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Kashmir Under the Influence of the Nadir Shah's Indian Campaign (1738-39) (According to the Persian Manuscript of the 18th c.)

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Abstract: The article explores the impact of the Nadir Shah's Indian campaign on the region of Kashmir in the 18th c., according to the Persian-language manuscript written by Muhammad 'Azam Didamari. The manuscript provides unique insights into how Nadir Shah's actions affected Kashmir, including the appointment of a new subahdar and a rebellion of the local population. Contrary to a popular belief, the author suggests that after the campaign the Mughal Empire retained control over Kashmir, highlighting the complex relations between Iran and the Mughal Empire. The study calls for a reevaluation of historical accounts of Nadir Shah's campaign and emphasizes the need for further research of the role of Kashmir in this significant event. The information presented in the work of Muhammad 'Azam encourages researchers to reconsider the history of Nadir Shah's Indian campaign in order to more accurately determine the boundaries between the Mughal Empire and Iran after this event. The mention of Kashmir in the context of these events adds particular value to the study, since other sources on Nadir Shah and his military campaigns either do not mention Kashmir at all or only briefly touch on the region. In this context, the presence of this plot in the work of Muhammad 'Azam is unique and calls for further research and analysis.

Key words: Kashmir, Nadir Shah, Indian campaign, manuscript, Persian language

The military campaign of Nadir Shah (1736–1747) to India in the 18th c. is one of the most significant events in the history of Persian rule of the territory of modern India. As a rule, the main event of this campaign is considered to be Nadir Shah's stay in Delhi in 1739 and the plunder of that rich, but at that time weakly defended capital of the Mughal Empire. However, the destruction that military campaign affected other regions of the Mughal Empire. Among them is the remote and inaccessible region of Kashmir.

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This study is devoted to the events in Kashmir caused by the Indian campaign of Nadir Shah, as described in the Persian-language manuscript from the mid- 18th c. — “Waqi’at -i Kashmir” (“Events of Kashmir”) written by Muhammad ‘Azam Didamari (d. 1765). The copies of this text are kept in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences under three call numbers (B663, B720 and B2458). Since all three texts are almost identical, for convenience, links to specific sheets will be indicated according to the version B720.

In addition, two historical texts dedicated to the history of Nadir Shah were used for comparative study. They are: “Nadir’s book decorating the world” (Name-yi ‘alamara-yi nadiri) by Muhammad Kazim (finished in early 1750s) and “Nadir’s story” (“Tarikh-i jahangosha-yi nadiri”) Mirza Muhammad Mahdi Khan Astarabadi (finished in 1747)¹.

According to the modern scientific tradition, it is generally accepted that Nadir Shah followed the following route as part of the Indian campaign: Ghazni, Kabul, Peshawar, Lahore, Sirhind, Karnal, Delhi. These settlements are indicated in the works of Muhammad Kazim and Mirza Muhammad Astarabadi. As for Kashmir, Muhammad Kazim has no information about it at all. Mirza Muhammad Astarabadi mentions that Nadir, while being in Lahore, ordered the reinstatement of Fakhr al-Daulah, a former subahdar of Kashmir. This person had been expelled from his province as a result of a rebellion, deprived of his position and lived in poverty in Lahore². Relevant information is reported in studies by Lockhart³ and Sarkar⁴.

For this reason, the information about Kashmir during the Indian campaign of Nadir Shah, contained in the text of the manuscript “Events of Kashmir,” seems unique.

According to the author of “Waqi’at-i Kashmir”, Muhammad ‘Azam, his work is the result of extensive research into the works of Mulla Hussein Qari, Haidar Malik Chadura and the text of Rajatarangini. Started in 1148 LH. (1735), during the reign of Muhammad Shah or Nasser al-Din Abu-l-Fatah Muhammad of the Mughal dynasty (1719–1748), the book covers the

¹ The following studies were used as supporting materials: J. Fraser “The History of Nadir Shah” (1742), L. Lockhart “Nadir Shah” (1938), J. Sarkar “Nadir Shah in India” (1925), R. Mattie “Nadir Shah in Iranian Historiography: Warlord or National Hero?” in the “Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, 1935–2018” (2018).

² KAZIM 1961: 318.

³ LOCKHART 1938: 131.

⁴ SARKAR 1924: 31.

history of Kashmir from ancient times to 1746/1747. The work includes an introduction (a description of Kashmir), three main sections (the history of the Hindu and Muslim kings, as well as the period of Timurid rule) and a conclusion. This manuscript contains a brief account of how Nadir Shah came to power in Iran, a detailed account of his route during the Indian campaign, what his actions were on the territory of the Mughal Empire and to what extent they affected the social political state of Kashmir. The events associated with the Indian campaign of Nadir Shah happened during the lifetime of the author, which makes this part of the “Waki’at-i Kashmir” manuscript a historical source.

The most detailed fragment about Kashmir in the context of Nadir Shah’s Indian campaign can be translated as follows:

آخر سال پنجاه و یکم فخر الدوله که در لاهور بود رقمی از نادر شاه که بلاهور رسیده بود حاصل کرده. قدری از مردم کوهستان را همراه آورده باز کشمیر آمد. اواسط محرم سال هزار و یک صد و پنجاه و دو داخل کشمیر شد و خیلی کر و فر ظاهر زیاده نمود. خواست که سکه و خطبه نادر شاه را جاری سازد. عوام الناس بسیار بغیرت و شورش آمده ممانعت نمودند چون چهل روز بتسلط و تغلب گذرانیده و مردم را بی جهت بسیار رنجانید.

“At the end of the 51st year, Fakhr al-Daulah [a former subahdar, who had been expelled by the local population dissatisfied with his rule], who was in Lahore, received a sign from Nadir Shah, having reached Lahore, and taking with him several mountaineers, in the middle of Muharram 1152 LH he entered Kashmir, where he caused much destruction. He demanded that coins be minted and a khutbah read in honor of Nadir Shah. The common people were very dissatisfied and rebelled because he had spent 40 days in domination and conquest, and easily caused a lot of harm to the people” (B 720 f. 268A).

This fragment is interesting for researchers for several reasons.

Firstly, using the example of remote and inaccessible Kashmir, researchers obtain information about how Nadir Shah built his policy on the territories that did not belong to him: he tried to act not with his own hands. This information generally confirms the main theory about Nadir Shah’s motives for this campaign. According to the established scientific tradition, to finally deal with the «Afghan problem» that arose before Safavid Iran as

early as 1722, Nadir Shah entered into correspondence with the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah. He asked that Afghan fugitives could not find refuge in the territory of the Mughal Empire.

Muhammad Shah not only failed to fulfill his promise to rectify the situation but also stopped the traditional practice of exchanging ambassadors with the Persian court when Nadir ascended the throne. Thereby, he had officially made it clear that he did not recognize him as the legitimate ruler of neighboring state.

The desire to put an end to the Afghan rebels once and for all, as well as to confirm the legitimacy of his status as a monarch, served as the reason for the military campaign against India. But the real reason for Nadir Shah's invasion of India was his need for a new source of income, and the Mughal Empire, weakened by civil strife, became an easy target.

According to the above-mentioned historical sources, Nadir Shah entered Ghazni on June 11, 1738, and captured Kabul on June 29. Having created a reputation as a merciful enemy and a liberal master, he encouraged local governors and subahdars to voluntary submission. Nasir Khan, subahdar of Kabul and Peshawar, which were part of the Mughal Empire, surrendered without resistance, was pardoned and restored as a subahdar of the same provinces. After Nadir Shah crossed the Indus at Attock, the subahdar of Lahore submitted to him without a fight, which is also mentioned by Muhammad 'Azam deputy:

ذکریا خان بہادر صوبہ دار لاہور خلف سیف الدولہ عبدالصمد خان مرحوم
صلاح در مصالحہ مالی دانستہ مبلغی خطیر از خود و مردم شہر و تجار جمع
نمودہ ملازمت شاہ کرد و بقبول خدمت مالی مورد عنایات شاہ شد.

“Zakariyya Khan Bahadur, Subahdar of Lahore, successor of the late Saif al- Daulah 'Abd al-Samad Khan, found it expedient to resolve the issue with the help of money. He collected a large sum from himself, the city residents and merchants as part of a financial reconciliation, provided his services to the Shah and gained his favor” (B 720 f. 270B).

Thus, Nadir Shah did not pursue the goals of conquering the Mughal Empire, spreading his influence as a ruler and seizing new territories in his favor. The widespread perception in the world tradition of Nadir Shah as the great conqueror of India⁵ can be challenged by the fact that conquests as

⁵ MATTHEW 2018: 474.

such did not occur. Most of the settlements on Nadir Shah's path to Delhi surrendered to him without a fight, and the local rulers almost voluntarily went over to his side.

As for the socio-political structure in Kashmir during that period, despite the formal affiliation of Kashmir to the Mughal Empire as a subah, and also despite the fact that subahdars were appointed from the center, in fact, the population of Kashmir often independently decided on the fate of the subahdar. This is evidenced by the fact that, according to the manuscript "Events of Kashmir", the population could expel a subahdar they did not like, or the subahdar could independently decide how to behave with the invaders and, on his own behalf, collect funds from the population and merchants.

This idea is confirmed by the following fragment from the manuscript:

عنایت الله خان را بدستور سابق نظامت بحال داشتند. خاص و عام شهر از کابر و اصاغر اتفاق نموده فخر الدوله را از شهر بر آوردند. مشارالیه در هفت چنار باغواى بعض اشرار نشسته اطراف شهر را آتش کشید. و جمعی را که یافت بقتل رسانید. قریب دو ماه از طرفین استادگی بود. آخر الامر بتنگ آمده راه فرار گرفت و ابوالبرکات خان که در لاهور بود نیابت عنایت الله خان گرفته بکشمیر رسید.

"According to the previous order, Inayatullah Khan remained in his position. Residents of the city, simple and high-ranking, great and ordinary, decided to drive Fakh al-Daulah out of the city. The above-mentioned, who settled in the Haftchenar garden, started a fire in the outskirts of the city, and brutally killed the people he caught. This confrontation lasted for about two months. Finally, he got tired and ran away. Abul Barakat Khan, who was in Lahore, arrived in Kashmir on behalf of Inayatullah Khan." (B 720 f. 268A).

In other words, by the time the subahdar of the Mughal Empire arrived in Kashmir, the population independently relieved him of the need to fight for power with the pro-Iranian subahdar. For the second time people decided to rebel against Fakh al-Daulah, thus demonstrating their independence from the authorities. The motives for the uprising were not determined by the fact to whom the state belonged, since the main thing is the loyalty of the subahdar — the direct representative of the government in this territory.

On February 24, 1739 the Battle of Karnal took place (in the "Events of Kashmir" it is mentioned as the Battle of Panipat). During it Nadir Shah was

finally convinced in the inability of the Mughal army to repel him. Taking advantage of the weakness of the padishah, as well as of civil strife among high-ranking officials, on March 20, 1739 Nadir Shah reached Delhi almost unhindered. He took Muhammad Shah as a hostage and stayed in the Shahjahanabad fortress (in Delhi) for about two months.

The result of the campaign, in addition to enrichment, was the establishment of relations between Iran and the Mughal Empire. Nadir Shah, who arrived to restore order in the border regions of the empire, returned the crown to the rightful ruler Muhammad Shah.⁶

Muhammad 'Azam reports:

بعد مصالحه پادشاه با نادر شاه صوبه کشمیر تعلق پیداشاه ماند.

“After the padishah’s reconciliation with Nadir Shah, the subah of Kashmir remained the property of the padishah” (B 720 f. 268A).

In other words, according to the agreement between the Mughal ruler and Nadir Shah, the latter retained Peshawar and Kabul, thus the rights to Hind, Sindh and Kashmir were retained by the Mughal Empire.

This information contradicts the generally accepted view that Muhammad Shah gave Nadir Shah the Mughal provinces west of the Indus River, including Kashmir and Sindh.⁷

Thus, based on the study of the manuscript “Waki’at-i Kashmir” by Muhammad ‘Azam Didamari, it can be argued that the Kashmir region was affected by the consequences of Nadir Shah’s Indian campaign. Even though Nadir Shah himself did not invade these territories, military actions did take place there on his behalf, which had a serious impact on the local population and led to its decline.

The information presented in the work by Muhammad ‘Azam encourages researchers to reconsider the history of Nadir Shah’s Indian campaign in order to more accurately determine the boundaries between the Mughal Empire and Iran after this event. The mentioning of Kashmir in the context of these events adds particular value to the study, since other sources on Nadir Shah and his military campaigns either do not mention Kashmir at all, or only briefly touch on the region. In this context, the presence of this plot in the work by Muhammad ‘Azam is unique and calls for further research and analysis.

⁶ LOCKHART 1938: 152.

⁷ LOCKHART 1938: 153.

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