R. Tabuqašvili (1927–)

V. Third Generation: New Talent

T. Babluani (1948–)

A. Cabaje (1956–)
D. Cincaje (1957–)
G. Čoxeli (1954–)

G. Çqonia (1950–)
N. Jorjaje (1950–)

G. Kandelaki (1940–)
D. Taqašvili (1959–)

G. Levasov-Tumanišvili (1943–)
L. Zakarişvili (1953–)

Raikom Secretary (1953)

The Sparrows’ Migration (1980)
The Brother (1982)
The Spot (1985)
Sleepless Night (1984)

A Long Voyage in Search of a Fiancée (1985)
Iris Iberika (1982)

Voyage to Sopot (short film, 1980)
Robinsonade or My English Grandfather (1986)

The Happening (1979), released 1987

Snow was Falling on the Winter Gardens (1983)
The Father (short film, 1983)
Afghan Women Between Marxism and Islamic Fundamentalism

PARWIN ALI MAJROOH

INTRODUCTION

In the context of traditional Afghan society women have had an active, if not equal, part in socio-economic activities. In the process of modernisation, women gained some ground, particularly in the field of education and legal status. According to the law (Constitutions of 1964 and 1977) women and men were considered equal as citizens. Unfortunately, after the communist coup d'état of April 1978, women lost the ground gained over the last few decades. Women resumed the veil and hid behind curtains as a result of the struggle between Marxism and Muslim fundamentalism. The nature, causes and consequences of this struggle are discussed in terms of education for women; their socio-political status; and the place of women in Islam, Afghan civil law, regulations and customs, followed by a summary of the present situation.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

There is evidence that in 10th century Afghanistan, upper class women had access to informal education. Girls were permitted before the age of puberty to acquire literacy and were taught linguistic and Quranic studies from private tutors at home or in a separate quarter. An example from this time is Rabia Balkhi. Under Samanid rule, which was established in 900 (A.D.), Balkh (north of Afghanistan) became a centre of art and learning. Rabia Balkhi, sister of the Emir of Balkh, managed to benefit from the educational possibilities of the time and became a well-known poet in Dari and Arabic.

From the end of the 15th to the beginning of the 18th century, the area of Afghanistan was under the influence of the Safavid Empire of
Persia, as well as the mogol of India. In 1709, a national movement was established under the leadership of Mirwis Hotaki in Kandahar, and led to the establishment of the Durani Empire in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durani. During this period a number of women poets appeared. Among them two outstanding figures were Nazo Ana, mother of Mir Wais Hotaki, and his sister Zainab Hotaki. Zainab Hotaki wrote poems in Pashto and Dari and taught girls in the harem (women’s quarter of the palace).

In contrast to the upper class, the peasants and craftsmen constituted the majority of the illiterate population of the country. Professional skills for handicrafts were acquired by practice and apprenticeship. There was job differentiation between men and women: carpet weaving, the making of clothes and embroidery were considered jobs for women; while poultry and cattle raising and agriculture were joint responsibilities; and carpentry, blacksmithing, and making pottery were mainly the jobs of men. This differentiation of work still exists in Afghan society.

Modern schools or formal education were part of the liberal reforms introduced in the 20th century in Afghanistan. The first high school for boys was established during the reign of King Habibullah (1901–1919). The first school for girls, “Masturat”, was opened in 1921 during the reign of King Amanullah (1919–1929). By 1927 there were two new primary schools for girls with a total enrollment of 700. The curriculum included the Quran, theology, history and Dari. At the beginning the subjects were taught by women and later male teachers joined the staff. In addition, women from Turkey, France, Germany and India were assigned to teach the sciences and foreign languages. A group of 15 graduates from Masturat were sent to Turkey to obtain higher education. However, when King Amanullah was overthrown, they returned home without completing their studies.

Regarding women’s reforms, King Amanullah’s successors, Nadershah (1929–1933) and Zahershah (1933–1973), followed a moderate course. More high schools were eventually established. In the academic year 1973–1974, there were 16,027 girls registered in 229 village schools, 73,304 in 174 primary schools, 13,044 in 51 middle schools, 6020 in 30 high schools, and 733 in one vocational school. Prior to 1964 separate classes within Kabul University were opened for girls. In 1963 there were faculties of medicine, literature and natural sciences for women. The constitution of 1964 granted legal status for men and women. In particular, equal opportunity was given to women in the institutions of higher education. Co-education began in all the primary schools and colleges of Kabul University, including the College of Theology.
A nation-wide campaign against illiteracy was launched in the 1950s and was extended in the years 1974–1977. Since, according to 1974 statistics, there was a 95% illiteracy rate among men and 98% among women, an elaborate plan for acquisition of literacy and professional skills was implemented with the financial support of UNESCO. A general directorate for women’s education was established within the National Directorate for Adult Education. A separate curriculum was developed according to students’ needs, job requirements and cultural ties. There was no negative reaction on the part of the conservative clergy concerning the basic objectives of the literacy programme. However, the lack of complementary measures such as community centres, libraries and nurseries in the villages, a shortage of textbooks and a job market for those being trained for certain professions were obstacles in the way of the implementation of the literacy programme for women. In order to overcome the obstacles, a developmental approach was taken. It was planned that literacy programmes should be incorporated in other developmental programmes such as agriculture, rural development, public health, family planning, etc.

After the communist coup of 1978, students, particularly females, began to drop out of the formal and informal sections of education alike. In 1984, there were no village schools and no reading classes outside of Kabul.

An average of 78% of all training institutions have been destroyed (see Table 1). Many students, boys and girls, fled from the rural areas and took refuge in the capital. Male teachers were either killed or emigrated to foreign countries. As a result, the number of female teachers in Kabul tripled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.2</th>
<th>Number of schools in 1978</th>
<th>Number of schools in 1984</th>
<th>Decline in percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High schools</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle schools</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>1154</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village schools</td>
<td>1451</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training schools</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical schools</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are three major reasons for the decline of educational institutions:

(i) Students of all educational institutions, both boys and girls, were used for political purposes, such as coerced pro-regime
demonstrations, recruitment into the army and the intelligence service, or the state secret police (KHAD);
(ii) Imprisonment of students; and
(iii) Due to resistance operations, the regime lost control of the rural areas. By 1984 most of the educational, developmental and industrial establishments had ceased to function.

The following changes took place in the informal section of education: the communist regime under the leadership of Taraki and Amin considered the literacy programme as an efficient means for introducing Marxist–Leninist ideology and for promoting ideological–political objectives among young people. The first step was a change in curriculum from an orientation toward professional education to an ideological–political orientation according to Marxist–Leninist principles. Textbooks on this basis were prepared for both males and females. The general directorate of women’s education was reduced to a department of field operation. The teacher training and curriculum section of women’s education was affiliated with political departments. Teachers were also the targets of the new political policy and were recruited into the youth organisation of the Communist Party.

In order to facilitate its goal, the communist regime announced that four million people would be made literate by the end of 1979, and illiteracy would be completely eliminated in five years time. But in practice, this aim was not reached.

Prior to the communist coup, primary education for girls and boys was free and compulsory, while higher education and attendance at reading classes was free and voluntary. After 1978, the regime made the acquisition of literacy also compulsory. Therefore, the content and compulsory nature of the programme caused a strong reaction among the masses, especially the forced recruitment of young girls and aged women, which contributed to the provocation of riots in the countryside. After the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Russia, the regime had to change its policy on the literacy campaign. Since then, the literacy classes have been organised only for those workers and government employees who are also members of the Communist Party.

EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN EXILE

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets caused mass immigration, particularly to Pakistan. In 1983, over 2.8 million registered refugees were living in the refugee tent villages of Pakistan, of which 75% were women and children. Although women and children outnumber
adult males, the education of girls is a matter of secondary concern to the Pakistani authorities and is questioned by Afghan Muslim fundamentalists. Statistics show the emphasis placed on education for boys. In 1985, there were 96,306 boys and 7318 girls in secondary schools; and 2684 boys and no girls in high schools. An average of 6.6% of the total number of students were girls (see Table 2).  

The Islamisation programme of Pakistan, and the shift of power from liberal to fundamentalist elements within the resistance, created pressure for the replacement of modern standardised schools by medressehs (Quranic schools). While in Islam education for men and women is an obligation; practically, this obligation could be fulfilled through modern schools because there is no place in the medresseh or mosque for women. The medresseh is basically a place where religious leaders and scholars are trained, who are by tradition and practice men.

This situation is not favourable for the improvement of the literacy rate for women in the foreseeable future.

WOMEN'S SOCIAL POSITION

Traditionally, Afghan women are respected as mothers and protected as wives, sisters or members of a family. The veil is an urban phenomenon, worn as an indicator of social status and as a means of protection. The veil had been worn by women of the royal clan, urban elites, the landlord class, and community and religious leaders. However, since the 1950s the veil lost its significance as an indicator of social status due to two factors: firstly, the royal family and high-ranking government officials began not to wear the veil, followed by the intellectuals and educated middle class urban dwellers; and secondly, because of the foundation of industrial and construction centres, immigration from rural to urban areas increased.

These job seekers were accompanied by veiled women. Thus, contrary to the traditional concept, a veiled woman in the city was considered to be an “atrafi” or villager living in the city, and belonged to a family with a low socio-economic standard.

The concept of protection is part of a social defence mechanism which is briefly discussed here.

Afghan society is composed of different ethno-linguistic groups, mainly Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turkmens, Hazaras and Nuristanis. Although these groups have different traditions and customs, they also have many common aspects. One common factor is the division of an ethnic society into sub-groups. An ethnic group is divided firstly
Table 2.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Primary schools</th>
<th>Secondary schools</th>
<th>High schools and religious medresseh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of schools</td>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>No. of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools established by the Pakistan Government for Afghan refugees, NWFP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>57,141</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>5268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools established by resistance organisations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>39,165</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2050</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>96,306</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>7318</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
into clans, and Pashtuns are divided into tribes. A clan or tribe is further divided into various lineages, or extended families. Each lineage is further sub-divided into branches composed of closely-related families. The correct duties and obligations of individuals throughout their lives are largely determined, shaped and protected by lineage membership, which is determined by birth. As an example, the right of ownership of land, livestock herds, wooded areas and grazing pasture is determined by lineage. These rights are the common interests of the members, and in turn, determine who one's enemies are, and with whom one must compete in order to protect common interests.

Women are considered as property to be owned, the honour of whom must be upheld by the family. Any threat to a woman is perceived as an affront not only to family pride but to the entire clan or tribe. Revenge or bada is part of the Pashtun code of honour, and is directly applied to the case of women. For example, if a girl runs away with a man from another family or clan, the girl's family or clan will restore their damaged pride by bada. In this case bada means that the girl's family negotiates with the boy's family about taking two or three girls, without paying bride price, instead of the one who went to them. If the girl goes to another clan or tribe, the process of settlement takes place between the two clans or tribes involved in the case.

Thus, the protection of women as possessions and as part of the family dignity and honour is the obligation of all members of the extended family in the first place and the clan and tribe in the second place. The area within the clan boundary of ownership and influence is considered a safe place for women. The feeling of protection gives freedom of movement to the women to attend freely to their domestic duties as well as duties outside the household. However, in urban areas where various ethno-linguistic groups live together, the feeling of insecurity and alienation makes the wearing of the veil an issue. Therefore, women are obliged to wear a veil while living outside their village or to cover their faces when appearing in front of a stranger.

In reference to Islamic law, it can be argued that there is no direct or clear indication to cover women's faces. Only Bibi Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) covered her face while participating in a war for the cause of Islam. Some Islamic scholars regard the wearing of the veil as an Islamic tradition (Sunat). But in the process of modernisation, not only in Afghanistan but also in other Islamic countries, the participation of women was needed for socio-economic development. The removal of the veil began parallel to efforts made for development and modernisation. As an example, the removal of the veil was implemented in Turkey at the time of
Ataturk; in Egypt during the reign of Malik Farouq; in Iran during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlawi. In Afghanistan under King Amanullah (1919–1929) it came as a part of liberal reforms. In 1927, Queen Soraya, wife of King Amanullah, appeared at a public function without the veil common in Afghanistan, the chadri (all enveloping). Her example was followed by the royal family, teachers, students and high-ranking government officials. As the ground had not been prepared for such a liberal social reform, it caused strong opposition in religious circles. It was used against King Amanullah as an indicator of his hostile attitude towards Islam. After King Amanullah was overthrown and had left the country, women were veiled again and the schools for girls were closed. When King Zaher Shah (1933–1973) rose to the Afghan throne, he had also included women’s emancipation in his social reforms. When his cousin Prince Daud became prime minister, the programme for women’s emancipation was implemented without hesitation and with great success. On 24 August 1959, on the occasion of Afghan Independence Day in Kabul, a number of women including the daughter of the prime minister, the wives and daughters of ministers and high-ranking government officials appeared unveiled in public. Removal of the veil was gradually expanded in a voluntary manner in all girls’ schools, the women’s faculties of Kabul University, and further in provincial centres and towns. It was accepted by the majority of the educated people and became a popular trend within a short period of time. The only reaction observed came from a mullah in October 1959 in the city of Kandahar. Soon the mullah’s revolt was suppressed by government military action.

The first periodical for women, *Irshad-un-Niswan* (“Guidance for Women”), was published in 1921. It was a weekly four-page paper. In the 1950s, the monthly magazine *Mermun* (“The Lady”) was published by the women’s association. In addition, all daily newspapers carried special pages for women.

**WOMEN’S ASSOCIATIONS**

**THE WOMEN’S WELFARE ASSOCIATION**

In the 1920s the *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Naswan* (Women’s Protection Association) was established. The association succeeded in forming branches in some provinces. The purpose of the association was to protect women from injustice and encourage them to demand just and lawful treatment. The idea was developed and extended in 1946.
by the establishment of the Afghan Women’s Welfare Association. This association was administered by the Ministry of Education. As a government association, it succeeded in establishing a school for married women, a nursery, some training courses, such as embroidery, home economics, typing and foreign languages, and literacy classes. However, the association remained non-political, a centre of socialisation for urbanised women. The association failed to take steps outside the elite social classes for the welfare of disadvantaged women in rural areas. Although the association had offices in the provincial centres, these centres were nothing more than pretty buildings without any real function. They ignored women in the countryside and did not take steps to become aware of their problems. Therefore, the need for the establishment of a non-governmental association for the purpose of creating pressure on the authorities to take greater action for the enforcement of women’s legal status was felt. In 1975, the International Women’s Year, a “Coordination Committee” was established to fulfill the objectives of the year: “equality, development and peace”. The members of the Coordination Committee adopted a draft resolution for the establishment of a non-governmental association, which was proposed to President Daud. However, a positive answer was not received until after the death of President Daud during the communist coup of 1978.

After the communist takeover, the association was affiliated with the women’s section of the Communist Party. At the beginning, the association was called the “Mass Women’s Organisation”. After the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Russia the name of the organisation was changed to “Afghan Women’s Democratic Organisation”. The main objectives of the organisation were to provide orientation to Marxist–Leninist ideology, to promote the programmes and policies of the regime, and to recruit and train women for the state secret police (KHAD). A new branch, called the “Russian–Afghan Women’s Friendship Society”, was also included. This new branch gave the Russians a free hand in bringing the activities of the organisation under control. Now the association functions under the control and guidance of Russian experts.

**AFGHAN FAMILY GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION**

The Afghan Family Guidance Association was created in 1968, as a non-governmental voluntary association under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Health. The Afghan Family Guidance Association
took a more positive approach to Afghan women within a limited scope of objectives. The government adopted a policy of monitoring the activities of the association, while giving them some freedom of action in order to attract funds from non-governmental and voluntary organisations, such as the Planned Parenthood Federation, and from foreign governmental agencies such as USAID.

The objectives of the association were: (1) to create awareness among Afghan women of family planning, of the inter-relationship between the number of children and the economy of the family, of education for mothers and children, employment, and about health and nutrition; (2) to inform Afghan women about the means of birth control; (3) to provide the means of birth control and other medical services; (4) to conduct field surveys for ascertaining the number of women who had adopted family planning and popular attitudes towards family planning; and (5) to obtain data on the birth rate and rates of child and maternal mortality.

The association succeeded in establishing medical centres in Kabul and all provincial centres. By 1975 there were eight clinics in Kabul, and 32 clinics had been established in provincial centres and sub-districts. Family counsellors were hired and teams were sent to the villages and towns of the country for the purpose of encouraging and educating women in family planning and family health. A group of volunteers joined and contributed to the efforts of the association.

No real reaction was observed from religious leaders or traditional elements towards the activities of the association. In practical terms, the Family Guidance Association centres were used more for the purpose of health care rather than birth control.

After Daud took power in 1973, aided by communist officers, the association was suspected of being an agency of the CIA disguised by its ostensible purposes. Under the influence of leftists, President Daud took action against the establishment. Two months after the coup of 1973, the general secretary of the association, Dr Maher, along with his deputy, Dr Baraki, were arrested. President Daud's cousin, Nazifa Nawas, was designated general secretary. Mrs Nawas, along with other non-leftist aids, convinced him to reconsider his attitude towards the association as a legitimate welfare organisation without political or underground connections. The former staff of the association were released from arrest. The association was given authority to carry out its normal activities.

After the communist coup of 1978, the regime intended to solicit funds, as was the case in previous regimes, while restricting the activities of the association. The communists argued that the ideal of family planning had been created by the "imperialists" to divert the attention of the masses from the true cause of the poverty and
underdevelopment to an unimportant factor, i.e. the number of children.

They also considered US support of family planning as a cover for the channelling of funds for espionage activities and conspiracies against the regime. The entire staff of the Family Guidance Association was replaced by Communist Party members. Mrs Nawas was arrested along with other members of the royal family. Her deputy, Dr Aziz Saraj, was dismissed from his post. Dr Aisha Amir, member of the Parcham faction of the Communist Party, became the general secretary of the association.

Although the basic idea of family planning was rejected by the Kabul communist regime, and its centres in the countryside were closed because of the war, the regime managed to get funds from USAID and the International Planned Parenthood Federation until the invasion of Afghanistan on 27 December 1979.

CONCLUSION

In 1979, the Russian armed forces occupied Afghanistan and installed a communist regime in Kabul. Since then the forces of occupation and their puppet regime have been confronted with a war of liberation. Therefore, the main concerns of the regime are matters related to the military and security. Under the slogan of freedom and equality, the regime had encouraged women to join the military and security forces. The majority of educated Afghan women oppose the forces of occupation and the communist regime in Kabul. Instead of cooperation, they prefer to take refuge in foreign countries or remain at home, unparticipatory. This situation has caused a sharp decline in the number of women’s welfare and educational institutions. Moreover, to achieve their goals the regime politicised women’s social welfare establishments, which has had a negative effect on the process of women’s emancipation.

On the other hand, the Islamic fundamentalists consider women’s emancipation un-Islamic. They have attempted to channel it parallel to their ideological and political goals and principles. Compared to the liberals and moderates, they are in a stronger position within the resistance. They have already influenced the moderates to be silent on the issue of women. The low number of girls’ schools and the wearing of the veil by the majority of refugee women in Pakistan are indicators of this influence.

The effect of the fundamentalists’ policies will persist in the future of Afghanistan. It is probably true that Afghan women will not be
able to participate as active and equal citizens in the reconstruction and development of the country for a long time to come.

NOTES

5. Information obtained from resistance organisations and also from the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Peshawar, 1985.
Book Reviews


The researcher seeking an up-to-date guide of the condition, demography, and culture of Soviet Muslims at the beginning of the Gorbachev era could do no better than this compilation of Bennigsen and Wimbush. It represents an attempt to bring together in one place all the statistical and ethnographic data available to the student concerning Soviet Muslims. In so doing the authors also point the way towards resolving some of the more disputed issues concerning the field and unambiguously render their considered opinion upon them. Thus the authors state that even non-believers assert their belonging to Islam because they preserve certain traditional allegiances to Islamic practices or outlooks that help structure their political, cultural, and social behaviour. By the same token, they observe that religious fervour cannot be mechanically and quantitatively directly correlated to the number of working mosques and give the example of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR which is a bastion of faith yet lacked any working mosques during 1973–1978. Today as well, the regional and local Soviet press for North Caucasia abounds with denunciations of the spreading religious identification of the masses.

The overarching Islamic identity of Soviet Muslims can exist quite comfortably with an identification as Soviet, Azeri, and even tribal or clannic groups. The authors maintain, rightly I believe, that the crucial indicator of the issue determining Soviet Muslims’ commitment to the USSR is this identity, not socio-economic indicators of progress. While other authors have attacked this point of view, their opinions seem wrong inasmuch as the upheavals in Azerbaijan, Tashkent, Kazakhstan, and elsewhere indicate as well an assertion of primordial Muslim identity even as the Muslim citizens of these republics accept their republican identities as well. People waving banners of Khomeini in Azerbaijan and constant Soviet attacks upon growing identification with Islam and cross-border ideological infiltration of Islam from Iran and Afghanistan demonstrate this fact.

The value of such arguments is not that they are made stridently but that they are based on over 50 years of research and the two authors’ scholarly activity. Indeed, this work can stand as a final monument of Bennigsen’s labours to define the field, determine what may accurately be known about it, and alert western Sovietologists to its growing importance due to its own intrinsic value. The mastery of data, ethnographic, demographic, and statistical is unobtrusive though pervasive. As such it will undoubtedly stand the test of time and even when superseded will remain valuable to students. As the Islamic problem and the national question in general become more and more central to the stability of the regime and the Gorbachev administration in particular, the formulation for understanding them that is laid here will prove of lasting benefit to the student, teacher, and analyst.

Kozlov’s book, on the other hand, is a more complex affair. It is one of the first