

Darī-Persian Inscription of NĀDER SHAH and ZĀHIR SHAH: Recently Reported from the Afghān building *Qissā Khwāni Bāzaar*, Peshāwar

MUHAMMAD WAQAR AND NIDAULLAH SEHRAI

Abstract

Here we have Persian inscription from Afghān building, situated in Qissā Khwāni Bazaar, nearby the Kabuli Gate, inside wall city Peshāwar. The inscription belongs to the king Moḥammad Nāder Shah (1883-1933) and his son king Moḥammad Zāhir Shah (1914-2007). They were from the Mohammadzai clan (a section of Bārakzai tribe). Prior to the present study, no attempts were made to document and decipher this important Darī Persian text written in Arabic script. The present research is focused on the translation and transliteration of the inscription along with its brief introduction, history and architecture of Afghān trade centre.

Keywords: *Darī-Persian Inscription, Afghān building, Qissā Khwāni, Peshawar*

Introduction

Peshawar, the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan, has a unique place in history. Due to its strategic position, this region has played a decisive role in the events, which have influenced the South Asia Subcontinent and the Central Asia alike. The city of Peshawar, perhaps one of the most ancient among the living cities of Pakistan (Nadiem 2007: 10). Furthermore, no city in South Asia has enjoyed such an ideal place as Peshawar. Similarly, guarding the Khyber Pass, it controls the lucrative trade with South and Central Asia. Families have survived from times immemorial whose forefathers patronized and managed the caravan trade between Peshawar, Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and beyond. The famous Sethi¹ family had monopolized such a network of the 19th and 20th centuries before the Russian Revolution. Peshawar was one

¹ Sethis family is the business class of Peshawar during 19th and 20th century.

of the four major cities (along with Pushkalavati, Hund and Shahbaz Garhi) of ancient Gandhara (Durrani *et al* 1997: 185).

The present paper is focused on the Darī²-Persian inscription from Afghan building³. An inscription in marble installed on main-entrance of the Afghān building located at the famous bazaar of Qissā Khwāni (Fig.1), latitude 34° 0'29.66"N. longitude 71°34'11 (Fig.2). 18"E. The Qissā Khwāni bazaar described as "This is the Piccadilly⁴ of Central Asia and the fame of the Qissā Khwāni or Story-Tellers Bazar is known throughout the length of the Frontier, Afghānistān and far even beyond." According to Gopal Das, this open Bazaar was originally built by Avitabile⁵. It is mentioned neither by Elphinstone nor by Mohan Lal, who have described other bazars (Dani 1969: 18). The bazaar has always been remained a meeting place for foreign traders, especially for marketing products like dried fruits, woolen products, rugs etc. (Nadiem 2007: 21). The present Darī-Persian inscription is one of the most important material evidence providing valuable information about the trade centre. The inscription mentions the names of the of *Musahiban* (a royal Afghān dynasty of Moḥammadzai clan) rulers i.e. Moḥammad Nāder Shah Ghazi, his son Moḥammad Zāhir Shah, their Afghān representative Mr. Ābdur Rāsul, the then 'Afghan Commercial Counselor' at Peshāwar and the dates of construction and completion of the building. Moḥammad Nāder Shah Ghazi and his son Moḥammad Zāhir Shah remained the Kings of Afghānistān. According to the inscription, the Afghan building was completed under the supervision of Mr. Ābdur Rāsul (Fig.3).

² Darī or DarīPersian (*fārsi dari*) is the variety of the Persian language spoken in Afghānistān.

³ The said building is known with various names i.e. Afghān building / Afghān trade center/ Afghān commercial consulate/ Afghān trade commissionerate.

⁴ Piccadilly is a road in the city of Westminster, London. Here Qissā Khwāni bazaar is compare with Piccadilly street.

⁵ Paolo Avitabile (1791-1850) also known Abu Tabela. Italian General and later remained as a governor Peshawar in 1837 during Sikh rule.

Historical background of Nāder Shah and Zāhir Shah

Mohammad Nāder Shah son of Sardar Muhammad Yusuf Khan, was born at Dehra Dun (India) on April 9, 1883. He got his basic education from his home-town and learnt English, Arabic and Urdu. In 1900 his grandfather, Sārdar Yaḥyā Khan, obtained permission for the family to return to Afghānistān, where, in 1903, Nāder Khan was appointed to command a regiment of Household Cavalry and was promoted to the rank of a general for year or two later. He accompanied King Ḥabib-Allāh to India. His position after the assassination of that monarch and his actions as a general in the ‘Third Afghān War’ has already been recorded. He served as a Minister of war from 1919-24 during the reign Amir Amān-Allāh. He continued to be a leading personage at Kabul under Amān-Allāh until, owing to his opposition to the injudicious haste that that ruler displayed in his reforms He fell out of favour and retired to the post of Afghan Minister at Paris. This appointment he resigned owing to illness, which did not, however, prevent him from responding to the trumpet-call of duty (Sykes 1940: 322). After the abdication of King Amān-Allāh in January 1929, Nadir left France for India and established himself at the Afghān frontier. He collected tribal support, including Waziri tribal forces from the Indian side of the border, and, after initial setbacks, defeated Ḥabib-Allāh Kalakāni and captured Kabul on 13 October 1929. Nāder Khan was proclaimed king two days later (15 October 1929). He was assassinated attended a high school graduation ceremony in Kabul on November 8, 1933 by a Hazara student (Abdul Khaliq) who was a servant of Ghulam Nabi’s family (Adamec 2012: 294-95). After the assassination of Nāder Shah in 1933, his nineteen-year-old son Zāhir Shah took his father’s title. He remained a strong ruler for the next forty years (1933-73), during this time Afghānistān enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence (Romano 2003: 44; Newton 2014: 353-55).

Architectural Details of the Afghān building

It is three-story building, in rectangular plan. The is presently used for commercial purpose. Façade of the building is elaborated and a series of windows are planned. Moreover, the façade of the building is patterned on an early 20th century. The building represents typical western architecture and it is suggested to be one of the rare examples

in Peshawar city. The main entrance⁶ of the building provides at the centre, facing south. The façade of the building containing a series of rectangular windows at regular intervals with slightly projected eaves (*chajja*)⁷. Topmost storey provided with circumference wall (*pardahwall*) (fig. 4). The main entrance has two Corinthian half engaged octagonal pilasters with squatted pitcher pattern, on either side with intricate floral motifs (fig. 5). The first and the second-floor are provided with square pilasters of which capitals are Corinthian. The second-floor window is round arched with French window (fig. 6). Internally, Only the ground floor containing a series of arch openings, the rest of the two storeys had rectangular openings. There are 40 rooms inside the building. In front of rooms, the veranda is provided (fig. 7). The roof is flat, made of steel-girders, T-iron and *chawka*-bricks. Staircases are provided to the southwestern and northern sides in the interior of the building. The first storey has an open rectangular arcaded courtyard whilst the upper two storeys are devoid of arches except for the pillars. Since 2004⁸ it is occupied and used as a shopping market (fig. 8).

Inscription Details

The inscription is installed on main-entrance top, in the fabric of the wall then in-framed in stucco mould. The detail of the inscription is executed on the flat surface of a rectangular white-marble slab measuring 170 x 61 cm, with black ink. Besides this, one more vaulted shape white marble slab measuring 46 x 28 cm, attached to it at the top, which shows the title of the inscription. The title of the inscription is written in *Naskh*, while rest of the text is written in *Nasta'liq* style and composed of six lines. Though this inscription is well-preserved and legible but slightly damaged at lower and side borders. Due to this uncertainty, some of the words are difficult to read (fig. 9).

The actual text and its transliteration & translation in the following languages are given as under:

6 It has a rectangular wooden jamb measuring 340 x 300 cm and provided a modern iron-gate.

7 Only first two storeys containing eaves above the windows. Presently, these storeys incorporated into shops.

8 Personal communication with Mr. Haji Sher Ghani Khan (shopkeeper in the Afghan building since 2004).

پښتون کوټ

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم در عصر سعادت و صبر و پایداری و قیام ملت و افغانستان پادشاه
محمد نادر شاه غازی نواند تعالی تعالی که کائنات را آفرید و زوی شاهان و پادشاهان و پادشاهان و پادشاهان
سعادت جامعه اسلامی افغانستان و پایداری و قیام ملت و افغانستان در نقطه مملو که حکومت افغانستان
واقع به بازار قصه خوانی پیشاور تا پس و بنا نهاد شد در سال ۱۳۱۴ هجری شمسی
لر ما انصرافی علی حضرت المشوکل علی الله محمد ظاهر شاه دام الله ظلال و لایزال و لایزال و لایزال
لعل التجار افغانی متعینه پیشاور شرف اختتام پذیرفته بنام پښتون کوټ نامید شد و بنیاد

English:

Pakhtun Kot

“In the name of Allah, the Merciful and Gracious. The well-wisher and progressionist King of Afghānistān, His Excellency Moḥammad Nāder Shah Ghazi (God luminescent his grave with blessing) whose sole intention was to keep the Afghāni Islamic Society together on the path of improvement and prosperity, and he always remained busy in this endeavour. During his auspicious period, this royal building was founded on the 23rd December 1933, owned by the government of Afghānistān located in Qissā Khwāni Bazaar, Peshawar. And in 1935 during the rule of, His Excellency Āl Mutukal Āal Allāh Moḥammad Zāhir Shah (his government always may remain under the protection of God), the Afghān Commercial Counselor/Commissioner Mr. Ābdur Rasūl was posted in Peshawar, under his supervision, it was reached to completion.”

Urdu:

پښتون کوټ

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم افغانستان کے ملت کے خیر خواہ ترقی پسند بادشاہ علیحضرت محمد نادر شاہ غازی نور اللہ تعالیٰ مرقدہ (اللہ تعالیٰ اس کی قبر کو نورانی بنادے) جس کی واحد شاہانہ آرزو افغانی اسلامی معاشرے کو بھلائی اور خوش بختی کی راہ پر گامزن رکھنے کی تھی اور اس تحریک میں مصروف عمل رہے۔ ان کے پُر برکت دور میں مورخہ 23 دسمبر 1933 کو پشاور کے قصہ خوانی بازار میں واقع افغانستان کے حکومت کی ملکیت میں اس شاہی عمارت کی بنیاد رکھی گئی۔ اور 1935 میں علیحضرت المتوکل علی اللہ محمد ظاہر شاہ ادام اللہ ظلال دولۃ (اس کی حکومت پر اللہ کا سایہ ہمیشہ کیلئے قائم رہے) کی حکمرانی کے دوران پشاور میں تعینات افغان کمرشل کونسلر جناب عبدالرسول کی نگرانی میں پایہ تکمیل کو پہنچی اس کا نام پشتون کوٹ رکھا گیا۔ بمہندسی نظر (معمار نظر)⁹

Discussion and Conclusion

The inscription played an important part to reconstruct the history of Peshawar particularly about the trade relationship with Afghanistan and other Central Asian Countries. The building was built by Afghān government to set up trade links with the Peshāwar city (the then north-western part of British India). In addition, to establish the historical value of persons mentioned there. Besides, undoubtedly forms an important chapter of Peshawar's history of King Moḥammad Nāder Shah and Moḥammad Zāhir Shah's reign. The inscription narrates, that the foundation of the building was laid in the reign of Nāder Shah in the ownership of Afghānistān's government, in the Qissā Khwāni bazaar Peshawar. Furthermore, praising his efforts for the development of Afghāni Islāmic State, especially the growth of trade and commerce during his rule and after his sudden death it was completed during the reign of his son Zāhir Shah. However, the foundation date (23rd December 1933) of the Afghān building is contradictory as per the information provided by the inscription. Whereas, the historical events of the Nāder Shah's reign

⁹ The author would like to express his utmost gratitude to Dr. Maqsood Ahmad (Lecturer in Persian Department, U.o.P) for translating the inscription from Persian to Urdu for this research paper.

revealed that, he was assassinated on 8th November 1933, which happened 46 days earlier from the foundation date. Here it shows lack of communication between the concerned authorities. After empirical analysis, it is suggested that most probably the idea of the construction of the Afghān building was proposed by Nāder Shah during his reign but after his sudden death, Afghān government started construction of the said building to fulfill his desire and to praise his efforts for the development of Afghan society, especially in the field of trade and commerce.

The inscription is written in *Nasta'liq* style, which shows Persian influence on the art of calligraphy. The dates mentioned in the inscription is given in Solar (*Shāmsī*) *Hijrī* calendar i.e. the year 1933, the 2nd day of the month of *Jadī*¹⁰. The study of the above inscription shows variations in the script i.e. the title of the inscription [پاښتون کوټ] where the second word of the text [کوټ] is basically [کوټ] but the absence of [ث] in Persian, they used it. In the second line, the word [تعالی] is basically [تعالی] but here they used flat [ت] instead of round [ی], for the calligraphic way. Furthermore, in the fourth and sixth line the word [پاښاور] is written in Darī-Persian style but usually, it is written in Urdu language in the following manner [پشاور]. Apart from this some of the words are missing due to some of the damages occurred with the passage of time. These words have been reconstructed and regenerated as per the meaning of their sentences i.e. the first word in the fourth line is [واقع] where [و] is missing, the last word in the same line is basically [وزمان] but here only [و] is clearly visible, the rest of the word is difficult to understand. The first word of the fifth line is [قیمان قومائی] where the word [قبر] is half missing. In the last line, the first word is [کابل] where the word [و] is completely missing. Similarly, the last word of the inscription [پامن سى نظر] in which the second word [نظر] is difficult to find because of the damages, but the first word [پامن سى] is used for an architect in the Persian language. Therefore, most probably the last word [نظر] is the name of an architect.

¹⁰ Solar or Shāmsī Hijrī calendar also known as Afghan Persian calendar used in Afghanistan. The month of Jadī or Jady (roman Capricorn) is the ten month of the said calendar and is equal to the month of December-January of the Gregorian calendar.

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Figures

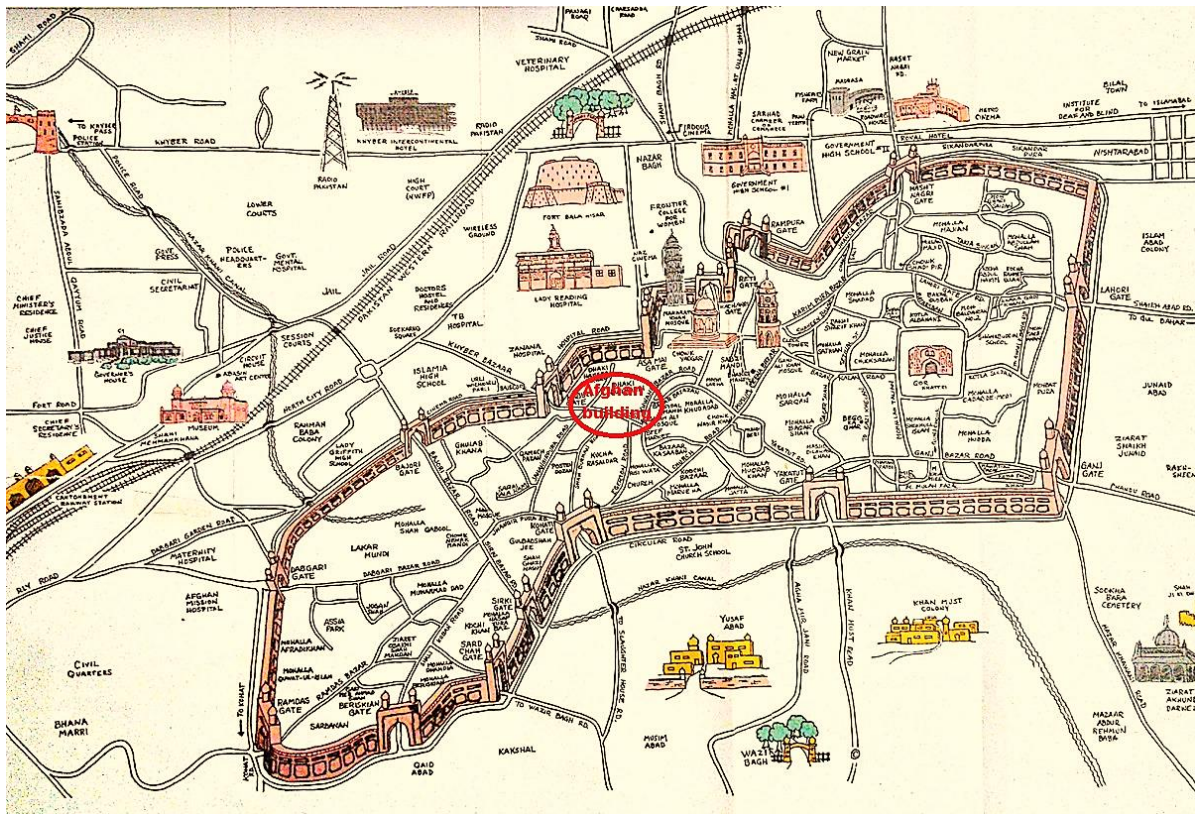


Figure 1: The Wall City of Peshawar, circle showing Afghan building (Courtesy: Sayed Amjad Hussain 1985)

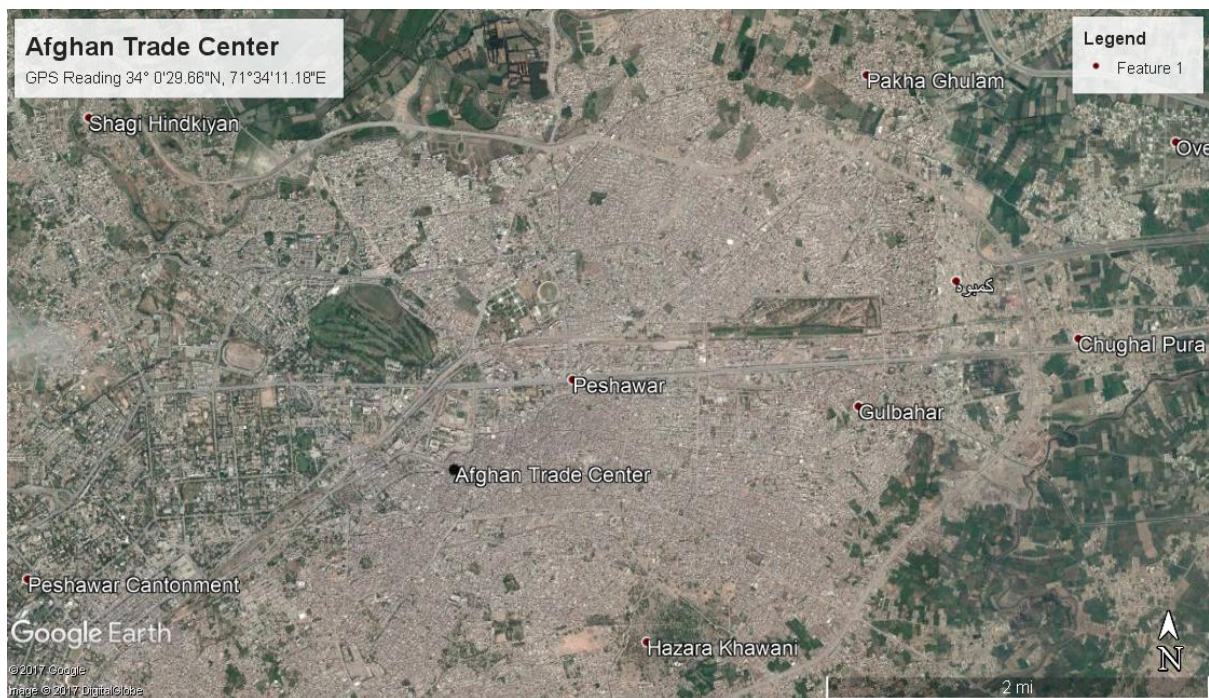


Figure 2: Location of the Building in Peshawar (Photo processed from Google Earth™ on October 3, 2017)

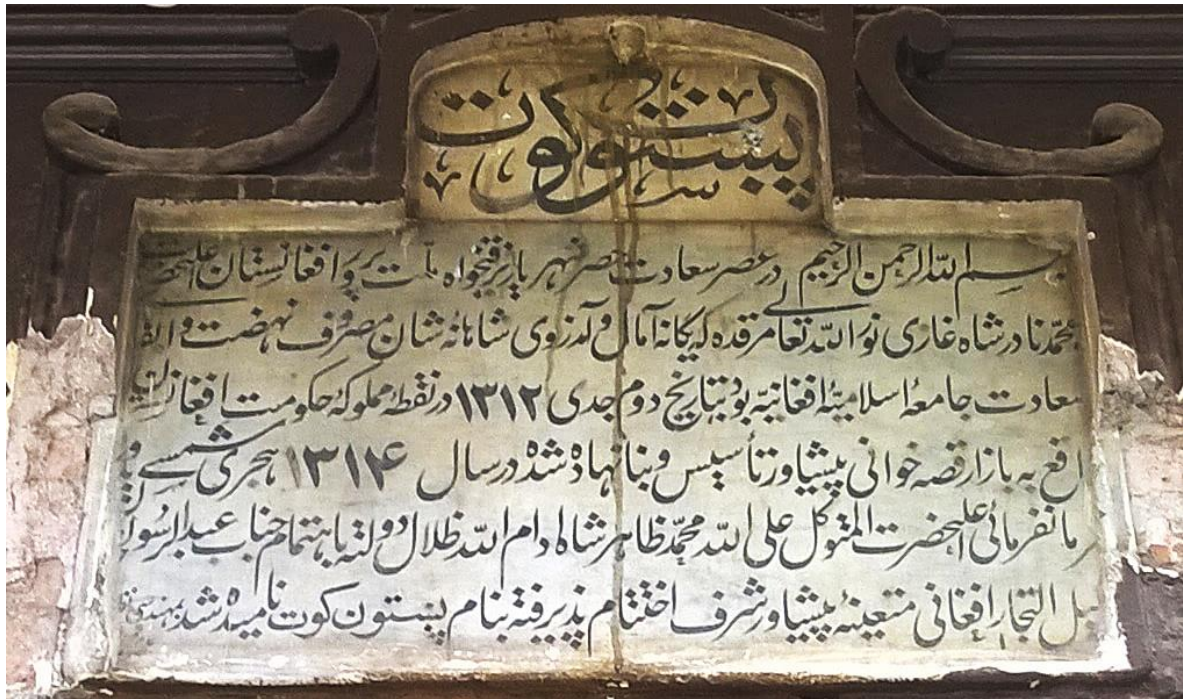


Figure 3: close-up view of the Darī-Persian inscription



Figure 4: Façade of the Building.



Figure 5: Main entrance showing white marble slab inscription with Corinthian pilasters on either side.



Figure 6: Complete view of the main entrance with rest of the storey



Figure 7: Interior view, showing multi stories of the Building



Figure 8: Interior view with central open-courtyard occupied by various shopkeepers.



Figure 9: Detail of the inscription.



Figure 10: Modern board, showing the name of the building

