Kabul
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Kabul had different names in the course of history. In Sanskrit it was called Kubha. The classic Greek writers called it Kophen, Kophes or Koa, while the Chinese traveler, Hieu Tsang, noted it as Kaofu. The name was given first to the Kabul River and subsequently applied also to the region between the Hindu Kush and the Sind, which was also called Kabulistan. Alexander Cunningham holds that Kaofu was probably the name of one of the five Yuchi or Tukhari tribes, and that this tribe gave its name to the city after it occupied it in the second century B.C.E. This supposition seems likely, as Ghubar writes that in Avesta Kabul was called Vaekereta while the ancient Greek writers called it Ortospana (High Place), a name corresponding to the Sanskrit word Urdhhastana, applied to Kabul. Later, Ptolemy called it Kabura, and its inhabitants Kabulitae.

According to a legend, there was a lake in the middle of which lay the Island of Happiness where a happy family of musicians lived. By the order of a king it became accessible by the construction of a bridge (pul) made of straw (kah) from the combination of which - kah and pul - eventually Kabul emerged. When the name Kabul was applied to the city is unknown, but it came into prominence after Chinggis Khan destroyed Kapisa and other cities of Afghanistan in the thirteenth century. In modern times, Kabul became politically also significant after Timur Shah made it the capital of the Durrnanay Empire, in 1776. At that time Kabul consisted of semi-attached houses situated between the right bank of the Kabul River and the Bala Hissar (High Fortress), along the Sher Darwaza Mountain.

The first significant expansion of Kabul occurred in the reign of Amir Sher ‘Ali by the construction of the Sher Pur (or Sher Abad) cantonment on the left bank of the river. Kabul was further developed during the reign of Amir ‘Abd al-Rahman by the construction of the Palace (Arg) and the expansion of Deh Afghanan. But Kabul’s extensive development occurred in the reign of King Aman Allah by the construction of Dar al-Aman, and afterward extensively during the second half of the twentieth century, a process which still continues with great rapidity.

Originally Kabul had six gates - the Kandahari, Safid, Sardar Jahan Khan, Bayat, Guzargah and Lahori. Among its many bazaars those of Shore Bazaar and Darwaza-e-Lahori were the most important. Four covered arcades (Char Chata) were separated from each other by open squares, originally provided with wells and fountains. The structure was destroyed by the British retribution army in the First Anglo-Afghan War, while its Bala Hissar was destroyed in the Second Anglo-Afghan War because of an explosion. But its unprecedented widest destruction and the death of approximately 60,000 of its inhabitants was the work of Afghans who fought for mastery over it from 1992 to 1996. They were the warriors of the radical Islamic Tanzimat and the militias of Commanders Ahmad Shah Mas’ud and ‘Abd al-Rashid Dostum. Actually during the past two centuries almost every time Kabul changed hands its new masters except the Taliban looted it.
The inhabitants of Kabul differed in origin, but the Persian speech and common habitat gave them a common identity. Of its 140,700 inhabitants in 1876, 103,050 were detribalized Kabulis, 12,000 Tajiks, 9,000 Pashtuns, 4,000 Hindus and Sikhs, 3,000 Kashmiris, 3,000 Parachas, and 100 Armenians. Amidst its Sunni inhabitants the 6,500 Shi’i Qizilbshes lived in the enclosed quarter of Chindawal and played a greater role in proportion to their number. Later the Jews of Herat and Mazar were also settled there. After 1893, the Shi’i Hazaras constitute a significant portion of its inhabitants. To-day, of its approximately four million inhabitants the Pashtuns are its single most important ethnic group.