

**TRAVELS IN LADAKH 1820–21:
THE ACCOUNT OF MOORCROFT'S
PERSIAN *MUNSHI*, HAJJI SAYYID
'ALI, OF HIS TRAVELS
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Mr Simon Digby, a scholar of Persian and Arabic resident in Jersey, spoke to the Society on 3 June 1997.

Late 18th- and early 19th-century materials in Persian about aspects of South Asian and Central Asian history have often survived from that time to the present day, lying unnoticed on the shelves of the libraries of the British nobility and gentry. This seems to have been the case with the unrecorded narrative of travel here examined.

The contents and order of the text

The manuscript is evidently not an autograph, as is apparent from miscopyings and misunderstandings of the author's vocabulary. It was evidently copied from loose 'signatures' or 'gatherings' of paper, each internally complete and in order, but presented to the copyist with the gatherings out of sequence. This incorrect order was followed by the copyist without question. The manuscript begins with an itemised account of the revenues of Qandahar (folios 1A to 17A). This was evidently compiled by the same author, before he began a narrative journal of his travels. The opening part of the narrative occupies folios 73–88 of the copyist's transcript. The continuation of the narrative to its close is found on folios 17B–70A of the transcript. The author's marginal annotations, which must have been intended to be inserted in a more polished version of the text, are neatly transcribed on the margins beside the places in the text where they were intended to be inserted, the copyist in this exactly following the author's autograph jottings.

The author's incipit is found on folio 70. It is followed by a recital of stages across Afghanistan with some notices of contemporary events there. This reflects an earlier pilgrimage to Mashhad, probably combined with an undertaking to report geographical and political information to the Agents of the East India Company. After a further account of current Afghan politics and list of the stages back from Kabul, the narrative of the author's travels with Moorcroft and 'Izzatullah begins with his meeting them at Lahore on 18 February 1820. The close of the present manuscript

records the arrival and stay of the party in Kullu. The narrative resumes with their departure from Kullu and continues with their journey via Spiti to Ladakh, followed by the day-to-day account of the residence of the party in Ladakh, with descriptions of the people and their customs. Later, the author left Moorcroft's party in November 1821 and travelled separately across Ladakh, down the Zoji-La pass and on through the Vale of Kashmir, and across the Pir Panchal range to the Panjab and Lahore.

Indications of the history of the manuscript

The text is written upon paper watermarked 'R. Barnard 1817'. The endpapers are watermarked 'Stacey Wise and Co 1821' with the bale-mark of the Honourable East India Company, attached to a European-style binding of boards with marbled paper and leather spine, almost certainly laid on in Calcutta or Bombay.

This suggests that the transcript was made or completed in Lahore or Ludhiana for immediate dispatch to the English authorities in the Presidency towns.¹ The date of the watermark on this English paper suggests that it may have come from the stock that Moorcroft's party had carried with them, amid their enormous pile of luggage, from the outset of their journey. In this case the paper must then have been carried down from Ladakh amid the baggage of the author. The failure to put the text into correct order suggests that the transcript was made in haste.

The endpapers bear a note in the hand of the Hon. Mounstuart Elphinstone as well as the label of his family library. Elphinstone was probably the original recipient of the present manuscript, which is a transcript. This evidence suggests that the transcript was made, probably at the orders of the agent of the East India Company at Ludhiana, Lieutenant William Murray, for dispatch to Elphinstone in Bombay, who must have had it bound not long after receiving it. After his mission to Peshawur in 1809 and the publication of his magisterial *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* in 1815, Elphinstone was at this time Governor of Bombay.² He had a good reading knowledge of Persian and was the East India Company's main expert on the affairs of countries to the northwest of India. He would have been an obvious man to give immediate and weighty advice.

Elphinstone made an apparently perfunctory examination of the manuscript, and wrote in his scrawling hand an account of its contents, of scant accuracy:

1. Account of the Revenues of Candahar.
2. Izzat Oollah's Narrative of transactions in Ladak (*Not his Journey in Tartary as I had at first supposed*).

The reference is to the earlier journal of 'Izzatullah's travels at Moorcroft's behest in Central Asia in 1812-13.

Three *munshis* or Persian secretaries accompanied William Moorcroft on portions of his Himalayan and northwestern travels, and their accounts are easily confused. The first of these is Mir 'Izzatullah Kashmiri, who wrote an account of the expedition of Moorcroft and Captain Hyder Hearsey into Tibet in 1812, but who also travelled independently to Central Asia and back and wrote a journal of these travels. He later accompanied Moorcroft as his principal *munshi* in the Panjab Himalaya, Ladakh and Kashmir, and onwards to Afghanistan, where they both met their deaths in August 1825. Ghulam Haydar Khan, originally a soldier of Hyder Hearsey, a military adventurer whose interests often did not correspond with those of the East India Company, accompanied Moorcroft on his later travels as Hearsey's agent. Ghulam Heydar Khan survived the hardships of Afghanistan and managed to make his way back to Hearsey at Dehra Doon; and Hearsey published a translation of Ghulam Haydar's account. The journal of a third member of Moorcroft's party in the Panjab Himalaya and Ladakh has hitherto remained unnoticed, but is now the subject of this article.

The reason for this is clear. Elphinstone brought the manuscript home to Scotland on his retirement. It then rested on the shelves of the library of his family seat, Carberry Tower, for nearly a century and a half. The contents of the library were sold by auction and scattered around 1961; and the manuscript is now in another private collection.

The author and his position in Moorcroft's party

The author of this narrative, contrary to Elphinstone's revised opinion, was not Mir 'Izzatullah Khan himself, but another *munshi* who was a close associate of his. On folio 70A, the actual beginning of the work, he gives his name as Hajji Sayyid Najaf 'Ali, son of Sayyid Malik Muhammad Khan Lahori. He refers to 'Izzatullah as "his dear brother", and it is possible that he was 'Izzatullah's younger brother. However, Najaf 'Ali may have been bound to 'Izzatullah by other, more distant family ties. A number of words used in this account as well as Najaf 'Ali's familiarity with the backgrounds of the individual Kashmiri traders in Ladakh, suggest that he was from a *sharif* family that had resided in Kashmir. He clearly spoke Kashmiri as well as the 'Kashmir Persian' with which Moorcroft grew familiar.³ Though Najaf 'Ali was probably of Irani Shi'i descent, he makes use of Kashmiri words that were not intelligible to the contemporary copyist in Lahore or Ludiana.

Najaf 'Ali is not mentioned in the published English accounts of Moorcroft's stay in Ladakh.⁴ His own account leaves no doubt that he was a paid agent of the East India Company, probably reporting back to Captain Wade at Ludiana. His account opens with information gathered in Afghanistan as he returned from a pilgrimage to Mashhad. He joined Moorcroft and 'Izzatullah under orders during their earlier unsatisfactory visit to Ranjit Singh's court at Lahore. He was with them on their travels

through Kullu and onwards to Ladakh, and he was in Ladakh during the winter of 1820-21.

During the time when he was with Moorcroft's party, Najaf 'Ali acted as 'Izzatullah's own amanuensis, serving as a *munshi* to the *munshi*. He recorded the conversations that 'Izzatullah had with the *kalon* or chief minister and other high officials of Ladakh, when Moorcroft and the British members of the party were not present. He also drew up and made fair copies and copies for his journal of Persian diplomatic and official documents received or issued by Moorcroft's party.

Najaf 'Ali stayed in Ladakh for about eight months. In November 1821, he set out, in company with one Raja Qasim 'Ali, to travel by the Zoji-La pass to Kashmir and onwards to Lahore. The last date mentioned is 2 July 1821. Some days later the author arrived in Lahore and 'here' he completed his narrative.

One must regret that Najaf 'Ali was sent down-country so early in the two years' stay of Moorcroft's party in Ladakh. His account has detailed information about the Kashmiri merchants in Leh, who were later to plot against Moorcroft. An account by him would have been invaluable of the attempts against the lives of Moorcroft and Trebeck, or of Moorcroft's expeditions to Nubra and Pangong, or of 'Izzatullah's mission to Yarkand in the autumn of 1821.

The social status and role of the 'Persian' *munshis*

Both 'Izzatullah and Najaf 'Ali, although employed by the East India Company, were Muslims of high social status and evidently travellers with an earlier reputation in these parts. The senior *kalon* in Ladakh, who played the role of a mayor of the palace, clearly appreciated 'Izzatullah's advice, and Khwaja Niyaz Ahmad Shah, another international figure who was a large-scale trader, a member of the ruling house of Yarkand and a Sufi *shaykh*, esteemed 'Izzatullah as a friend and put himself to trouble on 'Izzatullah's and Moorcroft's behalf. The esteem in which 'Izzatullah and his brother *munshi* were held is reflected in the presents and hospitality, indicative of high perceived status, offered to them by the Ladakhi officials and Khwaja Niyaz Ahmad Shah, as described in this narrative. Their treatment and presents compare quite favourably with what was offered to Moorcroft and Trebeck. 'Izzatullah's advice was sought and heard by the senior minister independently of Moorcroft's representations.

Both 'Izzatullah, in his conversation with the chief minister of Ladakh, and Najaf 'Ali, in his account of how he came to join Moorcroft's party, insist that they are paid employees of the East India Company and act under commands received by them from Calcutta. In the case of Najaf 'Ali there is no evidence of a previous link with Moorcroft.

One may note also the informative role of educated and travelled Muslims, mainly Kashmiri, in the last days of Ladakhi independence under its ancient native dynasty. Najaf 'Ali's narrative illustrates the

process of transmission, by Persian-speaking, travelled Indian and Kashmiri Muslims, of information about the changing state of European and global politics and technology, to this remote and threatened Tibetan Buddhist kingdom in the decades before it lost its independence.

The political situation in Ladakh in 1820

The ruling dynasty of Ladakh, with their centre of power in the vicinity of Leh in the upper Indus valley, claimed descent from the ancient kings of Central Tibet and probably established their rule in this westerly area in the 10th century AD. In recent centuries they had tributary relationships towards both the Mughal emperors and the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa, but they were effectively subdued by an invasion of the forces of the Dogra Raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh, in 1834. This was more than a decade before Gulab Singh gained possession of the coveted Vale of Kashmir.

The year before Moorcroft arrived in Ladakh, Kashmir had passed out of the hands of its Afghan governors into those of Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Panjab. The Sikh state in these years followed the Afghan practice in continuing many of the diplomatic relationships, recognitions and grants by which the boundaries of authority in these northern territories had previously been regulated by the Mughal emperor and his governor of Kashmir. This system of regulation and recognition of local powerholders was swept away by the subsequent Dogra conquests and the consolidation, with British acquiescence, of 'Jammu and Kashmir State'. Moorcroft's party arrived during the reign of the last independent king of Ladakh, the Chaspa Namgyal of Najaf 'Ali's account. He had been called to the throne from the monastery of Hemis in 1802. His chief minister, the *kalon*, had risen to power in the previous reign and remained in charge of affairs until his death around 1825. Command of the army had been relinquished by him to Kaha Tanzin (Najaf 'Ali's transcription), the largest landholder in Nubra, the valley over the northern ridge from Leh.⁵ From Najaf 'Ali's account, Kaha Tanzin appears more friendly to the Moorcroft mission than the chief minister.

Kashmiri influence in Ladakh: the historical connection

The importance of the route between Ladakh and Kashmir in the early medieval period, particularly the 10th and 11th centuries, is obvious to any student of the Buddhist culture of West Tibet. However, this channel of communication with the outer non-Tibetan world was not closed by the conversion of the rulers and population of Kashmir to Islam.

The cultural connections between Ladakh and Mughal India are sometimes ignored. Apart from the expedient and evidently retractable conversions to Islam of individual Ladakhi princes of the later 17th

century,⁶ the great early-17th-century King Sengge Namgyal had a Muslim mother, whose sister was in the harem of Prince Salim, later the emperor Jahangir.⁷ Central Asian and Indian Mughal fashions reached the court of Ladakh. Ten years after tobacco came to Akbar's court, the king of Ladakh was sampling it.⁸

Najaf 'Ali provides evidence that the 'tribute' that had gone from the Ladakhi rulers to the Mughal governor of Kashmir, of shawl wool and other local rarities, was dispatched to the *de facto* Afghan and Sikh rulers of Kashmir at this late period. In return, the king retained a considerable land-grant in the Sind valley, the produce of which was sent annually to Leh by his agent. Lists of the commodities dispatched in either direction are given by Najaf 'Ali.

By the early 19th century, the long connection of the Tibetan kings of Ladakh, through the province of Kashmir, with the Mughal imperial government of India, and the successors to their power and Persianised forms of government, had resulted in this local diplomatic world in which *sharif* Indian and Kashmiri Muslims and similar figures from Kashghar were trusted emissaries from the outer world, as well as sources of information about that world.

Najaf 'Ali's narrative

Controversy continues regarding the extent to which Moorcroft exceeded his possible secret and confidential instructions in the diplomatic and political role that he began to play in Ladakh. To this controversy Najaf 'Ali contributes one fresh item of evidence. 'Izzatullah was in possession of copies of letters from Sardar Muhammad 'Azim Khan, the last Afghan governor of Kashmir, who had been displaced by Ranjit Singh's forces in 1819. These letters urged the East India Company to extend their control over Kashmir. After his first meeting with the chief minister of Ladakh, 'Izzatullah dispatched these copies to him. Such transcripts of confidential political correspondence can hardly have come into Moorcroft's possession in his role of superintendant of the Company's stud, sent on a commercial expedition. Moorcroft's political negotiations offering a treaty that would extend the East India Company's protection over the king of Ladakh were later totally repudiated: but the possession and instant display of such documents suggests that, however informally and off-the-record, before Moorcroft set out the possibility of his negotiating such an agreement had been foreseen in the Secret and Political Department in Calcutta, and was not regarded at that time with disfavour. The channel by which such documents were supplied to Moorcroft is likely to have been his old friend Charles Metcalfe, who had just become secretary to the Department. The timing of Moorcroft's moves to procure the governor-general's permission for his expedition correlates with Metcalfe's appointment as secretary to the Department and to the governor-general; and it is difficult to believe that any lesser

figure could have authorised the supply to Moorcroft of such secret documents.⁹

Much of Najaf 'Ali's journal is a dull record of stages and distances, uphill and downhill, over passes and bridges and watercourses. However, even here his account is not without topographical value. Najaf 'Ali mentions briefly incidents of which more ample accounts are narrated by Moorcroft and his British companions. His account is sometimes written from a point of view that differs from the English narratives.

The *munshis* and their employers

Inevitably, 'Izzatullah was a pleader for his patrons, describing himself as "the servant and sympathiser of the English Company Bahadur". Yet the arguments that he presented to the ministers who ruled Ladakh are serious and well-conceived:

The junior minister said: "You went to meet Kagha Tanzin, and had some conversation about your plans?"

'Izzatullah replied: "I had a good opportunity to explain to Kagha Tanzin that the kingdom will pass from your hands."

"How will it pass?" he asked.

'Izzatullah replied:

Shridhar Pandit Kashmiri and Jawahir Mall Pishawuri [tax-farmers of the Kashmir passes now holding authority from Ranjit Singh] make no more out of their tax-farms, lest because of disturbance they do not realise the sum of four and a half lakhs of rupees and they suffer further injury.

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself pays a visit to the Vale of Kashmir, he will not be concerned about four or five lakhs of rupees. But he will certainly make plans to subdue this country [Ladakh], and the tax-farmers will not be able to hinder him on the grounds that their financial interest will suffer.

If you choose to display the appearance of friendship and agreement towards the Sahib Bahadur, he will certainly write to his superiors, [urging them] to write to the Maharaja Bahadur not to harm the Raja of Ladakh in any way, and he will certainly refrain from harmful demands.

In one sense, 'Izzatullah was the client of William Moorcroft. The Company *bahadur* was paymaster to both, and the reason for their travels was what Moorcroft (though not his critics) considered to be the interests of the Company. In another sense, Moorcroft was a client of 'Izzatullah. It was from 'Izzatullah that the minister sought evidence as to how to deal with Moorcroft. It was 'Izzatullah who had to deny to the minister the hostile suggestions of Kashmiri merchants of Leh. 'Izzatullah had to stake his own reputation in a legal attestation, reproduced in Najaf 'Ali's text, that in his opinion Moorcroft had come up to Ladakh solely for purposes

of trade, and not as a reconnaissance for invasion by the Company *bahadur*:

Copy: memorandum of the note of hand of Sayyid 'Izzatullah Khan. At this time the exalted Sahib William Moorcroft Sahib Bahadur has entered the Kingdom of Ladakh as a trader. Therefore I have given a writing to the effect that neither now nor in future will any act be committed other than in friendship on account of the above-mentioned Sahib Bahadur. For this I take responsibility.

Secondly, if any act other than of friendship and good faith occurs, I will answer for it.

The reason for writing these lines is that the servant of the Exalted Kalon Sahib who has been entrusted with this task, Muhammad 'Abdu'l-Latif, has insisted. This writing is given for reassurance. Written on the 10th of the month Dhi'l-Hijja, 1235 Hijri, corresponding to 19 September 1820 and 12th of the 8th month of the Iron Dragon year.¹⁰

'Izzatullah's role was recognised in the documents that were exchanged. A *laissez-passer* stating terms for Moorcroft to travel onwards was sealed by the main parties. 'Izzatullah's seal was added to those of Moorcroft, the ministers and the king.

From Najaf 'Ali's account, the personal relations between the Englishman and the Kashmiri, Moorcroft and 'Izzatullah, appear to have been cordial, each concerned about the health and welfare of one another. From his earlier visit, 'Izzatullah was the client and "ancient friend" of the influential Naqshbandi Khwaja Niyaz Ahmad Shah, then camping with his tents pitched beside the river Indus at Shey in the valley of Ladakh. Through 'Izzatullah's mediation, Shah Niyaz became a powerful advocate for Moorcroft, and some other members of the Muslim community, with the exception of most of the Kashmiri traders, viewed Moorcroft sympathetically. The imam of the mosque at Leh let Moorcroft watch the polo match in the capital from the windows of his house.

The view of the British and of global politics presented by the *munshis*

The first inquiry that Najaf 'Ali records as to why the British party has arrived in Ladakh is from the imam of the mosque of Leh. There had been a domiciled Muslim community in Leh since the 17th century, composed in part of the Argons, descendants of immigrant Muslims, often Kashmiri, who had married local women. The imam was not particularly hostile to the *firangis*, who, as we have noted above, later watched racing and dancing from the vantage point of his house.

Not long after the inquiries of the Imam, 'Izzatullah received a summons from the chief minister to discuss and to provide an explanation for the arrival of Moorcroft's party. Najaf 'Ali was present at the meeting and recorded the conversation that took place. The meeting ended with

the Ladakhi minister gravely commending Izzatullah's understanding and sagacity.

Then the chief minister inquired: "Where is the realm, and the capital of the English Sahibs?"

'Izzatullah replied: "It is in the seventh clime, between the North and the West."

Again the minister asked: "Is the realm of the English Sahibs in the cold lands or the hot lands?"

"In the cold lands," 'Izzatullah replied.

The Kalon followed this by asking: "What kind of fruits grow in the cold lands?"

'Izzatullah replied: "They have covered a place with glass and made a *hammam* [Turkish bath]. They make it as hot as they need for certain fruit-bearing trees, They provide as much heat [as is needed]. In the hot season the fruits of the cold lands grow [there] and in the winter the fruits of the hot lands grow."

The chief minister then asked: "There are also Gorkhas in the service of the English?"

'Izzatullah replied: "Many men are in their service in India. There are fourteen Gorkhas here in the retinue of the Sahib Bahadur. They have entered his service and have come from Almora."

The minister then asked: "Are all these *firangis* very accomplished in arts and sciences, or only some of them?"

'Izzatullah replied: "All the *firangi* Sahibs are accomplished in arts and sciences."

The minister followed this by asking: "What skill has the Sahib who has come here?"

'Izzatullah replied: "He is especially accomplished in the science of surgery and is really knowledgeable."

The minister remarked: "The *firangis* know watchmaking well. Does anyone other than them have the same skill, or not?"

'Izzatullah said: "They know how to make and mend watches in Rum [Turkey] and so on, but the Sahibs have especial skill and accomplishment. There are none equal to them in watchmaking."

Then the Kalon asked: "I have heard that the king of the English is a woman? Do they tell the truth or do they lie?"

'Izzatullah replied: "If there is a son among the children of a king of *firang* they set him upon the throne, but when the king is without son but has a daughter, the daughter sits on the throne of the kingdom. In fact whoever is of the lineage of the dead king can reign on the throne."

After this and further conversation, Sayyid 'Izzatullah Khan asked leave to depart, taking with him the minister's commendation.

Najaf 'Ali's picture of Ladakhi society

Power was in the hand of the chief minister, called *Wazir u Mukhtar* by Najaf 'Ali, the latter term being translatable as regent. He was surrounded

by a small group of Ladakhi Tibetan aristocrats and office-holders, their power in many cases deriving from their rights as hereditary landowners of regions of the kingdom. These political circumstances are reflected in the descriptions of the court and its etiquette by Najaf 'Ali. The minister chose to conduct the relations of Ladakh with the outer world through the mediation of locally settled Muslims, mainly Kashmiris or of Kashmiri descent. The king was even more retiring and reluctant to meet strangers. Najaf 'Ali, at the close of his description of the festival of horse-racing and dancing, describes the reluctance of the king to acknowledge the greetings and presence of the sahibs.

Najaf 'Ali also includes in his journal lively descriptions of Ladakhi customs and entertainments, the etiquette of meetings with local dignitaries and the course of exchanges of hospitality. He notes the behaviour and attitudes of the population towards Muslims, their methods of paying honour, and their diet, clothing and houses. He describes also the lamas of Ladakh and their dances as witnessed by Moorcroft. His perceptions of popular Buddhism in Ladakh are perhaps not well-informed or acute, but he conveys a sympathetic picture of the social life of this remote, fragile and ancient Himalayan kingdom, in the last days before it was overwhelmed by the advancing ambitions and tough soldiers of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu.

One reference by Najaf 'Ali appears to establish that polo was still played at Leh at this date. On 20 November 1820, the chief minister summoned Mir 'Izzatullah Khan to the garden and showed him a ball-game with riders on horses, then entertained him with food and tea. This was another occasion when the minister summoned 'Izzatullah without the presence of Moorcroft and Trebeck.

The reference is of interest in showing that this medieval game of kings survived in Leh, as well as in the strongholds lower on the course of the Indus and to the west of the river, in Baltistan and Dardistan. It was from Gilgit and from Manipur in eastern India that the British reintroduced the game to the lowlands of Hindostan and to the international circuit at the close of the 19th century.¹¹ In the last years of the 19th century polo was played in the broad street of Leh, where the horse-races evidently took place when Najaf 'Ali wrote.¹² In 1820, however, the game evidently did not take place in the broad street of Leh. The 'garden' of this description may be the maidan below the palace hill of Leh. This is the polo-ground today. Here in 1995, the translator watched the South Asian championship matches, with teams from Australia and Pakistan competing with Indian army teams and one from Manipur.

Though Najaf 'Ali states that there was no *sug* or bazaar area in Leh, his description of the location corresponds to the broad straight main street of Leh, at the west end of which is the mosque, now rebuilt with neo-Mughal minarets, beside which must have been the house of the imam from which Moorcroft's party watched the games. This is at the foot of the hill on which the palace stands. The king evidently watched the games from a pavilion erected at the other end of the broad street. At the end of

the 19th century, a stand for distinguished spectators to watch the game of polo played in the broad street was erected at the same spot.¹⁵ In the evening the king retired to his palace on the hill, where the dancing girls came to salute him. En route to the palace, the king would have passed the house of the imam, at the oriel window of which the sahibs attempted to salaam to him.

The Kashmiri community in Leh

In his account of Leh, Najaf 'Ali describes the role of Kashmiri traders in the economic life of this entrepot of the Central Asian caravan trade, and lists the prices of commodities in the market.

The inhabitants of this city are of three communities. First of all there are the Lamas, who are the guides and *Pirs* and preceptors of the Tibetan people. The second are the Tibetans. The third are the Kashmiris. Of these the Lamas are few and the Tibetans more numerous, and there must be 300 Kashmiris and a group of 20 traders.

The Kashmiris, who left Kashmir a while ago and have come here, have their main livelihood engaged in buying and selling shawl-wool and China tea. Some of them have, on their own behalf, settled their agents or partners in Yarkand and Lhasa. In Kashmir itself the partners and agents of those who are in Ladakh are Kashmiris. They sell the goods and in return send cash or commodities, whatever is suitable, like woven shawl-wool and white cloth, fine embroidery on white muslin, for which Lucknow is famous, kincob [gold brocade], silk woven with cotton, etc. They send what the Kashmiris of Ladakh have written for.

Almost all commercial affairs were entrusted by the minister to Muslims of the domiciled Kashmiri community.

The lodgings arranged for Moorcroft and his party were a property of the minister, but under the charge of the broker Rasulju, who figures in the list of the Kashmiri traders of Leh. He evidently acted as caretaker. Another of the Kashmiri traders, Mir Muhsin 'Ali, is also mentioned as an intermediary, arranging meetings between Moorcroft and "Izzatullah on one side and the king and the chief minister on the other.

The proposal that the East India Company should extend its protection to Kashmir

We have noted above that the last Afghan Governor of Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad 'Azim Khan, displaced by Ranjit Singh's invasion of Kashmir in 1819, had written letters urging the English to extend their protection over that country. According to 'Izzatullah,

They [the East India Company] have no designs upon anyone other than friendship and its benefits. Sardar 'Azim Khan, brother of the *Wazir* Fath Khan Barakzai has sent letters several times to come here and bring the Valley of Kashmir under their control "and give me a round of bread", but they did not agree to this.

The copies of these Persian letters were afterwards sent on the same day, 20 November 1820, for the perusal of the Chief Minister of Ladakh:

After two hours 'Izzatullah returned, and dispatched by the hands of 'Abdul-Latif the officer to the *kalon* two communications sent by Muhammad Azim Khan, brother of the Wazir [ruler of Kabul] Fath Khan Barakzai, that would reassure the *kalon*.

Though Moorcroft's negotiations for a treaty between the king of Ladakh and the East India Company were subsequently repudiated, the presence of such documents in the luggage of his party suggests that the possibility was contemplated in Calcutta before he set out that Moorcroft might enter into such negotiations on the Company's behalf.¹⁴

Editor: Readers of Simon Digby's contribution may like to be reminded of G. J. Alder's article 'The Asian Years of William Moorcroft, 1808-25', carried in Asian Affairs, vol. XVIII (Old Series vol. 74) Part I for February 1987.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cf. the dispatch of papers and other materials by Moorcroft in Ladakh in October 1821 to Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra to send on Mr Murray in Ludhiana; f. 62B. For other dispatches of letters from Ladakh by Moorcroft, see Garry Alder, 1980: *Beyond Bukhara: The Life of William Moorcroft*, London: 258, 267, 271, 280.

2. Elphinstone was governor of Bombay, November 1819 – November 1827.

3. See W. Moorcroft and G. Trebeck, 1841: *Travels In India Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir*, 2 vols, ed. H. H. Wilson, London; reprinted New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1989. Vol. I: 229, 231. By now it may have become more difficult to apprehend what Moorcroft meant by 'Kashmir Persian', so I may add my personal recollection from nearly half a century ago. At that time there were still elderly Kashmiris, mostly Pandits, who had received some education in Persian, and they would quote couplets from Hafiz, Sa'di and Ghani Kashmiri. The words were at first almost unrecognisable to those who had been brought up with the Irani or Indian pronunciation of the language, for all the vowels had taken on the complex diphthongal sounds of the spoken Kashmiri language.

4. See Alder, 1980.

5. See A. H. Francke, 1907: *A History of Western Tibet*, London: 126-47; L. Petech, 1977: *The Kingdom of Ladakh, c. 950-1842 AD*, Roma: 125-140.

6. See Francke, 1907: 109-10; Petech, 1977: 64. The title conferred on Del-dan Namgyal and revived by some succeeding kings of Ladakh, Aqibat Mahmud Khan, was at least intended to give the impression of conversion to Islam. An early 18th-century chronicle written in Kashmir specifically mentions Del-dan's conversion to Islam; see Khwaja Muhammad A'zam, n.d., c. 1930: *Ta'rikh-i Kashmlr*, Lahore, Electric Press: 165. This is in accordance with Francke's interpretation. For the tradition in the early 19th century, see Moorcroft, I: 336-7.

7. See A.H. Francke, 1926: *Antiquities of Western Tibet*, 2 vols., Calcutta; reprinted New Delhi, 1972. Vol. II: 106.

8. Asad Beg in Sir H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson: *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, 10 vols., reprinted Allahabad, 1964. Vol. VI: 165-7; D. Ashencaen and G. Leonov, 1992: *Tibetan Art at Spink*, London: pl. 33, a cloth painting depicting 'a king smoking a hookah and holding a branch of coral in his right hand'. See also Francke, 1926, vol. II: 106, 108; and G. Tucci, 1940: *Tibetan Pilgrims in the Swat Valley*, Calcutta: 65-83.

9. See Alder, 1980: 209-10. 'Izzatullah was employed as *munshi* in the Delhi Residency, and was held in as high esteem by Charles Metcalfe as by Moorcroft. After his death Metcalfe wrote a letter from the "Camp before Bhurtapore . . . at the request of [Izzatullah's] family" asking for a pension to be settled on them. The letter is in a file on the death of 'Meer Izzat Oolla' in the India Office Records (F/4/1038 Boards Collection); I am grateful to Dr Graham Shaw of the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library for supplying me with a copy.

10. I am grateful to Dr Michael Aris for the identification of the Tibetan date from Najaf 'Ali's Persian transcription; also for providing the current standard transliterations used in literary Tibetan of the names mentioned by Najaf 'Ali; and for many valuable comments that have been incorporated in this paper.

11. For the state of the game in the principalities of the upper Indus, before the Anglo-Indian revival of the late 19th century, see Frederic Drew, 1875: *The Jammoo and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account*, London; reprinted Graz, 1976: 380-92.

12. Cf. A. Neve, 1900: *Picturesque Kashmir*, London: 123, and photographic plate on p. 122, 'Playing Polo In Leh Bazaar'.

13. Cf. Neve, 1900: 122, 123.

14. As Moorcroft's permission to depart on his travels towards Bukhara immediately followed the appointment of his friend Charles Metcalfe to the Political Department, one may guess that Metcalfe furnished Moorcroft with these secret documents, and was in sympathy with Moorcroft's 'forward policy' and his engagement in "unblushing and quite unauthorized political activity in Ladakh" (Alder, 1980: 283) that the Political Department in Calcutta later repudiated; cf. Alder, 1980: 209-10.

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