



Mountstuart Elphinstone in South Asia: Pioneer of British Colonial Rule

Shah Mahmoud Hanifi

Print publication date: 2019

Print ISBN-13: 9780190914400

Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: September 2019

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190914400.001.0001

Mountstuart Elphinstone

An Anthropologist Before Anthropology

M. Jamil Hanifi

DOI:10.1093/oso/9780190914400.003.0003

Abstract and Keywords

During 1809, Mountstuart Elphinstone and his team of researchers visited the Persianate "Kingdom of Caubul" in Peshawar in order to sign a defense treaty with the ruler of the kingdom, Shah Shuja, and to collect information for use by the British colonial government of India. During his four-month stay in Peshawar, and subsequent two years research in Poona, India, Elphinstone collected a vast amount of ethnographic information from his Persian-speaking informants, as well as historical texts about the ethnology of Afghanistan. Some of this information provided the material for his 1815 (1819, 1839, 1842) encyclopaedic "An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul" (AKC), which became the ethnographic bible for Euro-American writings about Afghanistan. Elphinstone's competence in Farsi, his subscription to the ideology of Scottish Enlightenment, the collaborative methodology of his ethnographic research, and the integrity of the ethnographic texts in his AKC, qualify him as a pioneer anthropologist—a century prior to the birth of the discipline of anthropology in Europe. Virtually all Euro-American academic and political writings about Afghanistan during the last two-hundred years are informed and influenced by Elphinstone's AKC. This essay engages several aspects of the ethnological legacy of AKC.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Collaborative Research, Ethnography, Ethnology, National Character

For centuries the space marked 'Afghanistan' in academic, political, and popular discourse existed as a buffer between and in the periphery of the Persian and Persianate Moghol empires. During the first half of the eighteenth century the

power of these empires declined facilitating the rise of several fiefdoms in the foothills of the Hindukush mountain range. The largest of these feudal formations, popularly referred to as the 'Durrani Empire', dominated the area south of the Hindukush, corresponding to present day southern Afghanistan and the territory stretching to the eastern shores of the Indus river. During the first decade of the nineteenth century the Durrani Empire disintegrated into several fragments. Its eastern portion (the space within the triangle of Kabul, Peshawar and Multan) was ruled by Shah Shuja, a grandson of Ahmad Khan Abdali (r. 1747-73) also known as 'Ahmad Shah Durrani' the 'founder' or 'father' of the Durrani Empire in Western and local scholarship of Afghanistan. The decline of the Durrani Empire and the expanding British colonial (p.42) presence in South Asia during the early nineteenth century creates the historical and political context for the emergence and development of what is presently mapped as modern Afghanistan.

The 1798-1801 French military venture into Egypt and Syria prompted speculations about Napoleon Bonaparte's march toward India through Persia and what was then referred to as 'The Kingdom of Caubul' (roughly the space bordered by the Indus River in the east, Seistan and Herat in the west, and the Hindukush mountain range in the north). These speculations, reinforced by the historical British Francophobia, the French diplomatic contacts with Persia, and the continued resistance of the rulers of Panjab to British colonial domination, prompted the worrisome British government of India to take precautionary measures for safeguarding its colonial political and territorial stakes in South Asia. For this purpose the Governor General of India dispatched diplomatic missions to Persia, Panjab and the 'Kingdom of Caubul'. The diplomatic mission ('the embassy') to the Kingdom of Caubul was led by Mountstuart Elphinstone, a young high-ranking civil servant of the colonial government of India. The mission consisted of a staff of fourteen British specialists including Richard Strachey as secretary and his two assistants (Fraser and Alexander), Mr. Macwhirter as surgeon, Lieutenants Macartney and Tickell as surveyors and a 400-man native Indian security detail commanded by eight British military officers.¹ The delegation arrived in Peshawar, the winter capital of the Kingdom of Caubul, on 23 February 1809. The stated purpose of the mission was to negotiate a friendship treaty with the Durrani ruler of the Kingdom of Caubul and to acquire 'general information' about this kingdom that would 'likely to be useful to the British Government'.²

During his four months stay in Peshawar, Mountstuart Elphinstone negotiated and signed a treaty with Shah Shuja that obligated the latter to help safeguard the British Indian colony from the perceived French military excursion through the Kingdom of Caubul in exchange for a £30,000 British subsidy. But the treaty became moot and was never invoked because Napoleon did not venture east beyond Syria. However, the visit of the British mission created the historical foundation for the political and territorial construction of Afghanistan by Great

Britain as its crypto-colony. From its inception in early nineteenth century to the **(p.43)** middle of the twentieth century Britain subsidised the fragile Persianate state apparatus of Afghanistan and played a major role in the selection of its amirs and kings. Subsequent to the British withdrawal from South Asia after WWII, Afghanistan became dependent on the United States and Soviet subsidies. Since the American military occupation in October 2001 Afghanistan has existed as a crypto-colony of the United States totally dependent on its economic and political support under the umbrella of 'Operation Enduring Freedom'.

Shortly after the treaty was signed in June 1809 Shah Shuja was driven out of Peshawar by his older brother forcing him to escape and wander through the Panjab where he and his family were mistreated and manipulated into surrendering the famous *Koh-i Noor* diamond to Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Panjab. After escaping from Lahore, Shah Shuja sought refuge with the British government in Ludhiana, India where he stayed under the gaze of and with a pension from the British until 1839 when he was transferred to Kabul by the British armed forces (during the First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839–42) and installed as the king of Afghanistan.³ The cordial diplomatic encounter between Shah Shuja and Mountstuart Elphinstone's mission in Peshawar during 1809 is likely to have played a major role in the British Government's confidence and trust in the former ruler of the Kingdom of Caubul, even though Elphinstone personally opposed the First Anglo-Afghan War and the installation of Shah Shuja as the king of Afghanistan.

In addition to signing the treaty with Shah Shuja, Elphinstone's embassy to the Kingdom of Caubul produced numerous political reports and large amounts of information about the ecology, geography, politics and ethnography of Afghanistan. These reports are housed in '88 volumes of notes, correspondence and drawings found in the Elphinstone collection of the Oriental and India Office Records'.⁴ Some of this information was published in Mountstuart Elphinstone's 1815 encyclopedic *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India* (henceforth AKC). From their inception AKC and Elphinstone's other writings have served as the most influential sources for the academic (especially ethnographic) and political engagement of Afghanistan. AKC has become the ethnographic bible of Euro-American writings about Afghanistan. Recent publications dealing with the powerful influence of AKC — 'Elphinstonian Episteme'⁵ — **(p.44)** and other Euro-American academic and political writings dealing with Afghanistan cogently acknowledge this.⁶ But, to my knowledge, the research techniques and methodology used in the production of the ethnographic content of AKC (especially the sources of its information) and an informed interrogation of its ethnographic texts and political narratives has yet to be undertaken.

This essay situates Mountstuart Elphinstone as a pioneer European anthropologist long before the discipline of anthropology was born and provides a discussion of the research methodology and selections of the ethnographic content of his encyclopedic AKC. The ethnicity and class location of the informants from whom Elphinstone received ethnographic information about various ethnic groups, especially the Pashtuns, in the Kingdom of Caubul will be discussed. AKC includes frequent references to the culture and personality traits of 'Afghauns' (i.e. Pashtuns). Framed anthropologically, these traits configure into the 'National Character' or 'value orientations' of the 'Afghauns' (Pashtuns). The ethnographic contents of AKC are marked by the frequent use of the exonym 'Afghaun' as a substitute (or alternative) for the autonym 'Pashtun'. Elphinstone's unexplained conflation of 'Afghaun' with Pashtun has seeded a lasting problematic complexity in the scholarly, literary and political discourse dealing with Pashtun ethnicity, identity politics, and the overall history and political dynamics of multi-ethnic Afghanistan and its Persianate state apparatus. The interchangeable use of the Persian exonym 'Afghaun' with the autonym 'Pashtun' by Elphinstone has discouraged a critical engagement of the cultural identity of the dissimulating Durrani (and Barakzai) rulers of the Kingdom of Caubul. The invention of 'Durrani' identity by Ahmad Khan Abdali (by titling himself '*Dur-e-Duran*' [Persian, 'pearl of pearls'] and naming his followers 'Durrani') was a political maneuver to veil the non-Pashtun 'Abdali' and Chishti Sufi identity of himself and his followers. The Persian linguistic construct '*Dur-e-Duran*' clearly echos the cultural and political makeup of the Persianate ruling machinery of Elphinstone's Kingdom of Caubul.

In the context of the configuration of the 'National Character' of Afghans, this essay will discuss the epistemology of a set of cultural values and practices which Elphinstone calls 'Pooshtoonwullee [Pashtunwali] or customary law' of the Pashtuns.⁷ This is the first and **(p.45)** earliest recorded mention of this socio-cultural model. Ever since Elphinstone introduced Pashtunwali in AKC, this 'customary law' has become a taken-for-granted core normative feature of Pashtun identity in local (Pashto, Persian, Urdu) and Euro-American academic, literary and political discourse. AKC contains substantial information about the prominent presence of Persians (including the Qizilbash/Kizilbash) and Persian culture, including Persian language and material cultural features, in the structure and operation of the ruling apparatus of the Kingdom of Caubul and some aspects of the culture of its subjects. The Persian-dominated structure and culture of the Kingdom of Caubul has continued in its successor formations in Afghanistan during the past two centuries. But like Elphinstone two centuries earlier, Euro-American scholars continue to represent Afghanistan as a formation that is constructed with Pashtun cultural and social elements dominated and operated by Pashtuns. The ethnographic and historical contents of AKC, especially those aspects that are discussed in this chapter, continue to serve as the templates for Euro-American academic and political writings

dealing with the peoples and cultures of Afghanistan, especially the Pashtun communities on both sides of the Durand Line. Deconstructive engagement of the accuracy, validity and veracity of the ethnographic representations of the 'Afghans' in AKC is not the primary purpose of this article. My aim is not to overthrow the ethnographic content of AKC but to critically engage ethnographic selections of what Elphinstone has placed before his audience in AKC.

The Anthropological Inheritance of Mountstuart Elphinstone

Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859) was born and raised in Scotland. He joined the British civil service in India during 1796. Elphinstone was a Scottish intellectual with scholarly familiarity with the cultures, chronicle histories and politics of what was known as the Kingdom of Caubul, the historical cradle of what we now know as Afghanistan. He was a product of the Scottish Enlightenment and had absorbed its fundamental emphasis on the universality of human reason and the staunch rejection of political and social forces that undermined reason and practicality. The Scottish Enlightenment viewed reason couched in optimism as the driving force of socio-cultural change for **(p.46)** the benefit of society and the individual.⁸ Martha McLaren (1993) and Douglas M. Peters (1994) provide an informative discussion about the role of Scottish Enlightenment in the intellectual and political outlook of Mountstuart Elphinstone and other high ranking Scottish intellectuals (e. g. John Malcolm and Thomas Munro) in the service of the British colonial government of India.⁹ The Scottish Enlightenment sensibility had conditioned the intellectual outlook of Mountstuart Elphinstone as an ethnographer and a politician—especially his understanding of the culture, society, and the structure and operations of the Persianate Durrani ruling machinery of the Kingdom of Caubul.¹⁰

Mountstuart Elphinstone's AKC and the collaborative researches and reports on which it is based predate by about a century the pioneering 1898–9 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits led by Alfred Cort Haddon, 'the doyen of British anthropologists'.¹¹ The research expedition Haddon led was sponsored by the British government and is widely acknowledged as the methodological and theoretical founding block of British anthropology, an academic discipline that was consolidated and institutionalized during the first decade of the twentieth century. A century earlier Mountstuart Elphinstone's 1809 mission to the Kingdom of Caubul achieved, in principle, what Haddon's expedition had accomplished for the 'science' of anthropology during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Both expeditions produced knowledge for use by the British colonial government. Here is a brief comparative synopsis of the two expeditions.

The 1898–9 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the islands of Torres Straits has been widely proclaimed as a 'critical moment' with 'revolutionary consequences' for the discipline of anthropology in general and anthropological

ethnography in particular. The expedition 'revolutionized British anthropology'¹² and is considered the earliest European systematic collaborative field study for gathering information about the material and non-material culture of a distant and remote non-European society. Led by Haddon, the research project was carried out by seven men whose specialties included psychology, linguistics, photography, biology and ethnography. The collaborative research mission:

generated an enormous corpus of information including the six voluminous reports...numerous academic and popular publications... nearly 2000 artefacts, several hundred photographs, the first photographic **(p.47)** film sequence, numerous drawings, sketches, and sound recordings. The Haddon Papers also contain a significant amount of unpublished archival material including field notes, journals and correspondence.¹³

Virtually every general and cultural anthropology textbook cites Haddon's expedition and the information it produced as a founding link in the genealogy of the discipline of anthropology.

The 1809 British diplomatic mission to the Kingdom of Caubul spent about four months in Peshawar in order to gather 'general information' (except, photographs, films, and recordings) about the cultures and peoples of what was known as the 'Kingdom of Caubul' and its dependencies. Preparations preceding the mission, the time spent in Peshawar, and the time devoted to research and writing after leaving Peshawar took about two years. The general temporal context of the project that produced AKC is summarized by Elphinstone:

I was engaged for a year on my journey to the King of Caubul's court, and another elapsed before the mission was finally dissolved. The whole of that period was employed in such inquiries regarding the kingdom of Caubul as were likely to be useful to the British Government. The first part of the time was spent, by all the members of the mission in the acquisition of general information; but during the remainder a precise plan was arranged among the party, and a particular branch of the investigation assigned to every gentleman who took a share in it.¹⁴

Like Haddon's expedition Elphinstone's research project in the Kingdom of Caubul included collaboration among its members. Following is the division of labor in this collaborative project:

The geography was allotted to Lieutenant Macartney. ... and he was assisted by Captain Raper, already known to the public by his account of the Sources of the Ganges. The climate, soil, produce, and husbandry were undertaken by Lieutenant Irvine, and the trade and revenue by Mr. Richard Strachey. The history fell to Mr. Robert Alexander, and the government and the manners of the people to me.¹⁵

This is how Elphinstone describes the contributions of his collaborators:

What I have already said has in some measure explained my obligations. By the kindness of the other gentlemen of the mission, I was allowed the use of their reports, of which I have often availed myself, both to **(p.48)** direct my inquiries, and to supply the deficiencies of my information (ibid., p. xxxi).

Elphinstone specifically acknowledges the contributions of Strachey, Irvine, Macartney, Erskine, Jenkins, and Close. One of Elphinstone's collaborators during the writing of AKC at Poona was 'Mr. Durie. ... the son of an Englishman, by an Indian mother' (ibid., p. 268) who had travelled widely throughout Afghanistan. Durie's original narrative about his travels is included in AKC.¹⁶ Elphinstone was a pioneer collaborative ethnographer. Collaboration—an integral (but rarely explicitly acknowledged) social context for dialogue and reflexivity in real ethnographic research—has only recently received critical and explicit attention in anthropological discourse.¹⁷

Although focused on the 'Afghauns' (Pashtuns), the ethnographic narratives of Elphinstone's AKC provide brief descriptions of other ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Caubul and its dominions, and random comparisons between some of these groups and select European societies, especially his own Scotland Highlanders. To him the tribal format, ideology and operations of the government of the Kingdom of Caubul resembled 'the kingdom of "ancient Scotland": "the inordinate power and faction of the nobility most connected with the court", and relations between nobility and Crown, are so similar in the two states "that it will throw light on the character of the Durrani government to keep the parallel in view"'¹⁸

Although there was no tradition of social science research methodology to follow in early nineteenth century, Mountstuart Elphinstone conducted ethnographic research while in Peshawar and, after leaving the city, among Afghan/Pashtun communities in northern India. He also had access to Afghan informants in Bombay and Poona while writing AKC. Elphinstone was able to speak and read Farsi (Persian), the court language of the Kingdom of Caubul. It is safe to assume that he interviewed his informants in Farsi in Peshawar and was able to read the Persian chronicle histories of the region including the *Baburnama*, *Tarikh-e Shayr Shahi*, *Tarikh-e Morasa*, *Ayeen-e Akbari* and Mohammad Kasem Firishta's *History of Hindostan*. In his own words:

We had abundant opportunities of inquiry while in the Afghaun dominions; and after our return we continued to examine the numerous natives of those countries that accompanied us, and those whom we **(p.49)** could meet with in Dehli and its neighbourhoods. We also went to the fair of Hurdwar (the great rendezvous for natives of the countries north-west of

India), and into the Afghaun colony of Rohilcund. By these means we completed our reports, which were transmitted to Government in the end of 1810; at which time I set out for the Deccan, and considered my share in the transactions of the Caubul mission as at the end.¹⁹

After the reports were submitted to the British colonial government of India, Mountstuart Elphinstone started writing his AKC. He did this:

by the suggestion of Sir James Mackintosh, whose zeal for the promotion of knowledge has been felt even in these countries. He strongly recommended that the geographical information, collected by the gentlemen of the mission should in some shape be communicated to the public; and his kindness in offering, on his departure for England, to superintend the printing of what I might prepare for publication, removed the greatest obstacle to my design. About the same time, accidental circumstances brought a number of Afghauns from the parts of the country with which I was least acquainted to Bombay and Poona; I accordingly renewed my investigations with their assistance, and I now lay the result before the public.²⁰

It is important to note that Elphinstone's competence in Persian language enabled (but limited) him to receive ethnographic information about the 'Afghauns' (Pashtuns) through the linguistic and cultural filters of Persian-speaking non-Pashtuns and to use Persian texts.

What Mountstuart Elphinstone placed before the public was his 1815 encyclopedic *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*. B. D. Hopkins suggests that AKC was '(c)onsciously modeled on the French Encyclopedie'.²¹ A revised edition of this book was published in 1819. The 1819 edition was substantially revised and reprinted in two volumes in 1839 and reissued in 1842. The 1839 edition of AKC is informed by the 1830s travel accounts dealing with Afghanistan and Central Asia by Alexander Burnes, Arthur Conolly, Mohan Lal, and George Masson.²² These writers' travels and travel accounts were, in one form or another, inspired by Elphinstone and his AKC. The 1815 edition of AKC has been reprinted and widely circulated with 'Bio-Bibliographical Notes' by Alfred Janata in 1967 (Academische Druck, Graz, Austria). The 1839 edition was reprinted in 1972 with an **(p.50)** 'Introduction' by Olaf Caroe (Oxford University Press, London). The 1972 reprint of AKC was translated into Pashto by Mohammad Hasan Kakar and published in Kabul by the Afghanistan Academy of Sciences during 1981-2.²³ The 1967 reprint of AKC was translated into Farsi by Mohammad Asef Fekrat and published in Mashhad, Iran during 1997.²⁴ A substantial amount of unpublished documents including correspondence, notes, drawings and memoirs of Mountstuart Elphinstone and some of his collaborators

dealing with the Kingdom of Caubul are available in the archives of the India Office Library and British Parliamentary Papers.

From the start, according to some late twentieth-century anthropologists of South Asia, Elphinstone's AKC, 'became the touchstone work of frontier studies. ... (and) provided the most synoptic and in some ways most integrated account of Afghanistan'.²⁵ Elphinstone was 'the first ethnographer of the Pukhtun'.²⁶ 'Elphinstone's appraisal of the Pathans was astonishingly well balanced. He admitted many elements into his portrait, and ended with a rounded and complex picture of the Pathan mentality.'²⁷ Akbar S. Ahmed considers AKC as 'vivid (and)...the first English book on the Pathans [that] still remains one of the most accurate and interesting'.²⁸ And yes, Elphinstone was 'an anthropologist ahead of his time'²⁹—by about a century. Indeed, Mountstuart Elphinstone was an anthropologist long before anthropology was conceived as an academic discipline. More precisely, Elphinstone was a pioneer in ethnology, a comparative and explanatory subsidiary of anthropology focused on describing and explaining the similarities and differences among cultures (on local, regional, or global level). Elphinstone's comparative perspective is illustrated by his attempt to compare Afghanistan with Hungary and numerous instances of comparing the Kingdom of Caubul with the Scottish Highlands.³⁰ Ethnology requires valid ethnographic descriptions produced by systematic field research. The earliest recognition of Mountstuart Elphinstone as an ethnologist is available in the 1848 address by James Cowles Prichard, president of the Ethnological Society of London. Prichard cites the 1833 writings of the Russian linguist Bernhard Dorn 'who endeavours to follow up the investigations of our illustrious countryman the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone...[in]...an inquiry into the history of the powerful Afghan tribe of the Jusufzte **(p.51)** (Yusufzai)'.³¹ Elphinstone's ethnology of Afghanistan sponsored by and produced for use by the British colonial government also predates, by more than a century, the tradition of anthropological knowledge produced by and in the service of Anglo-American colonialism.

To my knowledge, Bahram Tavakolian—an American anthropologist with 'fieldwork' experience in Afghanistan—offers the first and only cogent discussion about the anthropological substance of AKC and the ethnological orientation of its author.³² According to Tavakolian '(t)here is hardly a book on Afghanistan or the North-West Frontier Province that does not make mention of Elphinstone's investigations and the overwhelmingly high praise he has received for both his own character and that of his writings'.³³ Tavakolian cites several extended quotations from AKC in order to illustrate Elphinstone's research methodology and theoretical orientation and his views on ecology, pastoralism, and select features of social organization. But, for reasons the excavation of which is beyond the scope of this article, most of about six dozen post-WWII Euro-American anthropological ethnographies of Afghanistan (including those written by Tavakolian) contain no or only passing and symbolic reference to the

ethnographic contents of AKC. The Euro-American ethnographers of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran who have made substantial use of Elphinstone's ethnographic texts in their own ethnographic writings include Akbar S. Ahmed, Jon Anderson, Klaus Ferdinand, Henry Field, Birthe Frederiksen, Charles Lindholm, Asta Olesen, Gorm Pedersen, H. F. Schurmann, and Willi Steul.³⁴ Elphinstone's ethnological texts about Afghanistan are widely used by Russian (especially Soviet-era) scholars in their ethnological and historical texts about the country.³⁵ Two Pakistani historians have made extensive use of the ethnographic contents of AKC in their Pashto writings.³⁶

No pre-1978 Kabuli writer in Farsi and Pashto, including the well known A. R. Benawa, M. G. M. Ghobar, A. H. Habibi, Q. Khadem, A. A. Kohzad, and S. Q. Reshtiya, have cited, referred to or discussed the contents of AKC. These writers are uniformly preoccupied with the 1809 treaty that Shah Shuja signed with Mountstuart Elphinstone and with the gifts the latter presented to Shah Shuja in Peshawar. Likewise, no reference is made to AKC or its contents in Afghanistan government official publications, including textbooks used in the country's schools. The ideological, political and academic reasons for the **(p.52)** absence of AKC in Kabuli publications will be discussed in a forthcoming paper (volume 2 of this series). Since the occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 by the United States this pattern of AKC avoidance has continued in the textbooks produced by the American government (through USAID and the Afghanistan Studies Center at the University of Nebraska) for schools in Afghanistan.

While decontextualized snippets of ethnographic descriptions from AKC are widely cited, surprisingly, Elphinstone's pioneering contributions to the ethnology of the Pashtuns based on his ethnographic research are rarely critically discussed in Euro-American anthropological discourse dealing with method and theory. Even when his ethnographic writings are cited in Western colonial and postcolonial texts, their utility is local and largely confined to the ethnography of societies straddling the Durand Line. Rarely is the methodological and theoretical framework and the overall ethnographic content of Elphinstone's published and unpublished ethnographic writings critically engaged and incorporated in the body of colonial and postcolonial ethnographic texts dealing with these culture areas. Moreover, in specific ethnographic discussions (especially those dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan), reference to AKC is only in passing and for symbolic effect, for the exploitation of its academic authority and historical fame.

Carlton S. Coon is the first anthropologist who cites Mountstuart Elphinstone's AKC in his 1951 introductory textbook about the ethnology of the Middle East.³⁷ To this day, no other reader or introductory textbook about the anthropology of the Middle East and Central/South Asia contains reference to Elphinstone's AKC. Coon provided guidance and inspiration for Louis Dupree in the latter's archeological and ethnological researches and writings about Afghanistan. A

careful reading of Dupree's popular 1973 *Afghanistan* illustrates the influence of Coon's 1951 tome. Compare Dupree's 'The Inward Looking Society'³⁸ with Coon's 'The Land of Insolence'.³⁹ Coon's writings about the Middle East are the inspiration for Dupree's understanding of Afghanistan: 'Altogether, Coon's (1951) mosaic concepts have never been more amply and graphically illustrated than in the current varieties of peoples and patterns in Afghanistan'.⁴⁰ It is likely that Coon's reading of Elphinstone inspired Dupree's declaration: 'Most writings on Afghan peoples and cultures have been footnotes to' Elphinstone's **(p.53)** *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*.⁴¹ Earlier Dupree had written: 'Most writing on Afghan people and culture is simply a footnote to Elphinstone's classic work (1815). Writers on Afghanistan have either copied Elphinstone or copied those who have copied Elphinstone'.⁴² Not surprisingly, the overall structure of Dupree's *Afghanistan* bears strong resemblance to the format of Elphinstone's AKC. But ironically Dupree, like most other Euro-American scholars (especially Anglo-American anthropologists) of Afghanistan, makes only superficial symbolic use of Elphinstone's ethnographic writings about the peoples and cultures of Afghanistan, especially the Pashtuns. Likewise, Jon W. Anderson's 1979 doctoral dissertation (and several derivative essays)—especially those parts that deal with the Pashtun cultural and linguistic categories that are subjected by Anderson to a Goffman-inspired symbolic analysis—bear strong resemblance to the ethnographic contents of Elphinstone's AKC.

In order to properly engage the ethnographic narratives of AKC, it is necessary to identify the cultural and linguistic filters through which Mountstuart Elphinstone received ethnographic information about his subjects, especially the Pashtuns whom he regularly identifies as 'Afghauns'. In anthropological discourse these sources are referred to as 'informants' or 'key informants'—the local (native) individuals who provide knowledge and often mediate the learning processes of the 'participant observer' (ethnographer) with her/his ethnographic subject. Elphinstone does not use the anthropological trademark concepts of 'informant', 'key informant', or 'participant observer', and does not explicitly identify the individuals who served as his main sources of information and mediators between him and the cultural communities represented in the texts of his AKC. But the identity of the native individuals from whom he likely received ethnographic information—his 'key informants'—is accessible to the reader in Elphinstone's account of his encounter with the Kingdom of Caubul before, during and after his four months visit to Peshawar during 1809. The individuals who served as Elphinstone's hosts and informants and with whom he frequently interacted are identified in the comprehensive (111 pages) introduction to AKC. In the texts quoted from AKC in this paper I have adjusted the phonetic format of some proper names, labels and titles in order to illustrate continuity and similarity with their current versions. **(p.54)** In most such cases the stretched vowels [oo], [ee], [au] of AKC are contracted to [o], [i], [a].

Mountstuart Elphinstone entered the dominions of the Kingdom of Caubul in Multan, about 350 miles south of Peshawar. During his stay in Multan he met his first official 'Mehmandar...[a]n officer appointed to receive and do the honours to such guests as the King wishes to show attention to... The name of this personage was Sarferaz Khan'.⁴³ The latter was 'of an Afghaun family of the royal tribe of Sadozais, but his ancestors had so long been settled in Multan, that he had lost most of the characteristics of his nation'.⁴⁴ Other encounters include:

While in Multan...I (Elphinstone) received visits from Molla Ja'far Siestani, from the King's deputy Harkara-Bashi, or Newswriter, and from various other persons.⁴⁵

We reached Dera Ismael Khan on the 11th of January. Before we entered Dera, we were met by Fateh Khan, a Baloch, who governs this province as deputy for Mohammad Khan, to whom it...is assigned by the King.⁴⁶ ... Fateh Khan sent us a present, including six bottles of Caubul wine.⁴⁷

Molla Ja'far was appointed to attend us till some person of rank could join us. [He] had been a schoolmaster in his native country of Seistan, but had afterwards come to court to better his fortune...he had some success in commerce and had an opportunity of obliging the King and enriching himself at once, by purchasing some of His Majesty's jewels, during his misfortunes, and flight to the mountains. He was now in great favour, though he maintained the style and manners of an ordinary merchant. He was a grave old gentleman, shrewd, sensible, and good humoured, but blunt, and somewhat passionate. Under his guidance we set out from Dera Ismael Khan on the 7th of February.⁴⁸

Elphinstone cites two other interactions with Molla Ja'far.⁴⁹ Toward the end of its march to Peshawar, the mission 'discovered a party of Persian or Durrani, drawn up across the way, and soon learned they were one hundred horse who had come from the King, and brought us a letter. The whole of the troops were dressed like Persians, with coloured clothes, boots, and low sheepskin caps... They wore Persian hilted swords'.⁵⁰

Soon after entering Peshawar on 25 February 1809 Elphinstone discovered that:

(p.55) [t]here were two parties in Court, one headed by Akram Khan, a great Durrani lord, the actual prime minister; and the other, composed of the Persian ministers, who being about the King's person, and entirely dependent on his favor, possessed secret influence, which they often employed in opposition to Akram Khan: the chief of these was Meer Abool Hussun Khan [Mir Abol Hasan Khan]. This last party obtained the earlier information about the embassy and managed to secure Mehmandari [Persian: hosting, providing hospitality]; but it was still undetermined who

would be entrusted with the negotiation. The Persians took pains to convince me that the King was jealous of Akram Khan and the great Durranis and to treat with us through his personal and confidential agents.⁵¹

Mir Abol Hasan appears to have been Elphinstone's key informant in Peshawar. While in Peshawar Elphinstone:

saw a good deal of Mehmandar, Mir Abool Hasan Khan, a Persian, whose family had long been settled in Caubul, and who had himself risen from the humble rank of a private soldier [report said even from that of a tailor], to the Sundoqdar Bashi [keeper of the wardrobe], and governor of Peshawar. He had a very fair complexion and red cheeks, but his person was small, his voice feeble, and his manner timid, so that our first impression of him was unfavourable: he, nevertheless, turned out to be the best of his nation, and to have a degree of simplicity about him seldom met with in a Persian.⁵²

Elphinstone describes several other formal and leisurely interactions with Mir Abool Hasan during his stay in Peshawar.⁵³ Two other Persian informants are also identified by Elphinstone. 'Two of the most remarkable of our visitors were Mirza Gerami Khan, and Molla Behramand. The former, who was the son of a Persian nobleman of high rank, had been in India, and had observed our customs with great attention and acuteness'.⁵⁴ Mirza Gerami Khan was the 'Moonshi Bashee, or secretary of state at Caubul' (ibid). When Elphinstone formally visited the court of the Kingdom of Caubul it was Mirza Gerami Khan who stood near him. 'The Governor General's Persian letter was now opened, and read with striking distinctness and elegance by the Moonshee Baushee to the king.'⁵⁵ (Moonshee Baushee is translated as 'head secretary' on this page). 'Moola Behramand was a man of retired and studious habits, but really a man of genius, and of insatiable thirst for knowledge' (ibid). These high-ranking Persian elite (Mir Abol Hasan, Mirza Gerami **(p.56)** Khan, and Molla Behramand) of the Persianate ruling machinery of the Kingdom of Caubul served as key informants in Elphinstone's ethnographic project that produced the AKC. Elphinstone also identifies 'Kareem, a Hazaura, once in my service'⁵⁶ who probably served as a source for information about the Hazaras, Aimaqs, and Uzbeks.

Shah Shuja, the king of the Kingdom of Caubul, could not speak Pashto.⁵⁷ He must have communicated with Elphinstone in Persian. These key informants, their king and his court interacted with Elphinstone through the medium of Farsi (Persian) in a 'contact zone'—'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination'.⁵⁸ This asymmetry is illustrated by the mediating effect of Persian culture and language in the encounter between Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Caubul. Virtually all the ethnographic information received by

Elphinstone was through Persian cultural and linguistic filters. Specific linguistic and broader descriptive instances of such asymmetry of power are present throughout the ethnographic texts of AKC. The use of the labiodental phoneme [v] in 'Vizeeree'⁵⁹ and 'Vizeer Auzim'⁶⁰ for the Pashto semi-vowel [w] in Waziri and Wazir-e Azam is probably received through the phonetics of Elphinstone's Persian informants (especially Mir Abol Hasan, the son of a Persian nobleman). The labiodental [v] phoneme is out of place in the phonology of Pashto.

Elphinstone's key informants at the Kingdom of Caubul were the equivalents of 'dragomans'—the early modern official interpreters, guides, mediators and translators for European missions, travelers, and embassies in the Middle East.⁶¹ The dragoman has evolved into present day '*tarjoman*' (Arabic and Farsi: translator) in Afghanistan. The Euro-American tradition of receiving knowledge about the 'Afghans' through the cultural and political filters of native elites formally connected to the state apparatus continues to this day in the successors to the Kingdom of Caubul—the Kingdom of Afghanistan, Republic of Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Late modern and postmodern Euro-American ethnographers in Afghanistan represent their Kabuli *tarjomans* as 'counterparts', 'assistants', cooks or servants. During the 1930s Ahmad Ali Kohzad (a Qizilbash) and Sayed Qasem Reshtiya were the most prominent (**p.57**) dragomans in Kabul. They played a major role in establishing the Afghan literary society (*Anjuman-e Adabi*) and the Afghan historical society (*Anjuman-e Tarikh*). Kohzad and Reshtiya produced the largest volume of Persian-language writings about the history of Afghanistan. In post-WWII years there was a government-selected pool of *tarjomans* in Kabul under the supervision of the faculty of letters, Kabul University, the foreign ministry and the security services of the government of Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani, the current president of Afghanistan, was a member of this pool of Kabuli dragomans during the early 1970s. A culturally informed interrogation of ethnographic research and writing projects in Afghanistan during the past century—the life span of the discipline of anthropology—confirms the prominence of Kabuli dragomans in the production of Euro-American knowledge about Afghanistan. Mountstuart Elphinstone's ethnographic research project in the Kingdom of Caubul is the trail blazer of the dragoman tradition in Afghanistan.

The tensions and conflicts between the nations that participated in the two world wars (and the Cold War) of the twentieth century sparked the development of the 'culture and personality school' in American anthropology. Out of this new focus emerged the 'national culture' studies. This essentialist paradigm was built upon the assumption that people living in one nation shared core cultural values, consciousness of solidarity, social behavior, self-perception, and sentiments.⁶² Virtually all European nations, the United States, Russia, and Japan were subjected to national character studies. The government of the United States sponsored national character studies in several American

universities including the Columbia University 'Research in Contemporary Cultures' project which provided the umbrella for the research and writings of American anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Geoffrey Gorer, Geoffrey Gorer and John Rickman, Margaret Mead, and Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux dealing with the national character of the current or potential enemies of the United States.⁶³ Similar studies were carried out by anthropologists in the aftermath of WWI.⁶⁴

About a century and half earlier Mountstuart Elphinstone produced a national character study of the people living in the Kingdom of Caubul (a former province of the Persian and Mughal Empires) in the context of rising tensions between British and French colonial powers (**p.58**) as well as between the British colonial presence in India and some of its semi-autonomous local peripheral regimes. Elphinstone's popularity among Western academic, political and popular writers about Afghanistan (especially Pashtuns) is chiefly derived from his portrayals of the cultural and social features of Pashtun personality and its tribal context. It is these personality and tribal cultural and social features that are widely cited in writings about Afghanistan, especially the Pashtuns. As mentioned above, what Elphinstone wrote about the national character of 'Afghans' was intended to 'be useful to the British Government' just as the American anthropologists' construction of German, Japanese, Romanian, Polish, and Russian national characters was sponsored by and intended for use by the American war machinery. The ethnographic contents of AKC largely consist of descriptions of the various cultural and social components of the National Character of the 'Afghans'.

No ethnic group in Central and South Asia has historically identified itself as 'Afghan'. Throughout the region (including present day nation-states) 'Afghan' is used as an oxonym for Pashtuns. The autonym for the people whose national character is constructed in AKC is 'Pooshtoon'—plural, 'Pooshtauneh' (Pashtun, Pashtaneh).⁶⁵ But they are identified by Elphinstone (through the filters of his Persian key informants and Persian language chronicle histories) with the oxonym 'Afghaun'. 'The origin of the name of Afghaun, now so generally applied to the nation I am about to describe, is entirely uncertain; but is, probably modern. It is known to the Afghans themselves through the medium of the Persian language' (ibid.). In India Pashtuns are known as 'Pitan'.⁶⁶ The Afghans 'have no general name for their own country, but sometimes apply the Persian one of Afghaunistaun. Doctor [John] Leyden has mentioned the name Pooshtoonkhau [Pahstunkhwa: Pahstun-side, Pashtun-place, Pashtun-land, Pashtun-territory], as bearing this sense; but I never heard it used.'⁶⁷

Elphinstone is steadily conscious about the accuracy and limitations of his data. In the introduction to the text dealing with cultural and social features of the 'Afghans', Elphinstone offers this caveat:

The description which I have attempted of the country of the Afghauns has been rendered difficult by the great variety of the region to be described, and by the diversity even of contiguous tracts. No less a **(p.59)** diversity will be discovered in the people who inhabit it; and, amidst the contrasts that are apparent in the government, manners, dress, and habits of different tribes, I find it difficult to select those great features which all possess in common, and which give a marked national character to the whole of the Afghauns.⁶⁸

But a sentence later Elphinstone situates the 'Afghuans' in a broad and abstract comparative perspective through an Englishman's lens:

The freedom which forms their [Afghauns'] grand distinction among the nations of the East, might seem to an Englishman a mixture of anarchy and arbitrary power; and the manly virtues that raise them above their neighbors, might sink in his estimation almost to the level of the opposite defects. It may, therefore, assist in appreciating their situation and character to figure the aspects they would present to a traveller from England, and to one from India.⁶⁹

If a man would be transported from England to the Afghaun country without passing through the dominions of Turkey, Persia, or Tartary he would...notice the absence of regular courts of justice, and of every thing like an organized police. He would be surprised at the fluctuation and instability of civil institutions. He would find it difficult to comprehend how a nation could subsist in such disorder; and would pity those who were compelled to pass their days in such a scene, and whose minds were trained by their unhappy situation to fraud and violence, to rapine, deceit, and revenge. Yet he would scarce fail to admire their martial and lofty spirit, their hospitality, and their bold and simple manners, equally removed from the suppleness of a citizen and the awkward rusticity of a clown; and he would probably, before long, discover, among so many qualities that excited his disgust, the rudiments of many virtues.⁷⁰

But an English traveler from India, would view them with a more favourable eye. ... He would admire their strong and active forms, their fair complexions and European features, their industry and enterprise, the hospitality, sobriety, and contempt of pleasure which appear in all their habits; and above all, the independence, and energy of their character.⁷¹

Based on this, one can assume that Elphinstone's raw cultural data for the construction of the 'national character' of the Kingdom of Caubul was received simultaneously through the undiluted imperial English filters and English filters that were informed by knowledge of (or experience in) Indian culture. This hybrid ethnographic sensibility **(p.60)** is also tempered by the presence of

Persian culture as well: ‘although I have endeavoured to measure them by the scale which will be applied in Europe, yet the first and most natural process by which I estimated their character was a comparison with their Indian and Persian neighbors’.⁷² I interpret this to mean that the ethnographic contents of AKC were received by Elphinstone through a triangular filter of English, Indian and Persian cultures. But, in reality, the hypotenuse of this triangle is Persian culture and Persian language. This effect is explicitly available throughout the ethnographic narratives of AKC. The longterm hegemonic effect of colonially produced ethnographic knowledge about Pashtuns through Persian cultural filters in AKC and the continued Persianate and Euro-American presence in the ruling apparatus of crypto-colonial Afghanistan are suitable illustrations of what Laura Stoler calls ‘Imperial Debris’—the everlasting academic, social, political, economic formations and effects of imperial domination.⁷³

Mountstuart Elphinstone has played a major role in the Persian-driven Afghanisation of Pashtuns in Euro-American academic, political, and popular discourse. His routine conflation of Pashtun with Afghan and his construction of Pashtun culture and society through oral and written Persian cultural and linguistic lenses—the Persianization of Pashtun culture—have left a lasting imprint on Euro-American scholarship of Afghanistan. Elphinstone’s AKC essentially consists of the ethnology of Pashtuns and Afghanistan through Persian cultural mediators. The considerable academic value and wide circulation of AKC together with the historical and political fame of its author has provided and continues to provide the scholarly and political legitimising authority for the conflation of ‘Afghan’ and ‘Pashtun’. Elphinstone’s understanding of this conflation is clearly expressed in his statement that ‘the Afghauns spoke nothing but *Pushtoo*’.⁷⁴ Based on this conclusion, one can safely assume that Elphinstone’s key informants were Persians because they could speak nothing but Persian; they could not have been Pashtuns (Elphinstone’s ‘Afghauns’) because they could not speak Pashto. This highly influential reception of Pashtun culture through Persian language and the imposition of ‘Afghan’ on Pashtun ethnicity continued in popular nineteenth-century colonial writings about Afghans and Pashtuns including Henry George Raverty’s *Gulshan-i-Roh* (Persian: *flower garden of spirit, soul, ghost, or apparition*) title and its **(p. 61)** English subtitle *Selections, Prose, and Poetical in the Pushto, or Afghan Language*.⁷⁵ The tradition of interchanging Afghan with Pashtun and the representation of Pashtun culture (oral or literary) through Persian cultural and linguistic filters is also present in Bernhard Dorn’s *A Chrestomathy of the Pushtu or Afghan Language* (1847)⁷⁶ and Raverty’s *A Dictionary of the Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*⁷⁷ and *A Grammar of Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*.⁷⁸ A late nineteenth-century example of the hegemonic Persianisation (through Afghanisation) of Pashtun culture is illustrated in the *Afghan Poetry of the Seventeenth Century: Being Selections From the Poems of Khush Hal Khan Khatak*, compiled and edited by C. E. Biddulph.⁷⁹ The book is a

compilation of the seventeenth-century Pashto poems of Khushhal Khan Khattak, considered the father of Pashto poetry.

The Persian cultural and linguistic effect is explicitly available throughout Elphinstone's narratives about the national character of the Afghans who spoke nothing but Pashto unless they were Hazara, Uzbek, or Baluch! Following is the core (and the most widely cited) of these narratives:

I know of no people in Asia who have fewer vices, or are less voluptuous or debauched; but this is most remarkable in the west: the people of towns are acquiring a taste for debauchery, and those in the north east of the country are already far from being pure. The Afghauns themselves complain of the corruption of manners, and of the decline of sincerity and good faith, and say that their nation is assimilating to the Persians. Their sentiments and conduct towards that nation, generally resemble those which we discovered some years ago towards the French. Their national antipathy, and a strong sense of their own superiority, do not prevent their imitating Persian manners, while they disclaim against the practices, as depraving their own. They are fully sensible of the advantage which Persia has over them at present, from the comparative union and vigour of her councils, and they regard the increase of her power with some degree of apprehension, which is diminished by their inattention to the future, and by their confidence in themselves. To sum up the character of the Afghauns in a few words; their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity, and obstinacy; on the other hand, they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious, and prudent; and they are less disposed than the nations in their neighborhood to falsehood, intrigue, and deceit.⁸⁰

(p.62) However, the form and practice of the cultural features of the Afghans in the Kingdom of Caubul varies from east to west:

Those of the west have derived their civilization from the Persians, and those of the east from Indians, and each resembles in dress and manners the people with which it is thus connected; while the inhabitants of the central part of the south, equally remote from both of the great empires to which I have alluded, and at a distance from great roads, appear to have retained the original habits of their own nation. From the superior extent of the country inhabited by the western tribes, and from the supremacy which two of those tribes have at different times maintained over the whole, the Persian dress, manners, and language decidedly prevail in the nation, and are recognized even in those parts where the Indian customs have acquired most force. It is to be observed, that every thing borrowed from the Persians and Indians, is preserved as it was at the time first adopted, and consequently varies considerably from the actual practices of

both countries in these days. The Indian dress and customs are those of the Shauh Jehaun days; and the Persian, those of the time of Naudir Shauh.⁸¹

The Afghans' 'love of gain seems to be their ruling passion. The influence of money on the whole nation is spoken by those who know them best as boundless, and it is not denied by themselves'.⁸² The 'love of independence... appears in some shape in most of their opinions and transactions. Their highest praise in speaking of a well-governed country is, that "Every man eats the produce of his own field" and that "nobody has any concern with his neighbour"'.⁸³ 'Khooḍ meekaurund, khooḍ meekhoorund. Kussee bau kussee ghurruz ned-aurud' (*Khooḍ maykarand, khooḍ maykhorand. Kasay ba kasay gharaz nada-rad*, Farsi: they grow their own, they eat their own. No one bothers anyone else).⁸⁴ Elphinstone:

once strongly urged to a very intelligent old man of the tribe of Meaunkhail, the superiority of a quiet and superior life, under a powerful monarch, to the discord, the alarms, and the blood which they owed to their present system. The old man replied with great warmth, and thus concluded an indignant harangue against arbitrary power: 'we are content with discord, we are content with alarms, we are content with blood, but we will never be content with a master'.⁸⁵

In addition to these universal features for all 'Afghauns' (Pashtuns), Elphinstone provides brief and condensed descriptions of other ethnic **(p.63)** groups in the Kingdom of Caubul. Here is what he states about the Qezilbash, the most powerful Persian group in the kingdom:

The Kizzilbaushes in Afghaunistan partake of the character of their countrymen in Persia; they are lively, ingenious, and even elegant and refined; but false, designing, and cruel; rapacious, but profuse; voluptuous and fond of show; at once insolent and servile, destitute of all moderation in prosperity, and of all pride in adversity; brave at one time, and cowardly at another, but always fond of glory; full of prejudice, but affecting to be liberal and enlightened; admirable for a mere acquaintance (if one can bear with their vanity), but dangerous for a close connection.⁸⁶

In a footnote to this paragraph Elphinstone tempers his generalization:

I speak for what I have seen of the Kuzzilbaushes of Caubul, and of a good many Persians whom I have known in India. The character, however, is chiefly applicable to the inhabitants of the towns; the country people are not so bad, and the Eliaut, or shepherd tribes, are something like the Afghauns.⁸⁷

Finally, here is Elphinstone's view of the character of the 'Afghauns' in a comparative perspective:

All communication with the Afghauns is rendered agreeable by the dependence which can be placed on what they say. Though they are far behind Europeans in veracity, and would seldom scruple to deceive both in statements and promises, if their own interest were to be promoted by their dishonesty, yet they have not that indifference to truth, and that style of habitual and gratuitous falsehood, which astonishes an European in natives of India and Persia. A man of the first nation seems incapable of observing any thing accurately; and one of the second, of describing it truly; but unless some prejudice can be discovered to mislead the observer, or some motive is apparent for misrepresenting the truth, one may generally rely on the Afghauns both for correctness and fidelity.⁸⁸

In the context of describing the cultural and social features of 'Afghauns' Mountstuart Elphinstone refers to 'Pooshtoonwullee' (Pashtunwali) as a prominent component of 'Afghaun' (Pashtun) culture and society.⁸⁹ According to Elphinstone Islam is the 'general law of the kingdom' of Kabul;⁹⁰ but:

(p.64) their [Afghauns'/Pahstuns'] peculiar code, and the only one applied to their *internal* administration of justice, is the Pooshtoonwullee, or usage of the Afghauns; a crude system of customary law, founded on principles such as one would suppose to have prevailed before the institution of civil government.⁹¹

By 'usage of the Afghauns' I assume Elphinstone means the Afghan (Pashtun) way, style, habit, method, custom, system, manner, approach, or mode. I cannot find any reference to this morphemic construct in any pre-1815 European or local ethnographic, historical, or literary written texts. Thus, it is safe to assume that this is the earliest ethnographic recording of this essentialist socio-cultural construct. Elphinstone does not explicitly discuss or identify the specific cultural, structural, behavioral, or historical features of Pashtunwali. There is no reference to 'Pashto', 'Pashtun' or 'Pashtunwali' in the court history of Ahmad Shah Durrani.⁹² Nor is there any mention of this history in AKC. The Persian informants of Elphinstone either did not know about this chronicle history or preferred not to share it with the British embassy in Peshawar.

Thus, by inference and implication, I identify the following three behavioral and cultural dimensions of Elphinstone's understanding of Pashtunwali in his ethnographic descriptions. First, balanced reciprocity—what has become known in succeeding modern and postmodern academic and popular accounts of the Pashtuns as *badal* (Farsi and Pashto: exchange, revenge, payback):

The opinion that it is every man's right and duty to do himself justice, and to revenge his own injuries, is by no means eradicated from among the Afghans; and the right of the society even to restrain the reasonable passions of individuals, and to take the redress of wrongs, and the punishment of crimes, into his own hands, is still very imperfectly understood; or if it is understood, is seldom present to the thoughts of the people...but it has taken root in the habits of the Afghaun nation. ... And though private revenge is every where preached against by the Moollahs, and forbidden by the government, yet it is still lawful, even honourable, in the eyes of the people, to seek that mode of redress. The injured party is considered to be entitled to strict retaliation on the aggressor: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and so on.⁹³

Second, hospitality:

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the Afghans, is their hospitality. The practice of this virtue is so much a national point of **(p.65)** honour, that their reproach to an inhospitable man, is that he has no *Pooshtoonwullee* (nothing of the customs of the Afghans).⁹⁴

Elphinstone does not provide a Pashto or Farsi label for hospitality. In subsequent colonial and post-colonial writings about the Pashtuns, this practice, as a component of Pashtunwali, is referred to by the Pashto label *maelmastiya*.

Third, 'Nannawautee':

A person who has a favor to ask, goes to the house or tent of the man on whom it depends, and refuses to sit on his carpet, or partake of his hospitality till he shall grant the boon required. The honour of the party thus solicited will incur a stain if he does not grant the favour asked of him; and so far is the practice carried, that a man over-matched by his enemies, will sometimes go Nannawautee to the house of another man, and entreat him to take up his quarrel; which the other is obliged to do, unless he is utterly unable to interfere with effect, or unless some circumstance renders his interference obviously improper.⁹⁵

Subsequent writers about Pashtuns have translated and interpreted *nanawati* as the obligation to accept an apology, grant refuge, shelter or protection to those who seek it. Two other cultural orientations—'Nung du Pooshtauneh, or honor of the Afghaun name'⁹⁶ and '*terbur-wali*', rivalry among male patrilineal parallel cousins (male children of brothers) which AKC simply identifies as 'Turboor' (ibid., Pashto: cousin) also fit into the ideology of Elphinstone's model of Pashtun customary law.

During the past two centuries Elphinstone's concept of Pashtunwali has become a fixture in most colonial and post-colonial writings about Pashtuns. The post-WWII academic (especially ethnographic) writings about the Pashtuns contain explicit reference to and discussion about Pashtunwali (Pakhtunwali, Pukhtunwali, Paxtunwali) as a core normative component of Pashtun culture and society. Some writers have viewed adherence to and participation in Pashtunwali as politically driven and structured by relations of power. In several ethnographic and political writings about Pashtuns the honor component of Pashtunwali is associated with the Persian triangle of *zan* (woman), *zar* (gold, money), *zamin* (land). These three Zs are out of place in the Pashto lexicon. The ethnographic writings of post-colonial anthropologists including Akbar S. Ahmed, Jon W. Anderson, Andre Singer, David (p.66) M. Hart, and Charles Lindholm devote considerable space to the discussion of Pashtunwali with varying emphasis on its structure, practice, and symbolic aspects.⁹⁷ The association of Pashtunwali with Pashtuns has played a major role in exoticising and exceptionalising them. However, an informed survey of the colonial and post-colonial ethnographies of tribal societies in North Africa, Central and Southwest Asia provides substantial information about the presence of cultural values and structural formations starkly similar to Pashtunwali.

To my knowledge the well-known Fredrik Barth is the only post-colonial ethnographer of Pashtuns who does not cite Mountstuart Elphinstone's AKC in his writings about Pashtuns.⁹⁸ Nor does Barth make any reference to Pashtunwali. His descriptive label for some of the cultural and social features that could be subsumed under Pashtunwali is 'value orientations'.⁹⁹ For Barth the core of Pashtun culture consists of 'value orientations' related to 'male autonomy and equality, self-expression and aggressiveness in a syndrome which might be summarized under the concept of honor [*izzat*]'.¹⁰⁰ In Barth's view these values are the tools with which Pashtun individual 'performance and excellence can be judged'.¹⁰¹ The institutional contexts in which consistency of individual performance with 'value orientations' is evaluated are "*Melmastia* = Hospitality, *Jirga* = Councils, and *Purdah* = seclusion (of women) and the honourable organization of domestic life".¹⁰² Value orientations seems to be a suitable theoretical framework for Barth's actor-focused and psychological modeling of Swat Pashtuns. The concept 'value orientations'—worldviews, assumptions, and cultural standards that guide and configure an individual's behavior—was originally articulated by Clyde Kluckhohn (1951) and Florence Kluckhohn (1953) in the context of the increasing popularity of psychological anthropology during the post-WWII decade when Barth was collecting information during 1954 in Swat for his doctoral dissertation which became the well known 1959 *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans*.¹⁰³ The idea of value orientations is closely connected to the national character studies that had become popular in American anthropology during the mid-twentieth century. Both models are closely related to the person-centered culture and personality

school in American anthropology. It is surprising that Fredrik Barth does not acknowledge the original source and the psychological parameters of **(p.67)** the value orientations model which he has used as a theoretical guide in his person-centered 'transactionalist' approach for describing political leadership, agencies and processes among Swat Pashtuns.

As mentioned above, ever since Mountstuart Elphinstone introduced Pashtunwali in his AKC, the concept has become a fixed feature of discussions and debates about Pashtun identity, politics, ethnicity, culture and society. Despite situating Pashtunwali in diverse temporal and spatial ethnographic locations and engaging it with various theoretical and methodological perspectives and levels of emphasis the standard components of Pashtunwali remain *melmastia* (hospitality), *badal* (balanced reciprocity, exchange), *nanawati* (providing obligatory refuge, asylum), *nang* (honour), and *terburwali* (patrilateral parallel cousin rivalry among males). However, the structure, cultural content and symbolic meaning of Pashtunwali remain unexcavated.

As mentioned earlier Mountstuart Elphinstone provides the earliest ethnographic reference for Pashtunwali. It is likely that the source for this reference is his Persian informants in Peshawar and Poona. The description of the format and cultural features of Pashtunwali was probably provided by Elphinstone's Persian informants at the royal court as a prominent feature of the other non-Persian Pashto-speaking periphery of the Kingdom of Caubul. The compound *pashtunwali* contains two morphemes: *pashtun* and *wali*. The morpheme Pashtun (Pushtun, Pakhtun) is a pronoun that stands for those who adhere to the following culturally constructed standards: 1. *Pashto Loral* (having Pashtu): The ability to stipulate and demonstrate membership in a Pashtun minimal patrilineage (three–five generations); 2. *Pashto Wayal* (speaking Pashto): competence in speaking Pashto as one's first (mother) language; 3. *Pashto Kawal* (doing Pashto): Pashtun identity requires subscription to and the performance of Pashtunwali. The meaning and historical (glottochronological) origin of the morpheme Pashto is unknown. Its conflation with 'Afghan' has continued to be a common practice. In the first government sponsored Pashto–Farsi dictionary published by the Pashto Academy of Afghanistan, Pashtunwali is defined as '*Afghaniyat*'—being an Afghan. 'Pashto' is defined as *zaban-e Afghani*—Afghani language. In this dictionary Pashtunwali is defined as *Afghaniyat*—being an Afghan (with) *ghayrat*—courage, *hemat*—power, resolution, and *wafadari*—loyalty.¹⁰⁴

(p.68) In Pashto and Persian '*wali*', as a free-standing morpheme, means a prince, governor of a province, a chief magistrate, occupant of a powerful social status such as the Wali (governor) of Swat and Wali (governor) of Badakhshan. In Persian '*wala*' (as a prefix) means exalted, sublime (*Walahazrat*, *Walashan*). As a suffix *wal*, *wala*, and *wali* are frequently used in Pashto, Persian and Urdu in the construction of labels for occupations and physical space or territory. The

following random examples of such usages are offered as material for a preliminary exercise for systematic excavation of the nuanced cultural and social complexity of Pashtunwali. In Pashto, *leekwal* means writer, *leekwali* means writing or literacy; *bangriwal* (with retroflex [r]) means vender of bangles, *bangriwali* means vending of bangles; *bandawal* means rural country dweller, *bandawali* means rural life; *andiwal* means friend, *andi-wali* means friendship; *ghotwal* and *loywal* mean greatness, prominence; *gharwal* means mountaineer or a person living in the highlands; *dagarwal* (a recently introduced Kabuli military rank) means field officer; *kotwal* means administrator of a military fort, *kotwali* means a government-owned building that houses the judiciary and security bureaucracy. The residents of Arghandai district (west of Kabul) are called and call themselves *arghandiwal*. Residents of Chardeh (a western rural suburb of Kabul) are called *chardiwal*. In Persian *choriwala* means bangle seller. In Kabuli Farsi and Urdu *qawal* means storyteller. In Urdu *qawali* means Chishti Sufi devotional singing. In Pashto *kaliwal* means rural village dweller, while *kaliwali* was the label Radio Kabul used for rural (village) or folk music during the 1940s and 1950s. The Hazara Pashtuns in Pakistan call themselves and are called by outsiders *Hazarawal* which means ‘person from Hazara’ (Ahmed 1990: 29).

In Kabuli Farsi *lablaboowala* and *kachaloowala* mean street vender of beet and potato respectively. The famous Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore has written a short story titled ‘*Cabuliwallah*’ (The Fruitseller from Kabul) about a migrant Kabuli vending grapes in Bengal.¹⁰⁵ The 17 July 1949 and 6 November 1949 issues of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* include an advertisement for ‘Afghan Snow’, a facial cream for ‘Alluring Beauty’ for women manufactured by ‘Patanwala for Perfumes & Cosmetics’.¹⁰⁶

In the context of the above morphemic and syntactic patterns Pashtunwali, as a cultural and linguistic construct, stands for a patrilineally **(p.69)** produced social location that requires the mindset and performance of Pashto language, hospitality, personal revenge (obligatory balanced reciprocity), and the provision of refuge and shelter for those who seek it. However, the social and cultural context of the practitioners of this occupation is space-less, it is non-territorial; there is no hint of or implication of space in Pashtunwali. There is only one instance in AKC of associating Pashtun society with space, quoted above (‘Doctor Leyden has mentioned...’).¹⁰⁷ In Elphinstone’s ethnographic texts, Pashtuns are not spatially situated; they are collectively referred to only as tribal social units residing in ambiguous spaces, distant communities in the imagination of his Persian informants. In a way Pashtuns, as a collective social entity, are an ‘imagined community’ in the gaze of Elphinstone and his Persian informants.¹⁰⁸

‘Afghaun’, the Persian label for Pashtun identity in AKC, is conceptually associated with space through the addition of the Persian suffix ‘*stan*’ meaning place or province. Thus, we have ‘Afghaunistan’ (Persian: land of the Afghan).

Examples of specializing other major ethnic and political communities with the Persian '*stan*' in the Middle East, Central and South Asia include Turkmanistan, Mogholistan, Qirghizistan, 'Arabistan, Uzbekistan, Turkistan, Hindostan, Kurdistan, Armanistan, Baluchistan, Daghistan, Waziristan, Yaghistan, Qazaqistan, Nurestan, Luristan, and Tajikistan. We could add Pakistan to this list but that would not be a proper fit because in the morpheme 'Pakistan' the prefix '*pak*' (Persian: clean) has no meaningful ethnic or sociological weight or specificity. After the birth of Pakistan during 1947, there emerged a brief political moment in Kabul for nationalizing and situating Pashtuns in an identifiable space (on a map) with the imaginary 'Pashtunistan', land of the Pashtuns. But that Kabuli political imagining of Pashtuns was circumscribed by spaces east and south of the colonially imposed Durand Line. Pashtuns on the west and north of this line were to remain in Afghanistan. Material cultural categories can also be specialized with the Persian '*stan*': *baghestan* (Persian: garden), *qabrestan* (Persian: land of graves, cemetery), *golestan* (Persian: flower garden), or *khormastan* (Persian: palm grove) as can be geographic and ecological features: Seistan, Kohestan.

As indicated earlier Mountstuart Elphinstone is a pioneer anthropologist and a trail-blazing ethnographer of cultures and societies that **(p.70)** straddle the Durand Line and the foothills of the Hindukush mountain range. I have briefly discussed some important aspects of his ethnographic texts including the construction of the national character of the Afghans and the prominent presence of Persian informants and Persian language competence in the production of these texts. Other than passing references to Pashto, Pashtuns, and Pashtunwali, the ethnographic contents of Elphinstone's AKC represent a Persian or highly Persianised socio-cultural environment. Virtually every page of the ethnography of AKC includes reference to the dominant presence of Persian material and non-material cultural features. Limitation of space does not permit a comprehensive coverage of the Persian and Persianate ethnographic contents of AKC. A stark Persianate effect in the Kingdom of Caubul is available in the various locations of power in the governing machinery of the kingdom. There is not a single status of power in this machinery that is identified with a Pashto morpheme. Shah Shuja presided over a government bureaucracy that was a crude replica of the Safavid model of state administration. This Persianate effect was not only present in every aspect of Shuja's government but also in the structure and operation of the administrative machineries of his grandfather and father. Samples of the official *farmans* (Farsi, orders, commands) of Ahmad Shah Durrani¹⁰⁹ and Timur Shah¹¹⁰ illustrates this. Following is a random list of Persianate offices in the administrative machinery of the court of the Kingdom of Caubul:

Mehmandar (official host);¹¹¹ *Mehmandari* (hospitality);¹¹² *Sandoqdarbashi* (keeper of the royal wardrobe);¹¹³ *Kishik Khana* (royal guard room);¹¹⁴
Monshi Bashi (royal chief secretary);¹¹⁵ *Peshkhedmat* (king's servant);¹¹⁶

Mirza (secretary);¹¹⁷ *Nazer* (steward);¹¹⁸ *Wazir Azam* (grand wazir, prime minister);¹¹⁹ *Nusuckchee Bashi* (officer who presides over physical punishments);¹²⁰ *Zabt Begi* (officer who seizes property on behalf of the government);¹²¹ *Arzbegi* (officer who presents audibly petitions of subjects to the king);¹²² *Ishikaghausee* (royal door keeper, door guard);¹²³ *Mir Akhor* (master of the royal horse or stable);¹²⁴ *Chaous Bashi* (officer who admits those who pay respect to the king);¹²⁵ *Jaurchi Bashi* (criers, or public announcers, attached to the *Arzbegi*);¹²⁶ *Harkara Bashi* (head of the intelligence);¹²⁷ elsewhere in AKC ‘king’s deputy *Harkara Baushee*’ is called ‘Newswriter’.¹²⁸

For the original Persian (Safavi) context of the labels for government offices see works by Willem Floor, V. Minorsky, and Roger Savory.¹²⁹

(p.71) All of these titles are constructed with Persian and a few Turkish morphemes. Persians, especially the Persian Qizilbash, are closely connected to these locations of power in the administration of the Kingdom of Caubul:

Most of the secretaries, accountants, and other inferior ministers, are Kuzzilbaushes, and almost every man of rank has a Meerza (secretary, clerk), a Nazir (a master of the household), and perhaps a Dewaun (a steward). Most of the King’s Peshkhednuts (servants), and other servants immediately about his person, are also Kuzzilbaushes.¹³⁰

The Qizilbash were also prominently present in the higher levels of power in Afghanistan. In discussing the government of the Durrani in Afghanistan, Elphinstone refers to the ‘Cuzilbaush [Qizilbash] nobles of the court of Caubul’.¹³¹ All 300 wives of Timur Shah (Shah Shuja’s father) were Qizilbash; he did not have a single ‘Afghan’ wife.¹³² Shah Shuja (and his thirty-six brothers) were children of Qizilbash mothers.

The entire ethnographic text of AKC contains only one instance of a brief Pashto text: ‘Shu Raghlee, Hurcul Rausheh...Shu pu Kheeree’—‘You are welcome, may you often come, may you prosper’.¹³³ Elphinstone has published a list of 367 Pashto words in AKC.¹³⁴ The words were collected for the purpose of comparison with other Central Asian languages.¹³⁵ But there is no use of or reference to this vocabulary in the ethnographic texts of AKC. In discussing the ethnic origin and language of Pashtuns, Elphinstone cites a popular Persian denigration of Pashto as ‘the language of hell’.¹³⁶ The phrase is attributed to the Prophet by some Persian historians of Pashtun genealogies. His Persian informants must be the source of this information.

It is from these Persian informants that Elphinstone received information about how ‘the day is divided in Afghaunistan’.¹³⁷ The Persian morpheme ‘*Sehr*’ stands for early morning; ‘*Aftaub Beraumud*’ is sunrise; ‘*Chausht*’ is lunch time; ‘*Neemrooz*’ is noon; ‘*Awullee Pesheen* (or *Zohr*)’ stands for mid-afternoon;

'*Aukhree Pesheen*' is late afternoon; '*Asr* or '*Deeger*' is sunset; '*Shaum*' is after sunset; '*Khooftan*' means early evening.¹³⁸ The Pashto labels (not included in AKC) for morning, sunrise, noon, afternoon, late afternoon, and sunset are *Sahar*, *Lmar khatiz*, *Gharma*, *Maspeshin*, *Mazdigar*, *Masham*. Pashto does not have labels for *Neemrooz*, *Aukhree Pesheen*, and *Khooftan*.

(p.72) The prominence of Persian culture in the social life of the rulers of the Kingdom of Caubul is illustrated by Elphinstone's description of his visit to the residence of his host and key informant in Peshawar, the Persian Mir Abol Hasan Khan:

The doors were hung with curtains of cloth of gold, or of highly embroidered silks, and the galleries, round the upper parts of the room were closed with Persian pictures, round which appeared a profusion of gold cloth and embroidery. Among other things, I observed with some surprise a large piece of silver cloth, in which the sun rising over a lion (the royal ensign of Persia), was wrought in gold.¹³⁹

During luncheon '(b)asins and ewers were handed round to wash our hands; after which they spread a large flowered chintz table-cloth ornamented with Persian verses on the bounty of God...'.¹⁴⁰ During this visit Elphinstone and his party were attended by 'mostly Persians, who are reckoned the best servants'.¹⁴¹ Thus, the ruling machinery at the court of the Kingdom of Caubul was from top to bottom populated by Persians. Here are some other Persian features 'Of The Great'¹⁴² of the Kingdom of Caubul: 'The pictures in the houses of the rich are mostly, if not entirely, done in Persia; the figures are old Persian kings and warriors, young men and women drinking together, or scenes from the Persian poems'.¹⁴³ 'The ladies (of the great) wear Persian dress'.¹⁴⁴

In his AKC Elphinstone devotes a few pages to Pashto literature. He refers to the poems of two Pashtun poets: 'The most popular of all the poets is Rehmann [Rahman Baba], whose works consist of odes, exactly like those of the Persians'.¹⁴⁵ Elphinstone states that 'I can perceive no merit in those of his poems, which I have had explained to me'.¹⁴⁶ 'Khooshhaul [Khushhal Khan Khattak] appears to me a far superior poet to Rehmann, and his productions are highly characteristic of himself and his nation'.¹⁴⁷ English translations of samples of Kushhal's Pashto poetry are provided in AKC.¹⁴⁸ Elphinstone does not mention that Khushhal Khattak also wrote 'many *ghazals* in Persian under the pen-name of Ruhi, and a Persian *kasida* or ode on the futility of this world in same metre as the *Bahr al-abrar* of Amir Khusraw Dihlawi; this Persian poetry is amongst the best of that written in the so-called *Sabk-i Hindi* or "Indian style"'.¹⁴⁹ Commenting on the marginality of Pashto literature in the Kingdom of Caubul, Elphinstone writes:

(p.73) The books written in Pooshtoo, are not to be relied on as giving any standard of the nation; for Persian still continues to be the language of composition, and in it almost all books of science are written...if we count all those who have written in Afghaunistaun, we should include some of the greatest Persian authors; but if we confine ourselves to those who belonged to the Afghaun tribes, the list will be brought within very narrow bounds. This much is certain, that all the Persian authors are familiarly read in Afghaunistaun, but the learning and accomplishments of the people are inferior to those of the Persians.¹⁵⁰

The ethnographic narratives of AKC portray Afghanistan as an underdeveloped or backward Persia. The Persianate elite from whom Elphinstone received information about the Pashtuns:

have many resources in reading or hearing books read to them; it is even a profession to read, and the Shauh Naumeh, the great heroic poem of Ferdausi, has a large class of readers called Shauhnaumeh Khoons, whose business it is to read it, or recite the fine passages with proper emphasis and action.¹⁵¹

According to Elphinstone Ahmad Shah Durrani, Timur Shah, and Shah Zaman wrote poems in Persian.¹⁵² 'Among the Pooshtoon poets we must not omit the name of Ahmad Shauh, who composed a book of odes in that language on which there is a laborious and voluminous commentary by the Khaunee Ooloom'.¹⁵³ Khan-e 'Ulum was the 'lord of the learned'¹⁵⁴ in the court of the Kingdom of Caubul. A handwritten copy of these poems was found by Henry G. Raverty in 1853.¹⁵⁵ Raverty published these poems as examples of Pashto poetry.¹⁵⁶ A copy of this document with Raverty's handwritten note is available at the British library. There is no reference to Afghan, Pashtun, Durrani, Qandahar, Afghanistan, Pashtunwalai, or Pashtunkhwa in the poems of this document. The document includes several pages of Persian poetry and continuous invocation of religious texts in Arabic. The last page (118b) of these poems includes a benediction in Arabic and is signed in Farsi '*Dastkhat-e banda, Ali Mohammad, ChaharYar*' (Persian: handwriting of [your] devoted servant, Ali Mohammad ChaharYar). The text of this document contains diacritical marks for Pashto vowels and marks for retroflex [r] and palatal [d] phonemes. These features did not appear in Pashto writings before the 1830s. Ahmad Shah Durrani died during 1772. During the post-WWII years these alleged odes of Ahmad Shah Durrani have been reprinted in Kabul and Peshawar with nationalistic **(p.74)** overtones and extensive modifications including the deletion of the Persian poems.

More than two centuries ago Mountstuart Elphinstone, a young Scottish intellectual and a trail-blazing anthropologist in the service of the British colonial government of India, led a small group of researchers to the Kingdom of Caubul—the rough equivalent of the cultural and social spaces stretching from

the current borders of Iran in the west to the Indus river in the east and from the Indian ocean in the south to the foothills of the Hindukush mountains in the north—in order to produce ‘general information’ for use by the British colonial government of India. Some of the information produced by the embassy resulted in the encyclopedic *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (AKC) authored by Mountstuart Elphinstone. In this paper I have engaged some of the ethnographic content of the 1972 reprint. Mountstuart Elphinstone was a pioneer anthropologist more than a hundred years before the discipline of anthropology was born. Specifically, I suggest that Elphinstone qualifies as an ethnologist, an anthropologist who engages in the comparison of cultures in historical and ethnographic contexts. The major social sources from which Elphinstone received ethnographic information about the Kingdom of Caubul are identifiable in the texts of AKC. I have explicated the Persian cultural and linguistic filters through which Elphinstone received information for his AKC.

The format of the ethnographic representations of the cultural patterns and personality traits of the ‘Afghauns’ in Elphinstone’s AKC resembles closely the national character model that emerged in American anthropology more than a century later. Every ethnic group in the Kingdom of Caubul discussed in AKC is identified, however briefly, with cultural traits that can be assembled into the National Culture of that group. The most prominent and problematic component of Elphinstone’s National Character of the ‘Afghauns’ or Pashtuns is Pashtunwali. A critical glance at the linguistic contents of this morpheme opens the door for cultural and social analysis that sheds light on the variety of meanings that are embedded in this concept. The hospitality, revenge, asylum, and honor quartet of this Pashtun ‘customary law’ have continued to occupy a prominent place in academic, political and popular discourse about the Pashtuns. Some recent Euro-American (p.75) texts have added the Persian triangle of *zan*, *zar*, *zamin* to the Pashtunwali typology. A comparative glance at the ethnographies of tribal societies in Central Asia, Middle East, and North Africa rejects the assertion that hospitality, revenge, providing asylum, and honour are unique to the Pashtuns.

Elphinstone’s AKC provides extensive ethnographic descriptions about the cultural communities in Afghanistan and information about the Persianate format of the administration of the Kingdom of Caubul including the Persian titles for various statuses in this administration. I have provided a list of these Persian labels for locations of power in the ruling machinery of the kingdom. The prominence of the Persian Qizilbash in the ruling apparatus of the kingdom is clearly noted by Elphinstone. The Persianate structure and prominence of the Qizilbash and other non-Pashtuns continues to this day in the ruling apparatus of Afghanistan. The conflation and confounding of ‘Afghaun’ with Pashtun has deeply complicated—and made it difficult, especially for outsiders, to grasp—the reality of Persian domination in Persianate Afghanistan and has facilitated the dissimulating imagining of the non-Pashtun Durrani and Barakzi rulers of Kabul

as Pashtuns. This paper is essentially an invitation for a close reading of Elphinstone's systematic ethnographies of Afghanistan in *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* as a foundational step for the confirmation of the absence of Pashtuns and Pashtun culture in the ruling machinery of the Kingdom of Caubul and its succeeding kingdoms and republics over the past two and a half centuries. Given the austerity of modern and postmodern Euro-American ethnographies about Afghanistan, and despite the critical tenor of this essay, it is difficult to deny the encyclopedic value of AKC, especially the overall integrity of its ethnographic texts. The anthropological, especially ethnological value of the contents of *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* remain unmatched in modern and postmodern academic, political and popular writings about the peoples and cultures of Afghanistan and the country's ruling apparatus. **(p.76)**

Notes:

(1.) Elphinstone, Mountstuart, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary and India; Comprising a View of the Afghaun Nation, and a History of the Doorany Monarchy*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown and J. Murray. (Reprinted 1819; revised edition in two volumes 1839 [reprinted 1842]. The 1839 edition with a preface by Olaf Caroe reprinted 1972 (Karachi: Oxford). The 1815 edition with notes by Alfred Janata reprinted 1969 (Graz: Akademische Druck), 1815 (1819, 1839, 1969, 1972), I: 1-2.

(2.) Ibid. I: xxix.

(3.) See Dalrymple, William, *The Return of a King: The battle for Afghanistan 1839-1842*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013; Hanifi, Shah Mahmoud, 'Shah Shuja's "Hidden History" and its Implications for the Historiography of Afghanistan'. Online, *SAMAJ-South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* <http://samaj.revues.org/3384>, 2010.

(4.) Hopkins, Benjamin D., 'The *longue durée* of the Human Terrain', *Anthropology Today* 32, 3 (2016), 9.

(5.) Hopkins, B. D., *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 17.

(6.) Bayly, Martin J., *Taming the Imperial Imagination: Colonial Knowledge, International Relations, and the Anglo-Afghan Encounter, 1808-1878*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

(7.) Ibid. II: 262.

(8.) McLaren, Martha, *British India and British Scotland, 1780-1830*, Akron, Ohio: Akron University Press, 2001.

(9.) McLaren, Martha, 'From Analysis to Prescription: Scottish Concepts of Asian Despotism in Early Nineteenth Century British India'. *International History Review* 15, 3 (1993), pp. 469-501; Peers, Douglas M., 'Soldiers, Scholars, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Militarism in Early Nineteenth-Century India'. *International History Review* 16, 3(1994), pp. 441-65.

(10.) For a selection of biographical accounts of Mountstuart Elphinstone see Colbrooke, T. E., *Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone*, London: John Murray (2 volumes), 1884; Cotton, J. S., *Rulers of India: Mountstuart Elphinstone*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892; Forrest, George W., *Selections from the minutes and other official writings of the honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, governor of Bombay*, London: Richard Bentley, 1884; Radcliffe, Cyril John, *Mountstuart Elphinstone (the Romanes lecture)*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

(11.) Ashley-Montague, M. F., 'Review: Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits', *Isis* 27, 1 (1937), pp. 349-53.

(12.) Kuklick, Henrika, *The Savage Within: The social history of British anthropology, 1885-1945*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 15.

(13.) Bani, Mary and Anita Herle, 'Collaborative projects on Torres Strait Collections', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 10 (1998), pp. 115-20.

(14.) Ibid. I: xxix.

(15.) Ibid. I: xxix-xxx, 1-2.

(16.) Ibid. II: 353-72 (Appendix B).

(17.) Lassiter, Luke Eric, 'Collaborative ethnography and public anthropology', *Current Anthropology* 46, 1 (2005), pp. 83-106; Marcus, George E., 'The uses of complicity in the changing mise-en-scene of anthropology', *Representations* 59 (1997), pp. 85-108.

(18.) McLaren, Martha, 'From Analysis to Prescription: Scottish Concepts of Asian Despotism in Early Nineteenth Century British India'. *International History Review* 15, 3 (1993), 475 (quoting an Elphinstone MS in the British Library).

(19.) Ibid. I: xxx

(20.) Ibid. I: xxx-xxxii.

(21.) Hopkins, Benjamin D., 'The *longue durée* of the Human Terrain', *Anthropology Today* 32, 3 (2016), 9.

(22.) Ibid. I: xxxv-xxxvi, n. 202-203.

(23.) Kakar, Mohammad Hasan, *De Kabul Saltanat Bayan* ([sic.] Pashto, Description [of the] Kingdom of Kabul), Kabul: Afghanistan Academy of Sciences (2 volumes), 1981–2. (Pashto translation of Mountstuart Elphinstone, 1839 [1972]). Kakar has modified the title and has, in numerous places, converted Elphinstone's "Afghan" to "Pashtun" in the text of his translation.

(24.) Fekrat, Mohammad Asef, *Mountstuart Elphinstone: Afghanan, Jae, Farhang Nezhad; Gozaresh-e Saltanat-e Kabul* (Farsi, Mountstuart Elphinstone: Afghans, location, culture, race; account of the Kingdom of Kabul). Mashhad (Iran): Astan-e Qods-e Razvi, 1997. (Farsi translation of Mountstuart Elphinstone, 1839 [1972]). Fekrat has modified the title and has inserted changes in the text of his translation.

(25.) Anderson, Jon W., 'Poetics and politics in Ethnographic texts: A view from the colonial ethnography of Afghanistan', in Richard Harvey Brown (ed), *Writing the Social Text: Poetics and Politics in Social Science Discourse*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992, 96.

(26.) Lindholm, Charles, 'Leatherworkers and love potions', *American Ethnologist* 8, 3 (1981), 514.

(27.) Lindholm, Charles, 'Images of the Pathan: The usefulness of colonial ethnography', *European Journal of Sociology* 21 (1980), 353.

(28.) Ahmed, Akbar S., *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977, 12.

(29.) Tavakolian, Bahram, 'An anthropologist in the Kingdom of Afghanistan: Mountstuart Elphinstone', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 3, 2 (1979), 27.

(30.) Ibid. I: 101–2 note.

(31.) Prichard, James Cowles, 'Anniversary Address for 1848 to the Ethnological Society of London on the Recent Progress of Ethnology', *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London (1848–1856)*, 2 (1850), 133.

(32.) Tavakolian, 'An anthropologist', pp. 26–43.

(33.) Ibid. 27.

(34.) Ahmed, Akbar S., *Millennium and Charisma among Pathans*, London: Routledge, 1976; Anderson, Jon W., *Doing Pakhtu: Social Organization of the Ghilzai Pakhtun*, Ph. D. dissertation in anthropology, University of North Carolina, 1979; Ferdinand, Klaus, *Afghan nomads: caravans, conflicts, and trade in Afghanistan and British India*, Copenhagen: Rhodes International Science and Art Publishers, 1980; Field, Henry, *Contributions to the Anthropology of Iran*,

Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History (Anthropological Series 29), 1939; Frederiksen, Birthe, *Carvans and trade in Afghanistan: the changing life of the nomadic Hazarbutz*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1995; Lindholm, Charles, 'Images of the Pathan', 350-361; Lindholm, Charles, 'Leatherworkers and love potions'; Lindholm, Charles, *Generosity and Jealousy: The Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982; Olesen, Asta, *Afghan craftsmen: the culture of three itinerant communities*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1994; Pedersen, Gorm, *Afghan nomads in transition: a century of change among the Zala Khan Khel*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1994; Schurman, H. F., *The Mongols of Afghanistan: an ethnography of the Moghols and related peoples of Afghanistan*, The Hague: Mouton, 1962; Steul, Willi, *Paschtunwali: Ein ehrenkodex und seine rechtliche relevanz*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981.

(35.) Dorn, Bernhard, *Cresthomathy of the Pushtu or Afghan Language*, St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1847; Gankovski, Yu. V., *Imperia Durrani* (Russian, The Durrani Empire), USSR Academy of Sciences: Moscow, 1958; Gankowski, Yu. V., *The Peoples of Pakistan*, Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1971; Masson, B. M. and V. A. Romodin, *Istoria Afghanistana* (Russian, History of Afghanistan), Moscow: Science Publication, 1964 (2 volumes); Reisner, I. M., *Razvitie Feodalizma i Obrazovanie Gosudarstva u Afganev*. (Russian, Development of feudalism and formation of the Afghan state), Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences, 1954.

(36.) 'Ataullah Khan, *De Paxtano Tarikh, 1622-1838*, (Pashto: History of Pashtuns, 1622-1838). Peshawar: Hamidiya Press (4 volumes). (Handwritten lithographed manuscript with selections of printed English script), 1947 (1962); Zafar Kakakhel, Sayid Bahdur Shah, *Pashtana de Tarikh pa Rana Kshe* (Pashto: Pashtuns in the light of history), Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1965.

(37.) Coon, Carleton S., *Carvan: The Story of the Middle East*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951.

(38.) Dupree, Louis, *Afghanistan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 248-51.

(39.) Ibid. 295-323.

(40.) Ibid. 180.

(41.) Dupree, Louis, 'Afghanistan (Ethnography)', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* I (1987), 499.

(42.) Ibid. 1973, 55, note 1.

(43.) AKC, I: 29.

- (44.) Ibid.
- (45.) Ibid. 31.
- (46.) Ibid. 38.
- (47.) Ibid. 39.
- (48.) Ibid. 44.
- (49.) Ibid. 100, 350.
- (50.) Ibid. 34-5.
- (51.) Ibid. 57-8.
- (52.) Ibid 61-2.
- (53.) Ibid. 70, 90, 93, 101, 358.
- (54.) Ibid. 82.
- (55.) Ibid. 67.
- (56.) Ibid. II: 208.
- (57.) Hanifi, Shah Mahmoud, 'The Pashtun Counter-Narrative', *Middle East Critique* 25, 4 (2016), pp. 1-16.
- (58.) Pratt, Marry Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Wrings and Transculturation*, New York: Routledge, 2008, 7.
- (59.) Ibid. II: 78-81.
- (60.) Ibid. 251.
- (61.) Lewis, Bernard, 'From Babel to Dragoman', in *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 18-32.
- (62.) Gorer, Geoffrey, 'The Concept of National Character', in Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray (eds), *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954, pp, 246-59.
- (63.) Benedict, Ruth, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946; Gorer, Geoffrey. 1954. 'The Concept of National Character', in Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray (eds), *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954, pp, 246-59; Gorer, Geoffrey and John Rickman, *The People of Great Russia*, New

York: Chanticleer Press, 1950; Mead, Margaret, *Soviet attitude toward authority*, New York: William Morrow, 1951; Mead, Margaret and Rhoda Metraux (eds), *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953.

(64.) Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.

(65.) AKC, I: 200.

(66.) Ibid.

(67.) Ibid. Brackets added.

(68.) Ibid. I: 196.

(69.) Ibid.

(70.) Ibid. 197-8.

(71.) Ibid. 198.

(72.) Ibid. 200.

(73.) Stoler, Ann Laura (ed), 'Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination', *Cultural Anthropology* 23, 2 (2008), 191-219.

(74.) Ibid. I: 42.

(75.) Raverty, Henry George (ed), '*Gulshan-i-Roh* (Persian: *flower garden of spirit, soul, ghost, or apparition*): *Being selections, prose and poetical in the Pushto, or Afghan language*'. London: Longman, 1860.

(76.) Ibid.

(77.) Raverty, Henry George, *A Dictionary of the Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*, London: Longman, 1860.

(78.) Raverty, Henry George, *A Grammar of Pukhto, Pushto, or Language of the Afghans*, London: Longman, 1860.

(79.) Biddulph, C. E. (ed), *Afghan Poetry of the Seventeenth Century: Selections from the poems of Khush Hal Khan Khatak*, Peshawar: Saeed Book Bank, 1890 (1983).

(80.) AK, 330-31.

(81.) Ibid. 322-3.

(82.) Ibid. 323.

- (83.) Ibid.
- (84.) Ibid. 327, note.
- (85.) Ibid. 231, note.
- (86.) Ibid. 418, parenthesis in the original.
- (87.) Ibid.
- (88.) Ibid. 326.
- (89.) Ibid. 220–22, 295, 298, 328; II: 262.
- (90.) Ibid. 219.
- (91.) Ibid. 220, italics in the original.
- (92.) Jami, Mahmud al-Husaini, *Tarikh-e Ahmad* (2 volumes), Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences, 1774 (1974). (Reprinted as '*Tarikh-e Ahmad Shahi: tarikh-e tashkil-e awalin hokumat-e Afghanistan*', Tehran: Tehran University Publications, 2012.)
- (93.) AKC.
- (94.) Ibid. 295.
- (95.) Ibid. 295–6.
- (96.) Ibid. 328.
- (97.) Ahmed, Akbar S., *Millennium and Charisma among Pathans*; Ahmed, Akbar S., *Pukhtun economy and society: traditional structure and economic development in a tribal society*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980; Anderson, Jon W., *Doing Pakhtu*; Hart, David M., *Qabila: Tribal Profiles and Tribe-State Relations in Morocco and on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier*, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2001; Lindholm, Charles, *Generosity and Jealousy*; Singer, Andre, *Guardians of the North-West Frontier: The Pathans*, Amsterdam: Time-Life Books, 1982.
- (98.) Barth, Fredrik, *Political leadership among Swat Pathans*, New York: Humanities Press, 1959; Barth, Fredrik, 'Pathan Identity and its Maintenance', in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969, 117–34; Barth, Fredrik (ed), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969.
- (99.) Barth, Fredrik (ed), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 120.
- (100.) Ibid.

(101.) Ibid.

(102.) Ibid. Parenthesis added.

(103.) Kluckhohn, Clyde, 'Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action', in Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils (eds), *Toward a General Theory of Action*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951, pp. 389-433; Kluckhohn, Florence Rockwood, 'Dominant and Variant Value Orientations', in Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray (eds), *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953, pp. 342-57; Kluckhohn, Clyde and Henry A. Murray (eds), *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

(104.) *Pashto Qamus* (Pashto Dictionary), Kabul: Pashto Society, 1951-4 (2 volumes), I: 183, hyphens and English translation added.

(105.) Chakravarty, Amiya, *A Tagore Reader*. New York: Macmillan, 1961, pp. 46-53.

(106.) *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 17 July (p. 69) and 6 Nov 1949 (p. 67).

(107.) AKC, I: 200.

(108.) Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, New York: VERSO, 1991.

(109.) Shahshahani, Sayed Hosein. 1958. 'Farman-e tarikhi-ye Ahmad Shah Durrani' (Farsi, the historical order of Ahmad Shah Durrani), *Farhang-e Iran* 6 (1958), pp. 159-63.

(110.) 'Ali, Syed Masud, 'A Farman of Timur Shah', *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society* 6, 3 (1958), pp. 203-7.

(111.) AKC, I: 29.

(112.) Ibid. I: 58.

(113.) Ibid. I: 61-2.

(114.) Ibid. I: 63.

(115.) Ibid. I: 66.

(116.) Ibid. I: 418.

(117.) Ibid.

(118.) Ibid.

(119.) Ibid.

- (120.) Ibid. 252.
- (121.) Ibid.
- (122.) Ibid. 253.
- (123.) Ibid.
- (124.) Ibid.
- (125.) Ibid.
- (126.) Ibid.
- (127.) Ibid. II: 252.
- (128.) Ibid. I: 31.
- (129.) Floor, Willem, *Safavid Government Institutions*, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2001; Minorsky, V., *Tadhkirat al-Muluk: A Manual of Safavid Administration*, London: Luzac and Company, 1943; Savory, Roger M., *Studies on the History of Safavid Iran*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1987.
- (130.) AKC. I: 418.
- (131.) Ibid. II: 217.
- (132.) 'Abd al-Karim Bukhari, Mir, *Histoire de L'Asie Centrale* (texte Persan), Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1876, 11.
- (133.) AKC, I: 308.
- (134.) Ibid. II: 431-40 (Appendix E).
- (135.) Ibid. I: 250-51.
- (136.) Ibid. 206.
- (137.) Ibid. 339.
- (138.) Ibid.
- (139.) Ibid. 259, brackets in the original.
- (140.) Ibid. 363.
- (141.) Ibid. 361.
- (142.) Ibid. 348.
- (143.) Ibid. 350.

(144.) Ibid. 354.

(145.) Ibid. 253.

(146.) Ibid.

(147.) Ibid. 259.

(148.) Ibid. 254–5.

(149.) Farhadi, Ravan, 'Khushhal Khan Khatak', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New Edition) 5 (1986), 72.

(150.) Ibid. 260.

(151.) Ibid. 258.

(152.) Ibid. 261.

(153.) Ibid. 259.

(154.) Ibid. 287.

(155.) Raverty, Henry George, *The Divan of Ahmad Shah* (Handwritten Pashto poems attributed to Ahmad Khan Abdali presented to Raverty by a 'Durrani nobleman'. On file at the India Office Library (#11), 1853. This manuscript is signed by 'Ali Mohammad Chaharyari. See documents # 96, 97, 98 in Blumhardt and MacKenzie. Several versions of these poems have been reprinted in Peshawar and Kabul and circulated in book forms). Raverty, Henry George (ed), *'Gulshan-i-Roh (Persian: flower garden of spirit, soul, ghost, or apparition): Being selections, prose and poetical in the Pushto, or Afghan language'*. London: Longman, 1860.

(156.) Raverty, *'Gulshan-i-Roh'*; Raverty, Henry George, *Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1867.

Access brought to you by: