

Garhi Kapūra Inscription of the Time of Aurangzeb ‘Ālamgīr

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The massive tribal movement from Afghānistān into the valley of Peshāwar and adjacent hills towards the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, initiated first by the Yūsufzais and then by the Ghoria Khels, resulted in the complete eviction of the earlier populations such as the Shalmānis and the more populous Dilazāks. The victory gave a tremendous psychological boost to the invaders whose turbulence soon became a source of trouble for the Mughal emperors of India. Fighting in the fastnesses of their country, which afforded the best of natural defences, they resisted any attempts to bring them into subjugation. Their attitude towards the Mughals was based upon enmity since the time of Mirza Ulugh Beg, the ruler of Kabul towards the end of the fifteenth century, who not only murdered their leaders but also took active steps to push them out of Afghānistān. The Mughal emperors of India made several attempts to subdue them; sometimes they won but at other occasions they miserably failed.

In order to keep the northwestern passes open and the valleys at their foot safe, the government of Aurangzeb ‘Ālamgīr (1658-1707) tried to win over these hillmen by payments of money. But even these political briberies were not always effective in securing obedience. Troubles began early in AD 1667, when Yūsufzais, under their leader Bhāku, rose in arms and challenged the Mughal might. The Ma’āsir-i ‘Ālamgīri (see Sarkar 1947: 40-41) gives the following account of this event.

“When the Emperor (Aurangzeb) learnt of the rising of the Yūsufzais Afghāns, their exalting as their commander a silly beggar under the name of Muḥammad Shāh, the disturbance caused by the exertions of that deceitful imposter the wicked Mullā Chālāk, and the leadership of the black faced Bhāgu (Bhāku), he sent orders to Kāmil Khān, the faujdār of Attock, to gather together the faujdārs and jagīrdārs of the environs of the river Nīlāb (i.e. Indus) and engaged in crushing the rebels as far as possible”.

Order was sent to Amīr Khān, *Ṣubahdār* of Kabul, to depute Shamshīr Khān (Tarīn), with five thousand men to put them down. Kāmil Khān in his eagerness, did not wait for the arrival of Shamshīr Khān, but fought a severe engagement with the enemy, overpowered them, and recovered the imperial outposts. On Thursday, the 2nd May /18th Zil-Qaad. Shamshīr Khān, after crossing the river Nīlāb, came towards Attock, and entered the enemy territory on the other side of the river opposite the Yūsufzais country. The enemy went away to the hills and waited for an opportunity.

On that day, Muḥammad Āmin Khān Mīr Bakhshi, with Āmir Khān, Qubād Khān and other commanders, and 9000 troops in all, was sent from the court to punish these rebels. Before the arrival of this Khān, Shamshīr had repeatedly fought great battles and engagements. Three hundred of the leading maliks of the tribes were taken prisoner. On hearing of it the emperor honoured Shamshīr Khān and Kāmil Khān with imperial favours.

The *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* (Farooqi 1985: 192-93), another contemporary source, puts it this way:

“When news of the insurgency of Yūsufzai Afghāns reached the Emperor, he issued orders (*farmān*) to Mīr (correctly Amīr) Khān, the *Ṣubahdār* of Kābul, Kāmil Khān, the *ḥaujḍār* of Attock, and *ḥaujḍārs* of the environs, for the suppression of these rebels. Kāmil Khān did not wait for the supporting force of the *Ṣubahdār* (of Kābul) and taking the *ḥaujḍārs* of the environs with him, he engaged the rebels and fought severe battles against them in which thousands of the Afghāns were killed and a number of the royal footmen and cavalry also lost their lives. About fifty thousand Afghān footmen and cavalry had gathered together. But Kāmil Khān continued to fight them. Meanwhile Shamsḥīr Khān (Tarīn), a companion of the *Ṣubahdār* Mīr (Amīr) Khān, arrived in time with a cavalry force of four to five thousand to support him. The royal army put the insurgency down with a heavy hand. Two thousand and four hundred heads of the dead Afghāns were sent to the court. The King ordered to make a tower of them. In spite of this, the ignorant Afghāns did not stop their mischiefs and continued highway robbery and harassing the people. When their rebellious activities crossed all limits, he despatched Muḥammad Āmin Khān, the *Ṣubahdār* of Lahore, to suppress the Afghāns.”

We have given above the accounts of the Afghān insurgency during the early period of the reign of Aurangzeb from two primary sources. In spite of minor divergences, the pith of the story remains the same: Kāmil Khān, having been ordered by Aurangzeb, took the initiative, and Shamsḥīr Khān led the full

thrust against the enemy and completed the job before the arrival of Āmin Khān.

Having beaten the enemy Shamsḥīr Khān evidently stayed on in the heart of the Mandaṇr country at a place near the present village known as Gaṛḥi Kapūra till the year AH 1080/ AD 1669 to lay the foundation of a fort and carry out other minor works. Apparently this was the only building in the entire stretch of the land around in which burnt bricks were used as building material.

After the death of Aurangzeb (AD 1707), the Mughal empire plunged into disorder on account of a terrible war of succession. Troops stationed in the fort erected by Shamsḥīr Khān were apparently withdrawn to take part in more important matters. This provided an opportunity to the Afghāns who immediately stepped in and demolished the fort and other buildings taking away building materials to be used in their own houses. Only the mosque was spared, but this has also been completely rebuilt recently. In the ruins of this fort was found an inscribed tablet by Captain Shortt, after the British occupation of the Peshawar valley. This tablet was sent to the Lahore Museum where it is on display in the Muslim gallery.

This white marble tablet, containing a Persian inscription in Nasta‘līq in seven lines, measures 49x39 cm; its thickness varies from 8 to 10 cm. The inscribed area marked out by a grooved line measures 43x33 cm. The inscription is slightly damaged at some points particularly in the lower left half where tiny little chips have come off, but the words can easily be restored. In line 1 the last two words are uncertain; the word *Ilāhi* (اللهی) is written as *Ālhi* (آلی). On the whole, the inscription is

fairly well preserved and neatly carved. It reads (English translation):

1. With the name of Allāh, the most beneficent and merciful
2. In the prosperous reign of the honoured Aurangzeb, the Bādshāh,
3. 'Ālamgīr, in the 12th exalted year of succession, corresponding to the year 1080 (AD 1670),
4. Hijri, the servant, appointed in the job, Shamshīr Khān Tarīn,
- 5-6. With the favour of God and royal prosperity (auspiciousness), brought the country of the Mandanr into the possession of the guardians of the powerful state,
7. (and) built this fort, building and a well.

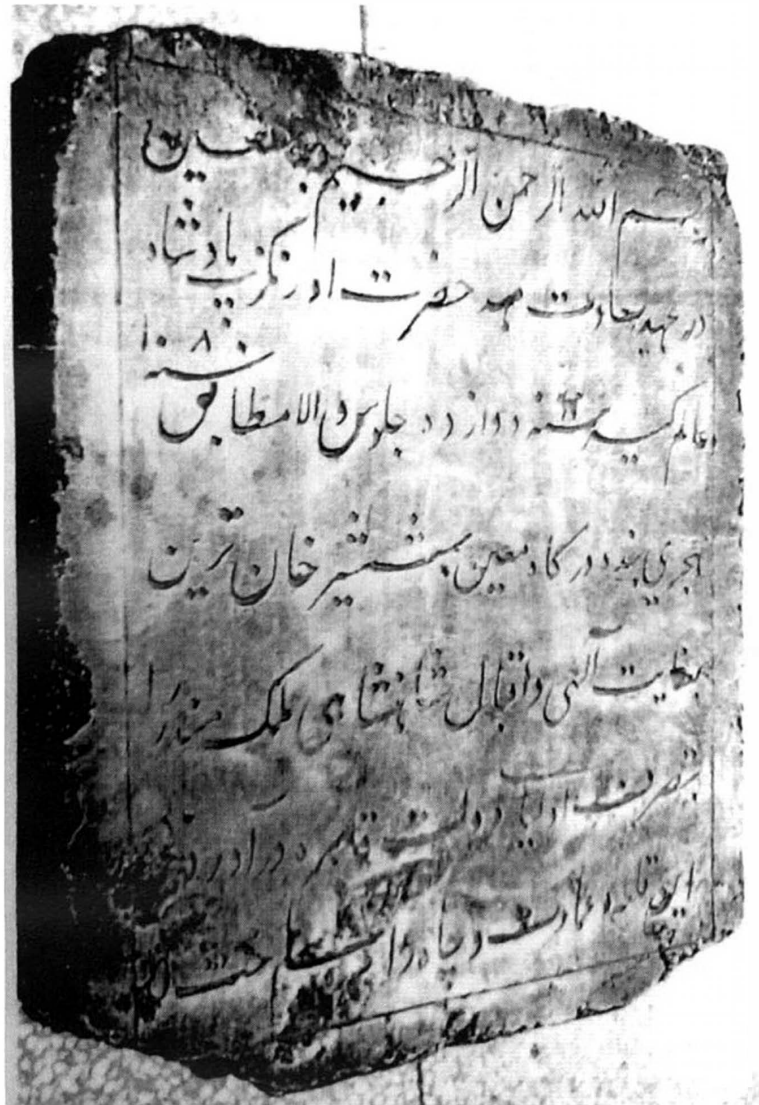
The actual text is as follows:

- ۱۔ بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم۔۔ تعیین [؟]
- ۲۔ در عہد سعادت بہ حضرت اورنگزیب پادشاہ
- ۳۔ عالم گیر سنہ ۱۲ دوازدہ جلوس والا مطابق سنہ ۱۰۸۰ء
- ۴۔ ہجری بندہ درگاہ معین شمشیر خان ترین
- ۵۔ بغایت آہلی و اقبال شاہشاہی ملک مندن را
- ۶۔ بتصرف اولیائے دولت قاہرہ در آورده
- ۷۔ این قلعہ و عمارت و چاہ را ساخت کرد

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