Afghanistan: A Brief Reading List
Compiled by Lee Dastur from Assorted Sources
May 2022

First, a disclaimer: when I blithely volunteered to help create a booklist for the Afghanistan project, I had no idea how daunting a task it would be. There is so very much to learn about this ancient and turbulent part of the world. Even though the Afghan Day has been postponed, I am hopeful that this list will help us gain a small level of understanding of our new neighbors.

Articles Online

Ancient Afghanistan was once a wealthy and exotic realm.

Afghanistan is a country made up of many and varied tribes.

Afghanistan has suffered for generation from “unending wars and revolutions,” giving it the nickname of “The Graveyard of Empires.”

This YouTube video is from September 16, 2021. Since then, women have been ordered to be fully covered in public.

Here are some ways that we can help support girls’ education.

NPR presents “Books That Will Help You Understand Afghanistan.”
Though this interview is dated, it still seems sadly pertinent and contains many recommendations for further reading.

Books

The Bookseller of Kabul, by Åsne Seierstad, translated by Ingrid Christophersen
This international bestseller, published 20 years ago, is described by the Washington Post as “an admirable, revealing portrait of daily life in a country that Washington claims to have liberated but does not begin to understand.”

_Lifting the Chaderi: My Life as an Afghan Refugee_, by Anisa Mahmoud Ulrich, edited by Lisa Drittenbas
After fleeing Afghanistan over a treacherous mountain pass, Anisa struggles to adapt to American life and overcome her cultural limitations and anxieties.

_The Sewing Circles of Herat: A Personal Voyage through Afghanistan_, by Christina Lamb
A British journalist describes how many common cope under extremely adverse circumstances.

_The Kite Runner_, by Khaled Hosseini
Set between the 1970s and 2001, when the political climate of the country changed dramatically, this is the sometimes-brutal story of the friendship between a wealthy boy in Kabul and the servant boy in his house.

_My Life with the Taliban_, by Abdul Salam Zaeef
The autobiography of a former senior member of the Taliban, who joined the organization as a youth in order to fight the Soviets. He eventually served time in Guantanamo.

_Descent into Chaos_, by Ahmed Rashid
Rashid, a journalist and correspondent for the Wall Street Journal, is the author of multiple books on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, including _Taliban_.

_Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History_, by Thomas Barfield
This book, which is part of the Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics project, “traces the historic struggles and the changing nature of political authority in this volatile region of the world, from the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth Century to the Taliban resurgence today.”