

An Overview of Geographical Status of Kashmir under Shamiri Dynasty (1339-1554)



Amar Jahangir	Junior Lecturer Kashmir Studies, Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muzaffarabad, Pakistan. Email: amirjahangir82@gmail.com
Unsa Jamshad	Assistant Professor Pakistan Studies, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, Women University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Bagh, Pakistan.
Anbrin Khawaja	Assistant Professor, Kashmir Studies, Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muzaffarabad, Pakistan.

Abstract: *The foundation of the Sultanate in Kashmir was laid by Shah Mir in 1339 AD, and for 216 years this family ruled over Kashmir, which is known as the imperial period in the history of Kashmir. This period was a blessing for Kashmiris, as they were victims of oppressive rule and political instability in the last period of Hindu rule. Shahmir abolished arbitrary taxes as soon as he took over the government. During this period, Kashmiris have been fortunate to see strong rulers like Shahab-ud-Din and Zain-ul-Abidin who, with their intelligence and broader perspective, elevate their status from a mere region to the developed states of the country. They protected the people of Kashmir from external invaders. The focus of this study is on the geographical location of Kashmir under the Shahmeri dynasty. This article examines the geographical location of Kashmir during the Shahmeri dynasty.*

Key Words: Kashmir, Shahmiri Dynasty, Geographical Status, Shahb-ud-Din, Zainul Abidin

Introduction

In 1339 AD, Hindu rule in Kashmir was replaced by the Muslim era when Shah Mir defeated the last ruler of the Hindu faith, Kota Rani, at Inder Kot. He came to Kashmir in 1313 AD during the reign of Shahmir Sahdev. The ruler of that time gave him a village near Baramulla to take care of him. Shahmir rose himself to the position of minister of the ruler in the state due to his abilities, wisdom, and courage. Historians consider Shah Mir to be the real founder of the empire in Kashmir, who ascended the throne in the name of Sultan Shams-ud-Din. He conducted the affairs of the state in a wise and prudent manner. He established a system of justice based on liberal principles, abolishing arbitrary taxes and oppressive methods of extortion. (Ahmad, 2015) Despite being a Muslim, he did not differentiate between his Hindu and Muslim subjects. He formed a marital alliance with the Hindus to win their trust, as the majority of the population in Kashmir belongs to the Hindu religion. During the reign of the Shahmeri dynasty, Sultan Shahab-ud-din and Sultan Zainul Abidin played an important role in the development of Kashmir and prevented any kind of internal and external interference in the Sultanate.

They played an important role in developing the industries, construction, literature, and architecture, diplomatic relations, religious tolerance, restoration of law and order, as well as in extending the geographical boundaries of Kashmir. The dynasty was established by Shahmir in 1339 and ruled for 215 years, during which 16 kings ruled till 1554 AD. (Din, 2012)

Objectives of the Study

1. To review the geographical Status of Kashmir in the reign of the Shameri dynasty.
2. To describe the geographical boundaries of Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din.
3. To express the geographical situation of Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Zainul Abidin.

Methodology

This research is based on secondary data. This is

descriptive and explanatory in nature. The required gathering data is from secondary sources. Secondary information was collected from books, research studies, and journals.

Islam and Kashmir

The advent of Islam in Kashmir was not the product of an accident but of a regular evolutionary process. Historians say that it is a fact that Islam came to Kashmir through Hamim bin Sama, a Syrian. Hamim bin Sama came to Kashmir with Jai Singh during Muhammad bin Qasim's invasion of Sindh. When Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sindh, the area from Multan to Kabul was under the control of the Raja of Kashmir, and the Raja granted some territory to Jai Singh as a jagir. Hamim bin Sama entered Kashmir not as a religious scholar but as a refugee. ([Wani, 2017](#)) However, Hamim bin Sama, the first Muslim to enter Kashmir, is by no means correct as Arab traders used to travel to India long ago for the purpose of trade. Due to its geographical location in the middle of the Asian continent, Kashmir had special importance in history. All Arab trade caravans used the Kashmir route to Tibet and China for trade, and, along with trade, they also preached Islamic views, thoughts, and beliefs. It would not be out of place to say that the Arab traders played an important role in awareness of Islamic teachings in Kashmir; after that, the effective and systematic propagation of Islam in the state of Kashmir began. Individually, some Muslims used to come to the state even before that. It is said that during the reign of Raja Harsh, some Muslims were serving in the Kashmir army. ([Tishna, 2008](#))

Ranchan Shah was a Tibetan who came to Kashmir because of bad relations with his uncle. Rinchen was full of courage and bravery, determination and courage and was unparalleled. Ranchan was a follower of Buddhism, but when he came to Kashmir the majority here belonged to Hinduism. Since Shah Mir was a Muslim who belonged to Hazara and was close to Ranchan, he had learned a lot about Islam while living close to Shah Mir. Ranchan began to study the three religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam) day and night. It is a myth that one-day, Ranchan decided to accept the religion of the person he saw first thing tomorrow morning. The next morning, when he opened the window of his palace, he saw a man praying in front of the river. Ranchan Shah summoned the man and asked him about his religion- The man happily recited the Qur'an, on

hearing which Ranchan Shah converted to Islam at his hands. ([Tishna, 2006](#)) Ranchan Shah, the ruler of Kashmir, converted to Islam at the hands of Bulbul Shah Abdul Rehman in 1325 and started Islamic rule in Kashmir. He became known as Sultan Sadruddin in the Muslim history of Kashmir. Sadruddin ruled Kashmir from 1325 to 1327 for two years. Although his reign was very short, the people of Kashmir began to enter the fold of Islam in droves, and Islam became the state religion of Kashmir. After the death of Sultan Sadruddin, Raja Sehdev's brother Odyan Dev ascended the throne in 1327. Haider Khan, the son of Sultan Sadruddin, was a minor, and after much deliberation, Kota Rani summoned Odyan Dev and handed over the throne to him. It was only a short time after Odyan Dev ascended the throne that the Turkish chief invaded Kashmir. The people of Kashmir were afraid of the war, due to which Odyan Dev fled and was put out of sight in Tibet. ([Abbasi, 2013](#))

Kashmir under Shahmiri Dynasty

Observing the delicacy of the situation, Kota Rani convinced Shah Mir to form an army and retaliate properly. Shah Mir bravely faced the enemy and forced them to retreat. When the threat was averted, Odyan Dev regained the throne. But life ended with him, so in 1339, Odyan Dev died. After the death of Odyan Dev, Kota Rani announced her government by adorning the crown of Kashmir on her head. Shah Mir offered marriage to Rani, but she flatly refused. Shah Mir came to Srinagar from Inderkot and appealed to his subjects for help. The people of Kashmir were inspired by the bravery and understanding of Shah Mir. Therefore, they not only promised to cooperate but also gave full support to Shah Mir against the queen. Nature had the same approval, so after a short battle, the throne came under the control of Shah Mir. In 1339, Shah Mir became the ruler of Kashmir. Kota Rani remained in power for about 50 days. Kashmir was ruled by the Shah Meri family for 215 years and ruled by 19 rulers of this family. ([Tishna, 2006](#))

During the rule of this family, significant changes have taken place in the geographical boundaries of Kashmir. Since the purpose of the research is to discuss the geographical boundaries of Kashmir in Salateen's periods. Therefore, after establishing family ties, we briefly discuss the reigns of these rulers during which the geographical boundaries of Kashmir increased beyond normal.

Sultan Shams-ud-Din

In the name of Shah, Mir Shams-ud-Din appeared on the throne of Kashmir. In the history of Kashmir, Shams-ud-Din is considered to be the forefather of the Shamiri family. Although the Muslim government was started by Ranchan Shah in 1325, since his death Odyn Dev remained in power from 1327 to 1339. Therefore, regular Islamic rule began with the reign of Shah Mir. His dynasty bought Ladakh, Baltistan, and Jammu under their control. (Nazami, 1998) After coming to power, Shah Mir married Kota Rani and set out to run the affairs of the country in the best possible way. In 1347, leaving his two heirs, Jamshid and Ali Sher, in the world, he passed away, and Jamshid became the ruler of Kashmir.

Sultan Shahab-ud-Din

Sultan Shahab-ud-Din was the son of Ala-ud-Din, who became the ruler of Kashmir after the death of his father. Shahab-ud-Din's reputation for conquering lands could not be replaced by any other ruler in the Shamiri era. Shahab-ud-Din not only handled the affairs of the country in a good manner but also carried the raft of victories during his tenure. It would be pointless to call his tenure an enviable time due to the importance of Kashmir's geographical borders because his government left in the history of Kashmir the friends whom the people of Kashmir are still jealous of. The conquests and geographical boundaries of the reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din are mentioned in these words. The most famous king of the Shamiri dynasty was Sultan Shahab-ud-Din. It not only recaptured Kashmir from the Hindu kings but also extended the kingdom of Kashmir from Attock to Sirhind. (Wani, 1995) During the reign of Shahab-ud-Din, the area up to Sirhind was included in the Sultanate of Kashmir. It is not possible to ignore the fact that Sultan was a brave, fearless and far-sighted man who not only managed the system of government well but also extended the borders of the country to Sirhind. Sultan Shahab-ud-Din is one of the most famous Muslim kings in Kashmir. (Khan, 2011)

In view of his great victories and unparalleled bravery, it seemed that the zealous victorious soul of Shahab-ud-Din Ghauri was tormenting inside him. Shahab-ud-Din conquered Hazara, Swat, and Bajaur and reached Kabul. There he conquered Badakhshan, Herat, Ghazni, Kandahar, Khurasan, and on his return from there, he came to Kashmir via the Hindu Kush. Shahab-ud-Din Bala was a brave and fearless ruler. If

life had been faithful, it is not known where he would have hoisted the flags of his empire. Shahab-ud-Din was a great ruler without exaggeration. In fact, his rule has been called from the political and military point of view as the most glorious epoch in the history of the Muslim sultanate in Kashmir. (Singh, 1992)

Undoubtedly, Shahab-ud-Din possessed the natural abilities bestowed by Allah Almighty. He not only repeated the history of the past in his reign but also achieved a special place in the Muslim reign. When Sultan Shahab-ud-Din came to power in 1360, Feroz Shah Tughlaq was all in all in India, but he too made a peace treaty with him and recognized the rule of Shahab-ud-Din over the territory from Serhind to Kashmir. (Parmu, 1969) This agreement clearly shows that Shahab-ud-Din was not only a brave general but also possessed a person with political insight. That is why victory always welcomed him where he went. The Sultan Shahab-ud-Din, with an army of fifty thousand cavalries and one hundred thousand infantry, once again set out on the way to Baramulla. His army reached Peshawar through Bajaur. At that time the insurgents were tried to disturb the peace and order of Punjab, and there was incitement to rebellion and disorder everywhere, so the Sultan ordered his army to turn towards Punjab for crushing the insurgency and maintain the peace. (Tishna, 2006)

The era of Shahab-ud-Din is called the Golden Age of Conquests because not only did they raise the flag of victory in India, but they also subjugated the outer edge of Kashmir where the declarations of independence were heard on a daily basis. In 1360 Shahab-ud-Din was the first great Muslim ruler, ascending to the throne restored peace and order in Kashmir after the destruction of the Mongols. Shahab-ud-Din focused on foreign adventures, capturing Baltistan, Ladakh, Kishtwar, and Jammu. (Schofield, 1999)

Apart from this, Shahab-ud-Din also annexed the areas of Baltistan and Gilgit to his empire. Although these areas were under the central government of Kashmir from BC, the local rulers were the ones who administered the administration to achieve regional peace and order. But sometimes, due to the weakness of the central government, the rulers around Kashmir were ready to revolt. Sultan Shahab-ud-Din, during his reign, conquered Kabul, Bajaur, Badakhshan, Ghor, Kandahar, Herat, and Khorasan and practically raised the flag of his rule over these areas. On his

return, he annexed Tibet, Gilgit, and Baltistan via the Hindu Kush.

([Mir, 2006](#))

The reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din not only lasted in terms of conquests and expansion of the Sultanate of Kashmir but also revived the culture of Kashmir, and effective measures were taken to preserve the cultural heritage of Kashmir. If, on the one hand, Sultan Shahab-ud-Din had become famous for conquering foreign lands by virtue of his military might, on the other hand, he had achieved far greater greatness in reviving, preserving, and promoting Kashmiri culture. ([Bazaz, 1992](#))

The study of history reveals the fact that Sultan Shahab-ud-Din was a very brave, valiant, and brave ruler. During his rule, Kashmir's geographical borders included Hazara, Swat, Bajaur, Kabul, Badakhshan, Herat, Ghazni, Tibet, Gilgit, Baltistan, Kandahar, Khorasan, Peshawar, Punjab, and Lahore. The area from Sirhind to Kashmir was included in the Sultanate of Kashmir under an agreement. Considering the vastness of Kashmir's geographical borders, one has to pay tribute not only to the Sultan's bravery but also to the importance of his prudent military policy. This ruler of Kashmir met his real creator in 1387, but his achievements in history are still alive.

Sultan Zainul Abidin Bad Shah

In 1423, Shahi Khan ascended the throne of Kashmir under the name of Sultan Zainal Abidin. The reign of Sultan Zainul Abidin is considered the golden age of the Muslim era in terms of construction, development, industry, and handicrafts. History remembers him by the name of Bad Shah due to his patronage, understanding, and social reforms. It is no exaggeration to say that Bad Shah was a great political strategist and visionary leader. Under his rule, Kashmir had diplomatic relations with Iran and Arab. During the reign of Bad Shah, where construction and development were at their peak, the geographical boundaries of Kashmir were also spread far and wide. Bud Shah was not only a good writer but also a good warrior; he was a poet among the poets and a writer among the scholars. ([Tishna, 2006](#))

In other words, Bad Shah was not only a good ruler but also a great conqueror. He was also a great scholar and poet. That is why Hindu-Muslim historians call the reign of Bad Shah the best golden age. He is known in Kashmir as the great king, and his long reign of fifty-two years is even now quoted by the Kashmir

the happiest period of their history. (Lawrance,1991) During his reign, Badshah introduced the industries of papermaking, silk making, carpet weaving, and shawl weaving on a large scale. He also set up an institution for the people of Kashmir where military training was imparted to the younger generation. The establishment of this institution shows that Sultan Zainul Abidin was not unaware of the importance of national defense. He not only defended his borders with his best army but also conquered some areas of Tibet and Punjab and annexed them to his kingdom. ([Tishna, 2006](#))

In 1423, when Badshah became the ruler of Kashmir, Delhi was ruled by Sultan Bahlol Lodhi. During the reign of Badshah, the borders of Kashmir extended to Sirhind. The peace agreement was revived by the ruler of Delhi during the reign of Bad Shah, which was signed between Sultan Shahab-ud-din and Feroz Shah. Budshah established institutions to protect Kashmir's geographical borders along with the Industrial Revolution in Kashmir. Due to Bud Shah's successful strategy, Kashmir's internal affairs and geographical borders were secure. ([Rehman, 2011](#)) While the history of Kashmir calls the reign of Badshah a golden age, the importance of Kashmir's geographical boundaries cannot be overlooked in his reign. During his reign, the borders of Kashmir included Tibet, Hazara, Punjab, Sindh Baghistan etc. and the area from Sirhind to Kashmir was included in the Sultanate of Kashmir.

In 1472, Badshah mourned the people of Kashmir and passed away. After Badshah, the Shamiri dynasty continued to rule Kashmir till 1554, but no ruler came who could have gained fame like Shahab-ud-Din and Bad Shah. After Bad Shah, the Shammiri rulers gradually declined. The last Shamiri ruler was Sultan Habib Shah who ruled from 1553 to 1554. He was also the nephew of Ghazi Chak but his uncles crushed on the sanctity of blood relations. Deporting Habib Shah, he sat on the throne so that the government would be transferred from the Shamiri family to the Chak family. ([Tishna, 2008](#))

The decline of the Shamiri Dynasty

The authority to give and snatch power belongs only to Allah Almighty. Of course, perpetuity will only belong to him because he has always been and always will be. Allah Almighty loves those who do justice and fairness, but when the rulers are deprived of justice and indulge in luxuries, then the chances of decline

increase. In the last years of the Shahmeri dynasty, there were several incidents that played a significant role in overthrowing them. Sultan Sikander the Idolater and his Minister Siah Butt, after his conversion to Islam, became known as Malik Saifuddin. It sowed the seeds of hostility within the Hindu people, which continued to grow slowly, and at last there came a time when the decline of Shahmeri dynasty started. The Hindu holy temple was extensively demolished in the reign of Sikander. ([Mir, 2006](#)) Although the Sultan Bad Shah healed the wounds of the Hindus, apparently the riots ended temporarily, but the results proved to be very bad, and one day the Shahmiri dynasty came to an end. The power struggle and the luxury of the rulers, thirst of power, and dance parties instead of the battlefield were the factors that played a major role in overthrowing the Shahmeri dynasty. In such a situation, the Chaks took advantage of the golden opportunity and seized power. But it would also be a great injustice to deny the fact that in the last few years, the incompetence of the Shahmiri rulers was the main factor for the decline of the Shahmeri dynasty. ([Abbasi, 2013](#)) In 1554, Ghazi Chak deposed Habib

Shah and came to power himself, the reign of the Shahmeri family came to an end, and the reign of the Chak family started.

Conclusion

It would not be out of place to consider the Shahmeri family as a combined Hindu-Muslim religious and social culture in Kashmir. Shahmer society was an antagonist of people belonging to different religions and sects. They never tried to convert anyone to their faith. Instead, they gave others unrestricted freedom. In all aspects of the state, religions and sects were given equal footing with their subjects. Even prominent posts in the administration were held by aristocrats of various religions and sects. Kashmir became the cradle of peace under Shahmeri reign, and its frontiers were greatly expanded. During the reigns of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din and Zainul Abdin, the geographical boundaries of Kashmir were expanded. Due to the luxury of the rulers, internal and external disturbances, selfishness of the emperors and sectarianism, the reign of the sultans in Kashmir came to an end.

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