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Mughal governance in Kashmir: Subedars of Kashmir during Shahjahan's rule

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Abstract

After the annexation of Kashmir into the fold of the Mughal empire in 1586, it became a prized possession for the Mughal rulers, who showed lavish care for it. The Mughal emperors frequently visited the valley. Mughal Kashmir was ruled by different governors who were appointed by the Mughal king. The *subedar*, or *nazim*, was generally the head of provincial administration under the Mughals. The *suba* of Kashmir was placed under the control of a subedar. He was answerable to the center for any lapse in administration. He could hold his office as long as he enjoyed the confidence of his ruler or master. The purpose of this paper is to explore the subedars of Kashmir who governed Kashmir during Shah Jahan's tenure. Many subedars were appointed during the rule of Shah Jahan, such as Zafar Khan, Ali Mardan Khan, and Shah Quli Khan.

Keywords: *Subedar*, Kashmir, Mughals, Shah Jahan

Introduction

In 1586, Kashmir was incorporated into the Mughal Empire. Though it remained a part of the province of Kabul for some time ^[1], Kashmir became an independent province under Jahangir ^[2]. Jahangir was succeeded by his son Shah Jahan, who ruled from 1627 until 1658. Attracted by its magnificent beauty and pleasure-giving qualities, Mughal rulers visited this country with small intervals: Akbar three times, Jahangir seven times, Shahjahan three times, and Aurangzeb twice ^[3]. Shahjahan, the second Mughal emperor, was more concerned with the wellbeing of Kashmir than his father. Some of his actions contributed to the true happiness and well-being of the masses. He eliminated a number of costly levies and cesses known as *rasum* or *bidats* ^[4]. As a magnificent builder, he left his mark in the numerous gardens, mosques, roads or routes, and *serais* that were constructed or maintained in Kashmir during his reign ^[5]. Tract are sinusitis, pharyngitis, laryngitis, tonsillitis & common the *subedar or nazim* ^[6] was generally the head of provincial administration under the Mughals. The *suba* of Kashmir was placed under the control of a subedar appointed by the Emperor. He was answerable to the centre for any lapse in administration. He could hold his office as long as he enjoyed the confidence of his ruler or master. There were no hard and fast rules for their appointments, reappointments, removal, and promotion or transfer. Shahjahan appointed ten governors altogether of whom two, namely, Zafar Khan and Ali Mardan Khan were reappointed. For instance, Zafar Khan Ahsan, after the death of his father Abul Hasan, was appointed the subedar of Kashmir in 1633 ^[7] and in 1639 he was removed from that office ^[8] to he again in 1642, he was appointed as subedar replacing Tarbiyat Khan ^[9]. In 1639, the *subedari* of Kashmir was given to Ali Mardan Khan; in 1640, he was recalled from Kashmir ^[10]; but in 1650, he was again appointed as a subedar of Kashmir and this time he held the post for seven years ^[11]. Itiqad Khan, who had been appointed by Jahangir in 1622, continued in office till 1632 ^[12].

Some of the *Subedars* remained in their post for one or two years, while some of them enjoyed his office for more than seven years. For example, the subedars like Khwaja Abul Hasan ^[13], Shah Quli Khan ^[14] and Prince Murad.

Baksh ^[15] remained in his office only for one year; Tarbiyat Khan ^[16] and Lashkar Khan ^[17] remained in their post for two years and Husain Beg Khan ^[18] for one and half years. There are few subedars who enjoyed their administrative position for more than seven years, like Ali Mardan Khan was subedar of Kashmir for eight years (one year in his first term, and seven years in the second) ^[19] and Zafar Khan remained in his post for eleven years (Seven years for the first time and four years for the second) ^[20].

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Itiqad Khan, who was appointed in 1622 and retained his office till 1632 (for ten years) ^[21]. The subedars, as an administrative as well as executive head, looked after all branches of revenue, police, military affairs, judiciary and general administration ^[22]. He maintained peace within his province looked after the welfare of the people, suppressed the revolts, adjudicated criminal cases, constructed roads, inns and other public utility works, extracted tributes from feudatory chiefs whose territories were within his province and collected revenue from other refracting zamindars and other taxes. The subedars used to welcome and receive the emperor and the imperial officials at the outskirts of the subah and at the time of departure accompanied him to give him a suitable send off ^[23]. In order to meet the requirements of the emperor's comfort during the travel, the roads, routes or passes and inns and khanqah were maintained and constructed ^[24]. Feasts, festivities, illuminations and jashns were also arranged by the subedars ^[25].

In the time of natural calamities, the relief measures were launched under the supervision of subedars. During Shahjahan's reign, a heavy flood damaged the entire fields of rice, as a result, the entire crop was destroyed and thousands of people left Kashmir ^[26]. Large numbers of amounts were delivered by the emperor for the relief measures to the subedars ^[27].

The following is an account of the governors of Kashmir during the reign of Shahjahan with short descriptions of the regime of each. As already mentioned, the number of governors actually appointed by Shahjahan, was ten. Itiqad Khan ^[28], who had been appointed by Jahangir in 1622 and continued in office till 1632, his high-handedness and oppressive rule, brought about his removal. Khwaja Abul Hasan Turbati ^[29] was appointed subedar of Kashmir in 1632 and succeeded Itiqad Khan. His son Zafar Khan Ahsan acted as his naib, because he himself was too old and infirm. At the death of his father, Zafar Khan ^[30] was confirmed as subedar of Kashmir with a rank of 3,000 zat and 2,000 sawar.

Zafar Khan's original name was Ahsanullah Khan Ahsan ^[31]. Zafar Khan was the title conferred on him by Jahangir ^[32]. In the 5th year (1632) of Shahjahan's reign, he acted as Naib-i-Suba of Kashmir. When his father's death, he was confirmed as the subedar of Kashmir with a rank of 3,000/2,000 granted a standard and a drum and he enjoyed his administrative position for a total of eleven years. On the emperor's visit to Kashmir, he went to receive him at Bimber ^[33]. Zafar Khan is chiefly remembered for the removal of hardships which Itiqad Khan had imposed upon the people of Kashmir and which which Itiqad Khan had imposed upon the people of Kashmir and which were brought to the notice of Shahjahan by him. To this effect, Zafar Khan, therefore, obtained a *farman* ^[34] from Shahjahan which was engraved on a stone-slab, which is in Persian and put into the masonry of the southern gate of Jami Masjid in Srinagar and is there still ^[35]. The imperial *farman* proclaimed that the autocratic and oppressive rule of Itiqad Khan had ceased, and the emperor demanded implicit and ungrudging obedience of all government officials to the new regulations.

In 1635-36, during the regime of Zafar Khan, Srinagar became the scene of a violent conflict between the Shias and Sunnis. A certain incident led to the flare-up. A group of vagabonds of both the sections were eating mulberries at Maisuma ^[36] when a quarrel broke out amongst them and

some of the Shias were accused of using indecent words about the Prophet and the first three Caliphs. In a short-while the entire city was engulfed in the riots with the Sunnis demanding suitable punishment for the Shias. Zafar Khan, the subedar did not take any prompt action, and the Sunnis led by Khwaja Khawand Mahmud, then head of the Naqashbandi Muslims in Kashmir, set fire to Shia dwellings. However, Zafar Khan was able to restore tranquility and he awaited the imperial orders. Khwaja Khawand Mahmud was summoned to the court and was not allowed to return to Kashmir ^[37].

In the 10th year (1637) of Shahjahan's reign, Zafar Khan was ordered to re-conquer the little treat Tibet. (Baltistan) He captured the zamindar of the country ^[38]. Its brief detail is this. During the early years of the reign of Jahangir, Abdal, son of Ali Rai, offered asylum to Chak pretenders to the throne of Kashmir, and caused trouble in Kashmir. Jahangir sent Hashim Khan ^[39], subedar of Kashmir, to invade Baltistan, but he met with failure ^[40]. Abdal used Habib Chak and Ahmad Chak, two Chak refugee princes, as allies against the Mughals in Kashmir. The growing power of Abdal Khan and his hostility towards the Mughals was a sufficient cause for the Mughal intervention in this region. In September 1637, Shahjahan directed Zafar Khan to march against Abdal Khan at the head of 8000 soldiers ^[41]. The expedition culminated in success ^[42]. Abdal Khan used for peace and surrendered his main fort and got the *khutba* recited in the name of Shahjahan and paid one million rupees as indemnity ^[43]. Zafar Khan brought Abdal Khan along with his family to Kashmir ^[44] and both Habib Chak captured and brought to Kashmir. Since the winter season was approaching and there was no way to return, Zafar Khan had no alternative but to leave for Kashmir as soon as possible. The charge of the territory was made over to Muhammad Murad, the wakil of Abdal Khan. Shahjahan did not approve of the terms of agreement, and Zafar Khan, on his arrival to Srinagar, was summoned to the court ^[45].

Zafar Khan laid out several gardens in Kashmir, the better-known Zafar Khan laid out several gardens in Kashmir, the better-known being *Bagh-i-Zafar Khan*. He laid the foundation of a large and graceful being *Bagh-i-Zafar Khan*. He laid the foundation of a large and graceful garden on the bank of the Dal Lake, in 1635-36. He offered this garden as a *Peshkash* to Shahjahan during the latter's visit to the garden. It was named *Bagh-i-Tulani*, on account of its vastness ^[46]. *Bagh-i-Zafarabad*, *Bagh-i-Gulshan*, *Bagh-i-Inayat* and *Bagh-i-Hasanabad* were also laid out by Zafar Khan during the tenure of his subedari ^[47] and he planted varieties of new fruits and flowers (like *gul zanbaq* (champa), *gul-gulab*, etc.) in Kashmir. The beautiful country of Kashmir is also grateful to him for having improved the quality and taste of the cherry, plum, peach and kind of grapes by introducing grafts and saplings from Persia and Kabul ^[48]. He built *barahdari kadal* (bridge), and the serai at Rajouri was also built by him and he was also in charge of Noushahra serai, which was transferred to Ali Mardan Khan, in 1641-42 ^[49]. In the 12th year (1638-39) of Shahjahan's reign, he was removed from the subedari of Kashmir, and Kashmir was assigned to Ali Mardan Khan ^[50]. He was son of Ganj Ali Khan an old servant of Shah Abbas I of Persia. After the death of his father, he was given the title of Baba-Sani and appointed Persian subedar of Qandahar. After the death of Shah Abbas II, Shah Safi did not favour the nobles of Shah Abbas. Ali Mardan Khan

approached Shahjahan and surrendered the fort to him. He came to Lahore where Shahjahan offered him office with a *panj hajari zat-u-sawar* (5000/5000). He also received a flag and a drum on this occasion. In due course of time, his rank was increased to 6, 000/6, 000^[51]. In 1639, as a token of reward, Kashmir was assigned to him^[52], with his rank increased to 7,000/7,000 Punjab was also assigned to him^[53]. In 1640, he was transferred from Kashmir; and Shah Quli Khan, appointed the subedar of Kashmir^[54].

Shah Quli Khan hailed from Balkh. He came to India during Shahjahan's reign and was made the subedar of Kashmir in 1640. He led a campaign against the refractory zamindars of Poonch. On his successful military campaign against them, Shahjahan presented him a dress of honour and enhanced his rank to 3,000/2,000. He also received as presents a sword with ornamented accoutrements, and fifty thousand rupees in cash^[55]. He remained in his post only for one year, and the subedari of Kashmir was then assigned to Tarbiyat Khan^[56].

Tarbiyat Khan was appointed the subedar of Kashmir for two years (1640-42)^[57]. His full name was Tarbiyat Khan Fakhruddin Ahmad Bakhshi. He came from Turan to India during the reign of Jahangir who gave him a mansab. Shahjahan granted him the title of Tarbiyat Khan and sent him as an ambassador to Turan. On his return, he presented before the Emperor forty five horses and a like number of male and female camels, and other articles. Thereupon, his rank was raised to 2, 500/1, 500^[58]. It was during his governorship that the valley registered unprecedented floods followed by a famine in 1641 that rendered the villages desolate. It was caused by heavy and continuous rainfall which destroyed the shali crop. The scarcity of foodstuffs became so acute that over 30,000 people migrated to Lahore. In utter distress they presented themselves before Shahjahan and appealed for relief. Their wretched condition touched him so much that he gave them a lakh of rupees in cash and also ordered ten kitchens to be opened to provide free cooked food for them as long as they remained in Lahore. He also sent thirty thousand rupees to Tarbiyat Khan to be distributed among the destitute in Srinagar and also ordered that five centres should be opened in the valley to provide free food for the needy. But Tarbiyat Khan failed to cope with the situation^[59]. He is said to have not taken appropriate measures to help the famine-affected people for which he was removed from Kashmir and Zafar Khan was again appointed the subedar of Kashmir in 1642^[60].

The emperor provided an additional sum of 20,000 rupees for relief work to Zafar Khan, who dealt with the crisis satisfactorily. For his extra-ordinary service, his rank was raised by 1,000 sawar so that he ultimately held the rank of 3, 000/ 1,500^[61]. During the second term of his governorship he remained in his post for four years^[62].

Zafar Khan was replaced by Shahjahan's younger son Prince Murad Bakhsh. It is also peculiar to note that subedari of Kashmir was never assigned to any prince except Murad, but he too was removed within one year^[63], Murad Bakhsh was appointed the subedar of Kashmir for only one year (1647-48)^[64]. Accustomed to leading a life of luxury, the prince neglected the administration of the land and indulged in the pleasures of life. He was betrothed to the youngest daughter of zamindar of Shahabad and taking undue

advantage of their relationship with the prince, they ravaged the land imposing exactions on the peasants. When the news of the sad condition of the people under Murad Bakhsh reached the emperor he recalled him and appointed Husain Beg Khan in his place^[65].

Husain Beg Khan^[66] was the son-in-law of was appointed the Master of the Horse by appointed the subedar of Kashmir, with the on this post from 1648 to 1650 (only for one was raised to 1,500/1000, and given an elephant and a flag.

Ali Mardan Khan was again appointed as 1650-51 and this time he held the post for seven years (1650-57). It was here that he ultimately died though he was buried in Lahore, Shahjahan called him *yar-i-wafadar* (faithful friend)^[67]. During his governorship, a splendid garden near Noushahra was laid out by him. It had many terraces. Tanks and fountains were formed in each terrace^[68]. A canal was brought from Lar to irrigate the garden^[69]. Another garden named *Bagh-i-Aliabad*^[70] was founded by him buildings, strong walls, a large canal and spacious trunks, cascades and attractive fountains^[71]. Many kinds of trees like *chinar*, *safdar*s and fruit trees were planted in the garden^[72]. The Mughal route (it runs over the Pir Panjal Pass, via Hastivanj) was frequently used by the Mughal monarch^[73], when they visited Kashmir. Most part of the route was route was hilly^[74]. Ali Mardan Khan made further improvements upon it during his governorship of Kashmir. He also built rest houses on it^[75]. The Serai at Aliabad was built by him^[76]. Pandit Mahadev was the secretary employed by Ali Mardan Khan during his second tenure of office^[77]. In 1657, subedari of Kashmir was assigned to Lashkar Khan^[78].

Lashkar Kha's personal name was Yadgar Beig. In 1657 Shahjahan made him the subedar of Kashmir, with his rank enhanced to 2,500/ 2, 000^[79]. He was the last subedar under Shahjahan, and remained the subedar of Kashmir till 1659 during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign with an increase of 500/500 in his rank, which was enhanced to 3,000/2500^[80]. During his term, the country, however, enjoyed such a spell of prosperity that a bag of Shali (unhusked rice) could be had for a fowl^[81]. During his governorship, a splendid garden was founded by him on the bank of Dal Lake near Phak, with cascades and attractive fountains, which became a centre of picnic spots^[82].

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 41. Lahori, Badshahnama, I, Part-II, pp. 281-86; Amal-i-saleh, II, pp. 253-62
 42. Saksena, op. cit., pp. 113-14
 43. Lahori, Badshahnama, I, Part-II, pp. 284-5; Amal-i-saleh, II, p. 261; Qazwini, Badshahnama, III, f. 415; Saksena, op. cit., p.114
 44. Ibid., pp. 285-86; Ibid, p.262
 45. Ibid., Muntakhabu-Lubab, vol. I, Part-II, pp. 546-47; Elliot and Dowson, op. cit., VII, p. 62; While Zafar Khan was coming back, he arrested all of them and brought them to Kashmir: Qazwini, Badshahnama, III, f.416
 46. Lahori, Badshahnama, I, Part-II, p.28.
 47. Hasan, Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, pp.298-99.
 48. Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 103b; Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Urdu trasi. p. 287; Mukammal-Tarikh-i-Kashmir, II, pp.542-43.
 49. Hasan, Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, p. 315; Amal-i-saleh, II, p. 14; Lahori, Badshahnama, I, Part-II, pp. 18-20, II, Part-I, p. 212, II, Part-II, p.469.
 50. Amal-i-saleh, II, pp. 262, 298; Dasturul-Amali-Badshahnama, II, Part-I, p. 125; Also see, Maasir-ul-Umara, p.1016.
 51. Amal-i-saleh, II, pp. 289, 297-298; Lahori, Badshahnama, II, Part-I, pp. 125, 141, 162-163, 167; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104a; Also see, Maasir-ul-Umara, H. Beveridge, I, pp. 186-87
 52. Amal-i-saleh, II, p. 298; Dasturul-Amali-Shahjahani, ff. 180-3; Lahori, Badshahnama, II, Part-I, p. 125; Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527 /48, pp. 130-31
 53. Lahori, Badshahnama, II, Part-I, p. 163; Maasir-ul-Umara, H. Beveridge, I, p. 188.
 54. Ibid., II, Part-1, pp. 222-23.
 55. Ibid., II, Part-I, pp. 223, 225, II, Part-II, p. 724; Amal-iSaleh, II, pp. 337-38; Maasir- ul-Umara, H. Beveridge, II, pp. 777
 56. Ibid., II, Part-I, pp. 223, 225; Amal-iSaleh, II, p. 3
 57. Ibid., II, Part-I, pp. 225, 282; While the authors of Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 149ab and Mukammal-Tarikh-i-Kashmir, II, p. 550 have mentioned the date of his appointment, 1646-67
 58. Ibid., p. 225; Amal-iSaleh, II, p. 338; Maasir-ul-Umara, I, Part-II, pp. 486-88.
 59. Ibid., pp. 282-83, 225; Ibid, II, p. 360; Ibid, p. 488.
 60. Ibid., pp. 282-83; Ibid, II, pp. 360-61; Ibid, p. 488; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i- Kashmir, f. 104a.
 61. Ibid, pp. 282-83; Ibid, II, pp. 360-61; Maasir-ul-Umara, H. Beveridge, II, p.1017
 62. Ibid., pp. 283, 309, 419, II, Part-II, p. 469; Muhammad Sadiq Khan, Tarikh-i- Shahjahani, Rotograph No. 39, f. 149a; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104a; Mukammal-Tarikh-i-Kashmir, II, p. 548; Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 149ab.
 63. Waris, Badshahnama, I, f. 6; Muhammad Sadiq Khan, Tarikh-i-Shahjahani, Rotograph No. 39, f. 149a; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104a
 64. Waris, Badshahnama, I, ff. 6, 36; Muhammad Sadiq Khan, Tarikh-i-Shahjahani, Rotograph No. 39, f. 149a; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104a; While the authors of Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 149ab and Mukammal-Tarikh-i-Kashmir, II, p. 547 have mentioned the date of his appointment, 1640-41.
 65. Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 149ab; Mukammal-Tarikh-i- Kashmir, II, p. 547; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f.104a.
 66. Waris, Badshahnama, I, ff. 29, 36; Maasir-ul-Umara, I, Part-II, pp. 591-93; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104a
 67. Waris, Badshahnama, I-II, ff. 90, 131, 144, 209, 278, 292, 321, Amal-i-Saleh, III, p. 246; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104b; Maasir-ul-Umara, H. Beveridge, I, p. 192; Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527 / 48, p. 130-31
 68. Hasan, Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, p. 299; Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527/48, p. 130-31
 69. Ibid., pp. 146, 261.
 70. Ibid, p. 300.
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 72. Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527 / 48, p. 130-31
 73. Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, 2 vols. Nawal Kishore's edition, Lucknow, 1879-80, vol. II, p. 169; Tuzuk, p. 316; Lahori, Badshahnama, I, Part-II, pp. 15-16; Francois Bernier. Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668, trans, on the basis of Irving Brock's version by A. Constable, with notes, 2nd edition revised by V.A. Smith, Delhi, Reprinted in LPP; c2005. p. 407-409.
 74. Muhammad Qasim Khan was ordered to level and widen the route, in 1589. After that it was made passable for pack loads, ponies and mules and elephants, but because of its high altitude it remained closed during the winter months: Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, ed. Agha Ahmad Ali and Maulavi Abdur

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75. Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527 / 48, p. 130-31.
 76. Ibid.
 77. Ibid. p. 130-32.
 78. Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104b.
 79. Amal-i-Saleh, III, p. 247; Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527 / pp. 130-32; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f. 104b; Mukammal-Tarikh-Kashmir, II, p. 554; Maasir-ul-Umara, III, p. 168-71.
 80. Alamgirnama, p. 195; Narain Koul Ajiz, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, f.104b; Mukammal Tarikh-i-Kashmir, II, p. 554.
 81. Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Abdus Salam collection, 527 / 48, pp. 130-32; Mukammal- Tarikh-i-Kashmir, II, p.554.
 82. Ibid.