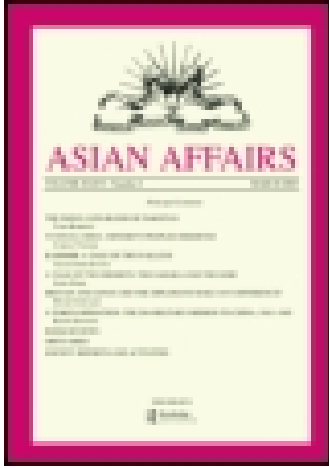


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Publisher: Routledge

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UK



Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors
and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/raaf19>

Nadir Shah

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Published online: 25 Feb 2011.

To cite this article: Laurence Lockhart Ph.D. (1939) Nadir Shah, Journal of The Royal
Central Asian Society, 26:2, 265-279, DOI: [10.1080/03068373908730910](https://doi.org/10.1080/03068373908730910)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03068373908730910>

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NADIR SHAH

By LAURENCE LOCKHART, PH.D.

Annual "Persia" Lecture given to the Royal Central Asian Society on March 22, 1939, Brig.-General Sir Percy Sykes, K.C.I.E., C.B., C.M.G., in the Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Before I begin to speak about Nadir Shah, I must express to the Society my keen appreciation of the great honour which it has paid me in inviting me to deliver the Persia Lecture.

Nadir's father, Imam Quli Beg by name, was a humble member of the Qiriqlu branch of the Afshars, a powerful and warlike Turkish tribe that had for centuries been settled in Iran. Imam Quli, whose name has a Shi'a ring about it, has been variously described as a shepherd, a camel-driver, a skinner, and a farmer. Whatever he may have been, he was a person of no consequence. In the summer, Imam Quli lived in the small village of Kubkan, in northern Khurasan, eighty miles north-west of Meshed. Sir Percy Sykes was the first European to visit Kubkan and he took an excellent photograph of it. When winter approached, Imam Quli and his fellow-villagers were wont to migrate with their flocks to their *qishlaq* or winter grazing-grounds in the district of Darragaz. It was while this annual trek was in progress, in November, 1688, that Nadir was born near the village of Dastgird. I have dealt in some detail with Nadir's origin, because, when he first became known in Europe, the most fantastic stories about him became current, and many nations sought to claim him as one of their subjects. For example, he was later known for a time by the title of Tahmasp Quli Khan, which became distorted by Europeans into Thomas Kouli Kan. Some Irishman, hearing the name Thomas Kouli, was convinced that it was really Thomas O'Kelly, and claimed the conqueror as a worthy son of Erin.

As a boy, Nadir (who was originally called Nadr Quli Beg after his paternal grandfather) assisted his father, but his ambitious nature soon led him to join the bodyguard of Baba 'Ali Beg, the governor of the town of Abivard and chief of the local Afshars. Nadir's intelligence and prowess procured him rapid advancement, and he soon became not only head of the guards but also his Chief's son-in-law. In 1719 his eldest son, Riza Quli, was born. The fact that he gave

a Shi'a name to his son leads me to suppose that, up to that time at any rate, he belonged to that sect. Baba 'Ali Beg died in 1723, and Nadir sought to succeed to his position, but opposition proved too strong. He thereupon went to Meshed and entered the service of Malik Mahmud Sistani, the independent ruler of that place. He became involved in a plot against Malik Mahmud, but it miscarried, and he was compelled to fly for his life. Gathering together a number of his former associates, he formed a band of well-mounted robbers, and, at their head, pillaged far and wide in Khurasan.

Iran was, at that time, in a lamentable state. Some years previously, the Ghalzai Afghans, under their leader Mir Wais, had revolted, had seized Qandahar, and had successfully resisted all attempts to subdue them. The Abdali Afghans of Herat had followed the Ghalzais' example. In 1722 Mahmud, Mir Wais's son and successor, had invaded Iran, defeated the royal forces, besieged and captured Isfahan, and deposed the feeble Shah Sultan Husain. Mahmud had then mounted the throne of Iran. In the summer of that year Peter the Great had invaded Daghistan and Shirvan, and he later established his authority in Gilan. In 1723 the Turks were beginning to overrun the north-western and western provinces. In the chaotic conditions prevailing, Malik Mahmud had set himself up in Meshed.

After spending a year or two as a robber leader, Nadir began to co-operate with the forces which Tahmasp Mirza, the third son of the ex-Shah, had dispatched against Malik Mahmud, and in 1726, when Tahmasp came in person to Khurasan, Nadir entered his service at the head of 2,000 men. We do not know what Nadir's true motives were on this occasion. Mirza Mahdi, his official biographer, asserts that Nadir had, from early times, wished to deliver his country from its invaders and oppressors. He may indeed have harboured such a desire, but, from what we know of his character in later days, it is probable that he considered the liberation of his country mainly as a means of procuring his own advancement.

At first sight, the expulsion of the Afghans, Russians and Turks from Iranian soil must have seemed a hopeless task, when so small a portion of the country remained independent of foreign control. But there was no love lost between the various invaders. The Ghalzais, though supreme in the capital and in a large part of Iran, were relatively few in number and were detested by the Iranians. Nadir was no student of history, but he was a shrewd judge of character, and he may have been aware of the extraordinary capacity which the Iranians

possess of regenerating themselves and of either assimilating or expelling their conquerors. He knew that they were intensely monarchical in sentiment, and he doubtless felt that, with Tahmasp Mirza as their nominal head and himself as their military leader, much could be accomplished.

The ex-bandit's vigorous personality and his powers of leadership impressed Tahmasp, and he soon acquired much influence over the weak prince. But his way to complete control was barred not only by the courtiers, but also by Fath 'Ali Khan, an Ashaqbash Qajar chief and ancestor of the later Qajar dynasty. By more than questionable methods Nadir procured the death of Fath 'Ali Khan, and so became Tahmasp's chief adviser.

After a short siege, Meshed fell to Tahmasp and Nadir, and the latter was rewarded for his services with the title of Tahmasp Quli Khan.

Nadir's plan of action was to attack his foes in detail, beginning with the least formidable. The Abdali Afghans of Herat were next on the list, and they were vastly more powerful than Malik Mahmud and his adherents had been. Before attacking these Afghans, Nadir set himself to the task of reorganizing the Iranian army. Many years of neglect and the almost entire absence of discipline, coupled with a long series of defeats, had reduced the royal forces to a terrible state of inefficiency and dispiritedness. With tremendous energy, Nadir trained and disciplined the troops and instilled them with confidence not only in themselves but also in him. In his first encounters with the Abdalis, he took care not to put his men's newly regained courage and endurance to any very severe test, and in due course he led them to victory over their redoubtable foes. The Ghalzai Afghans constituted a still more formidable obstacle, but Nadir defeated them in a series of hard-fought engagements, drove them headlong from Isfahan and placed Tahmasp on the throne of his fathers. Poor Tahmasp soon realized, however, that he was Shah merely in name and that the real power was in the hands of his general.

When the Afghans had been finally routed and dispersed, Nadir marched against the Turks in Adharbaijan, expelled them from Tabriz, and recovered most of the province. Before he could complete his task, however, a revolt of the Abdalis caused him to hasten to Herat. In his general's absence, Tahmasp, spurred on by his courtiers' foolish advice and by his still more foolish ambition, attacked the Turks in Adharbaijan, but sustained a crushing defeat and lost most of the

territory which Nadir had regained. When Nadir heard of these events he affected great indignation, but actually he must have blessed Providence for giving him such an opening to oust Tahmasp. In August, 1732, after making the Shah drunk and showing him to the notables of the kingdom in that condition, Nadir declared him unworthy of the throne and had him deposed in favour of his infant son 'Abbas. Nadir himself became Regent. In the following year, Nadir led his army against Baghdad and was on the verge of taking it when a relieving force under the command of Topal 'Osman Pasha appeared from the north. Nadir, confident of victory, marched against him, but sustained the most serious defeat of his career. Baghdad was relieved, and Nadir had to withdraw with the shattered remnants of his army into Iran. In two months, however, he had made good his losses and invaded Mesopotamia again. This time he turned the tables on Topal 'Osman in a fiercely contested battle to the north-east of Kirkuk, in which the Turkish leader and a large number of his officers and men perished. Nadir thus wiped out the stigma of defeat, and it seemed that Baghdad would now inevitably fall to him. However, a revolt in the province of Fars caused him to hasten there. He put down the rebellion, but the escape of the rebel leader to an island in the Persian Gulf brought home to Nadir for the first time the importance of sea power. In order to effect the capture of the rebel leader, he had to borrow ships from the English and Dutch East India Companies. Subsequently, when further requests for naval assistance were received, the agents of these companies in Iran nearly always prevaricated or sought to be excused, saying with some justice that compliance would be detrimental to their trade, and that, if the operations were to be directed against the Turks or against the Arabs of Muscat, their interests in the lands of those peoples might suffer. In order to be independent of foreign aid, Nadir proceeded to buy ships from the English and Dutch and set up a naval base at Bushire. By degrees he built up quite a formidable fleet which not only wrested the control of the Gulf from the Muscat Arabs but also, by acting in conjunction with an expeditionary force, enabled him to add 'Oman to his dominions. Not content with the purchase of ships, Nadir sought to build his own vessels at Bushire with timber brought all the way from the Mazandaran forests, but this scheme ended in complete failure.

After Nadir had quelled the revolt in Fars, he marched his troops northwards to Shirvan, where he attacked and defeated the fierce Lazgi tribesmen, some of whom had allied themselves with

Turkey. He then threatened Russia with war unless she restored the Iranian territory which she still held. Russia, conscious of the newly restored strength of Iran and anxious to obtain her aid against Turkey, was conciliatory, and Nadir attacked the Turks instead. He closely invested the fortresses of Erivan, Ganja, and Tiflis, and in June, 1735, at Murad Täppä, near Erivan, he inflicted an overwhelming defeat on a powerful Turkish army which had advanced to their relief. While he was conducting the siege of Ganja, he concluded a treaty with Russia whereby she agreed to withdraw her troops immediately from Baku and Darband on condition that these towns were never handed over to any foreign power (for a number of years past Russia had been desirous at all costs of preventing Turkey from gaining access to the shores of the Caspian Sea). Nadir undertook not to conclude peace with Turkey without the knowledge and consent of Russia.

As a result of his great victory over the Turks, the fortresses of Ganja and Tiflis surrendered almost immediately, and Erivan followed suit later. In consequence, Turkey no longer had a footing on Iranian soil, while Russia had voluntarily handed over the territories which she had seized. Depressed by her disasters in Adharbajjan and Georgia, and alarmed by a Russian attack on the Crimea, Turkey offered peace terms to Iran. Realizing that his financial resources and his reserves of man-power were insufficient to enable him to march to Constantinople with much hope of success, Nadir negotiated a truce, but not a permanent peace, with Turkey; he thus violated the spirit, but preserved the letter, of his undertaking to Russia, which power had in the meanwhile openly declared war on Turkey.

Shortly before the conclusion of the Turkish truce, Nadir put an end to the farce of governing the country as Regent for the infant Shah. In the early spring of 1736 he convened a vast assembly of the notables of the country on the Mughan plain, where, after much feigned hesitation, he accepted the crown of Iran and took the title of Nadir Shah. The hollowness of this pretence was shown when the Chief Mulla, in an unguarded moment, expressed himself in favour of the ancient royal line. He was overheard, and was instantly put to death. Remarkable features of the proceedings at Mughan were Nadir's open espousal of the Sunni doctrine and his measures to ensure that his subjects followed suit; in so doing, he was, apparently, actuated entirely by political considerations. It is possible that he may have looked upon himself as the future Caliph of the Islamic world.

Nadir now resolved to regain Qandahar, the last remaining part of Iran under hostile control. Here the Ghalzai Afghans, under Mahmud's brother Husain, were strongly ensconced. It is very probable that Nadir was at this time also envisaging the invasion of India. From Afghanistan he could obtain large numbers of fighting men for his army and from India he could, by despoiling the Mughal Empire, secure the financial sinews of war. He could then turn his attention once more to conquest in the west.

Having no fear of an attack by Turkey for some time to come, Nadir marched against the Ghalzais of Qandahar. Husain, however, had had ample warning, and had laid in plenty of provisions in his strongly fortified capital. Marching via Bam, Gurg, Farah and Girishk, Nadir invested Qandahar in April, 1737, after defeating the troops whom Husain had sent to oppose him. Nadir, as usual, was weak in heavy siege artillery, and the siege became a protracted one. Frontal assaults were made in vain, and the artillery pounded equally fruitlessly against the enormously thick walls of the citadel. Nevertheless, the outlying defences were taken one by one, and the Iranians at length gained a footing on the lofty Qaitul ridge immediately overlooking Qandahar. From here, cannon were brought to bear on the defenders below, but breaches in the walls were repaired almost as soon as made. It was when Nadir learnt, through a spy, that the defenders were wont to leave the main walls but thinly manned on Fridays, in order that the majority could worship in the mosques, that he was at last able to force his way through by attacking in great force on a Friday.

Thus fell Qandahar, after its garrison had held out stubbornly for nearly a year. Part of the massive walls of the citadel are still standing, despite Nadir's orders that they should be razed to the ground, and much of the site of the town is now cultivated land; the Afghans have turned their swords into ploughshares. Husain Sultan was, at the intercession of his sister, spared, and he, together with large numbers of his followers, was exiled to Khurasan. Many young Ghalzais were enrolled in the Iranian army, and some people were settled in the nearby city of Nadirabad which the conqueror had established during the siege.

On the pretext that the Mughal authorities had done nothing to prevent the influx of Afghan refugees into Indian territory, notwithstanding repeated Iranian requests that they should do so, Nadir and his men soon set out for Kabul. After crossing the frontier, they occupied Ghazna without opposition and pressed on towards Kabul.

Many Indian and other writers have alleged that Nadir was invited to invade the Mughal domains by certain disaffected nobles such as the Nizam-ul-Mulk, the Viceroy of the Deccan, and Sa'adat Khan, the Iranian-born Subadar of Oudh, but these charges have never been proved, and it seems unlikely that Nadir's ambition needed any such whetting.

Nasir Khan, the Subadar of the provinces of Kabul and Peshawar, had repeatedly urged the authorities at Delhi to send him money to raise troops to repel the Iranians. According to an Indian writer,* Nasir Khan wrote to Delhi that he himself was—

“but a rose-bush withered by the blasts of autumn, while his soldiery were no more than a faded pageant, ill-provided and without spirit; he begged that, of the five years' salary due to him, one year's salary might be paid, that he might satisfy his creditors and have some little money at his command.”

Even this moving appeal remained unanswered; the Delhi court, torn by party factions, did nothing, and apparently did not realize the danger till it was too late.

Kabul fell after a brief attempt at defence, and Nadir's army moved on towards the mountain barrier between him and the plains. Nasir Khan had done the best he could, and had assembled a strong force in the Khaibar Pass. Finding his way blocked, Nadir, by a characteristic manœuvre, short-circuited the Indian position by leading a strong mounted force over the unguarded Tsatsobi Pass to the south of the Khaibar, worked his way round to the eastern end of the latter, and attacked and routed the Indians from their rear. Jamrud and Peshawar then fell, and, as soon as a bridge of boats over the Indus had been completed, the Iranians marched into the Panjab. Zakariya Khan, the Subadar of Lahore, offered resistance, but his men were defeated, and he, in order to spare his city the horrors of a sack, submitted. Meanwhile, the lethargic Emperor, Muhammad Shah, and his ministers, had at last left Delhi at the head of a large force and had advanced by easy stages to Karnal, seventy-five miles north-north-west of the capital, where they made a fortified camp. Nadir and his army marched steadily onwards via Ambala and Shahabad. When he found that the Indian position at Karnal was protected by a thick belt of jungle to the north, he swung round to the south-east, with the object

* Anand Ram Mukhlis, in his *Tadhkīra*; this passage is from Sir H. Elliot's English translation in his *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. VIII., p. 71.

of passing to the east of the Mughal army. If the latter came out to attack him, as he hoped would be the case, he would give battle; if, on the other hand, the Indians stayed behind their fortifications, he would press on to Delhi. As he and his men were living on the country, the fact that the Indians would be astride his line of communications did not worry him in the least.

On the evening of February 23 the Iranians took up a position close to the Jumna river, near the village of Kunjpura, some two and a half miles east of the Indian camp. That night the Iranian-born Sa'adat Khan, who had been hurrying northwards from Oudh, managed to reach the Emperor's lines with his men, although Nadir had sent a force to intercept him. Early the next morning the Iranians fell upon and plundered Sa'adat Khan's baggage, which led that impetuous commander rashly to emerge from the Indian camp and attack some Iranian patrols; the latter succeeded in luring him and his men into an ambush, with the result that they were overwhelmed and the Khan was captured. Khan Dauran, the Indian commander-in-chief, advanced to his relief with the Indian centre and right, but his men were likewise defeated, while he was mortally wounded. Meanwhile, the wily Nizamu'l-Mulk, who was jealous of both Sa'adat Khan and Khan Dauran, remained inactive with the whole of the Mughal left wing. Although only a small proportion of both armies had been engaged, the result of the battle was decisively in favour of the Iranians. The Indians became dispirited and demoralized, and soon found themselves surrounded. When famine began to make itself felt, the Nizamu'l-Mulk made terms with Nadir, and the Emperor himself went to the Iranian camp, the understanding being that Nadir and his men would, on receipt of an indemnity, return whence they had come. Sa'adat Khan, furious at the behaviour of the Nizamu'l-Mulk, who had become Mir-Bakhshi or Paymaster-General, a post which he himself had coveted, urged Nadir to stiffen his terms, which he was nothing loath to do. In consequence he made the Emperor a virtual prisoner, and soon after marched with him to Delhi. An unprovoked attack by some unruly elements in the city on Nadir's forces led him to decree a general massacre there in which some 20,000 perished. To this day, as Sir Percy Sykes has informed me, a disturbance in the Delhi bazaars is known as a *Nadir-Shahi*. Enormous sums were extorted from Muhammad Shah and his nobles and subjects, and he was forced to cede to Iran all the territories west of the Indus.

After spending two months at Delhi, Nadir began his homeward

march, taking with him the spoils of India, amongst which were the famous Peacock Throne and the Koh-i-Nur diamond. The army followed the same route as on the outward march for the first part of the way, but later struck further north in order to escape from the great heat of the plains and also to traverse country that had not been denuded of supplies. Many men were lost when the bridge of boats over the Chenab broke in two, and the crossing of the river took a long while to accomplish. When nearing the Indus, Nadir was opposed by the warlike Yusufzais, whom he had to buy off; he reached Kabul at the beginning of December, 1739, but left almost immediately for the south in order to subdue Khudayar Khan, the Governor of Sind, who had ignored the conqueror's summons to do homage to him at Kabul. Nadir marched his men over the mountains into the grim Kurram valley. It is said that he lost a quarter of his spoils in the Kurram river, which his army and baggage train had to ford repeatedly. There are still memories in the Bannu district of the passage of Nadir and his host. Sir Edward Maclagan heard a story there to the effect that a Bannuchi, on the approach of the Iranian army, climbed a tree and hid in the branches. To his horror, the tents of the royal harem were pitched right underneath him. The poor wretch was so terrified that he fell to the ground, and was seized and brought before Nadir. The Shah, instead of punishing the man, said to him with princely contempt that, as the harem was now of no value, he might take it all. The Bannuchi found himself, to his embarrassment, possessed of an emperor's harem and all its retainers. He was, however, only too pleased to accept a small sum from the ladies and let them proceed to Khurasan.

In due course, the Iranian forces descended the Indus and, after a trying march across the desert, surrounded Khudayar Khan in his castle of 'Umarkot (where Akbar had been born in 1542) and forced him to yield. From 'Umarkot, Nadir retraced his steps to the Indus, and thence proceeded to Nadirabad via the Bolan Pass and Shal (Quetta).

Two years had elapsed since Nadir had left Nadirabad en route for Delhi. In that time he had humbled the Mughal Empire and had greatly sapped its power; he had emptied its treasuries and shorn it of much of its territory. By so doing, he greatly accelerated the process of decline which had set in with Aurangzib's death in 1707.

From Nadirabad, he went to Herat, where he showed to his people the Peacock Throne and other treasures from India. He did

not halt there for long, because the lust for further conquests impelled him on. Proceeding via Balkh, Kilif and Charjui, he invaded the kingdom of Bukhara, whose weak ruler Abu'l-Faiz submitted after making only a show of resistance. From Bukhara, Nadir marched against Ilbars, the predatory and treacherous Khan of Khwarizm, who had made incursions into Iran during his absence in India. One by one Ilbars's fortresses fell, and he himself was captured and put to death. Many thousands of Iranian slaves at Khiva and elsewhere in Khwarizm were liberated; for once in a way, Nadir's conquering sword did some good to his countrymen.

On the completion of this campaign Nadir spent two months at Meshed, now the capital of his vast empire. He did not linger there for long, because he keenly desired to revenge himself on the Lazgis of Shirvan and Daghistan, who had killed his brother Ibrahim in 1738. On his way to the west he was shot at and wounded by a marksman in ambush. Had the wound proved mortal it would have been far better not only for his own reputation, but also for his people. He was then at the apogee of his career. In the years that followed he met with reverse after reverse, he suffered tortures of remorse after blinding his eldest son for his alleged complicity in this attempt on his life, his health became impaired, and his splenetic outbursts of rage, which grew more and more frequent as time went on, caused large numbers of his subjects to lose their lives.

The campaign against the Lazgis succeeded only in the low country. In the thickly wooded hills and mountains further inland the bold mountaineers waged a successful guerilla war against the soldiers who had conquered India and Turkistan. During the Lazgi campaign, Nadir used a ship belonging to members of the Russia Company to convey cargoes of rice from Enzeli to Darband. This ship had been built by an enterprising Englishman, Captain John Elton. He evidently made an impression on Nadir, for the latter engaged him to build ships for his Caspian navy. These activities had disastrous effects on the Russia Company's recently established transit trade with Iran via Russia, for the Russian Government, becoming alarmed at the creation of Nadir's Caspian flotilla and annoyed at Elton's work for the Shah, cancelled the transit privileges which it had accorded to the Company. If I had more time I should like to say something of Elton's romantic career, but I must now return to Nadir. After his army had lost many thousands of men from enemy action and from disease, Nadir withdrew from Daghistan and once more attacked

Turkey. His forces swept across northern Mesopotamia, but failed to take Mosul, despite desperate attacks. Revolts in his own country made him raise the siege and withdraw his troops to the Iranian frontier. The Shah did not follow them, but paid visits to the Shi'a shrines at Kazimain, Karbala, and Najaf. Costly presents were exchanged between him and Ahmad Pasha, the astute Governor of Mesopotamia, for whom he had a high regard. At Najaf, Nadir convened a great meeting of the 'Ulama of Iran, Balkh, Afghanistan, and Bukhara, at which the divines signed a document deploring the religious policy of the Safavis, declaring the legitimacy of the first three Caliphs, and recognizing the Iranians as belonging to the Ja'fari sect. This sect, which was a pet project of Nadir, was intended to be a fifth division of the Sunnis, but its existence was never recognized by the Turks. In the meanwhile, Nadir and Ahmad Pasha had agreed on provisional terms of peace, and these were dispatched to Constantinople for approval at the beginning of December, 1743. As these terms contained a number of points, such as the recognition of the Ja'fari sect, which the Turks were almost certain to reject, one can only suppose that Nadir was seeking to gain time until he had suppressed a rising in north-western Iran. Other risings took place in various parts of the country, but they were unconnected with each other, and Nadir was able, with his Afghan and Turkoman troops, to put them down one after the other. Most serious of these disturbances was the rebellion of Taqi Khan Shirazi, the Governor-General of Fars. Nadir's forces, however, defeated the Khan's followers and besieged Shiraz, which he had made his headquarters. Taqi Khan, who had formerly been in high favour with Nadir, was captured and most terribly mutilated. There is a quaint picture in Muhammad Kazim's MS. history of Nadir's reign of the unfortunate Taqi Khan and his son being derisively greeted with a mock *istiqlal* on their entry into Isfahan after their capture.

Having quelled all the revolts, Nadir, in the spring of 1744, encamped near Hamadan preparatory to marching once more against Turkey. We have a first-hand account of this camp from Jonas Hanway, an Englishman in the employ of the Russia Company who, after being involved in a revolt in Astarabad (in which he narrowly escaped being seized by Turkomans and taken off as a slave), had come to seek redress from the Shah for the seizure by the rebels of his goods. Cartoonists of Mr. Neville Chamberlain ought to be grateful to Hanway, for he was the first Londoner to carry an umbrella.

When it became clear that the Porte would not ratify the treaty, Nadir set out for the Turkish frontier, which he crossed, and then laid siege to Qars, but he was unable to make any impression on the defences and the approach of winter forced him to raise the siege. Then followed a successful winter raid into the Lazgi country. In the following summer the Turks were rash enough to invade Iranian territory, but suffered a terrible defeat at Murad Täppä, on the very field where they had been so decisively routed ten years earlier. Nadir showed great moderation after this victory, probably because he realized that his country was becoming too exhausted to continue the long struggle. Fresh peace negotiations were initiated, which resulted, in the following year, in the signature of the treaty of Kurdan. Under this treaty, the frontier laid down in the treaty of Zuhab of 1639 was recognized, all prisoners on both sides were to be exchanged, and no mention was made by Nadir of the Ja'fari sect.

Scarcely had this treaty been concluded when disturbing news of a revolt in Sistan reached Nadir. He hastened from Kurdan to Isfahan, where he remained for seven weeks. During his stay in the former capital he gave signs of increasing mental derangement and was guilty of appalling cruelties. He behaved even more severely on reaching Kerman, and at Meshed got into such a frenzied state that no one, not even his own relatives, felt safe. His nephew, 'Ali Quli Khan, and even Tahmasp Khan Jalayir, one of his earliest and most faithful supporters, joined the rebels in Sistan. The unruly Kurds of Khabushan rose in sympathy and raided the royal stud farm at Radkan. Enraged at this action of the Kurds, Nadir marched in person against them. Feeling in his disordered mind that he would not be safe so long as any Iranian officers remained alive, he gave orders to his Afghan followers to put them to death. The news leaked out, and the Iranians determined to breakfast off Nadir before he could sup off them. On the night of June 19-20 he was murdered in his tent at Fathabad, a few miles from Khabushan. Thus perished ignominiously the last of the great Asiatic conquerors.

Having given an outline of Nadir's career, I shall now try to appraise him as a soldier, a statesman, and a man.

He was, first and foremost, a soldier, and there can be no doubt that he was a military genius. His youth having been spent in the frequently raided border districts of Khurasan, he was accustomed from his early days to the atmosphere of war and indeed, at times, to actual fighting. As head of Baba 'Ali Beg's guards, he first learnt how to

command men, and his experience slightly later as leader of a mounted band of robbers several hundred strong must have been of decided value to him. When the time came for him to employ strategy, he showed that he was as much a master of it as he was of tactics; he was a firm believer in the necessity of strict discipline and careful training, and he had the gift of inspiring his men with confidence. In view of the melancholy series of defeats which the Iranians had suffered during the reign of Shah Sultan Husain, these were assets of capital importance.

Nadir was at his best as a cavalry leader, and he won most of his successes with the aid of his horsemen. Nevertheless, he by no means despised his infantry, and he made his *jazayirchis*, or heavy musketeers, into a most formidable body of men. Like Hannibal and Wellington, Nadir was least successful in siege warfare, mainly because his heavy siege artillery was not very effective.

Mention has already been made of Nadir's navy. Although he never went to sea or, so far as I know, even went on board one of his ships, he understood the value of sea power and realized its importance as an adjunct to military strength; the conquest of 'Oman is proof of this.

As a ruler Nadir was a failure. This was not because he had not the necessary gifts, but because he subordinated everything to his love of war and conquest. In the pursuit of his ambitious aims he bled his unfortunate country white. Although for a time he succeeded brilliantly, the edifice he erected had no proper foundations and crumbled rapidly to pieces after his death. He had no consideration for his subjects, whom he ruined by his excessive taxation, while his press-gangs took many thousands of them to swell the ranks of his army and replace casualties. In his foreign policy, however, he showed some shrewdness, and played off Russia against Turkey with skill.

If, on returning from Turkistan to Iran in 1741, Nadir had rested on his laurels and had, instead of hoarding his Indian spoils, used them to further the welfare of his people, how different the concluding years of his reign might have been. However, he cancelled his edict for the remission of taxation in Iran, plunged his people once more into ceaseless wars, and taxed them more remorselessly than ever.

In the administration of his realm, Nadir continued the system of the Safavis under which the larger provinces were each under a Beglar-begi or Governor-General, while the lesser provinces were under Khans or Governors. Under Nadir there were three Beglarbegis—in Khurasan, Adharbaijan, and Fars. He took care to appoint to all these positions

men on whom he felt he could rely, and, to make sure that he was being well served, he sent other officials to spy on them. He used himself to go most carefully through the revenue returns of each province or district through which he passed, and woe betide the luckless official whose accounts failed to satisfy the conqueror.

As regards religion, there seems no doubt that, whatever he may have been in his youth, Nadir was a sceptic in later life. His espousal of the Sunni cause and his creation of the Ja'fari sect were merely political moves and had no religious significance. What seems at first sight paradoxical is Nadir's prodigality in regard to the great Shi'a shrine of the Imam Riza at Meshed. He made very substantial gifts to this shrine, one of the chief of which was the gold with which the famous "Golden Gate" was made. His earlier donations to the shrine may have been designed to gain the goodwill of the Shi'a clergy. In later times, his object was doubtless purely secular—namely, the embellishment of the chief building of his capital city. A historian of Isfahan, Muhammad Mahdi by name (who is to be carefully distinguished from his namesake, the biographer of Nadir), states that the Shah once had a talk with a holy man on the subject of Paradise. After he had listened to a long description of its wonders and delights, he asked: "Are there such things as war and the overcoming of one's enemy in Paradise?" When the holy man replied in the negative, Nadir remarked: "How then can there be any delights there?"

A number of writers have compared Nadir with other great conquerors; he has often been termed the second Alexander or the Napoleon of the East. But by far the closest parallel is with Tamerlane. Like him, Nadir was of Turanian race. He was also unlettered and of boundless ambition. Further, he was a born leader, and he was relentless to evil-doers. By a curious coincidence, Nadir's second wife was a namesake of Tamerlane's daughter-in-law, Gauhar Shad. But it was no coincidence that, when Nadir's eldest grandson was born in 1734, he was given the name of Shah Rukh, for by then Nadir had begun deliberately to model himself upon Tamerlane.

In a book on Nadir which I published last year, I expressed the opinion that Nadir, despite all his faults, was a very great man. A reviewer has taken me to task for saying that, but I still maintain that a man who could, without help or influence, rise from nothing to the position of arbiter of Asia must indeed have been great.

In answer to a question regarding the Ja'fari sect, the lecturer said

that the reason for the formation of this sect was purely political. In point of doctrine, it did not differ from any of the four existing Sunni sects; as each of the Imams of these four sects had a column (*rukʿn*) in the Ka'ba at Mecca assigned to him, Nadir desired that a fifth column should be erected there for the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, after whom the new sect was called; this was one of the points to which the Turkish *'ulama* took great exception.

The fact that Ja'far as-Sadiq, who was one of the twelve Imams of the Shi'a, was a great exponent of the doctrines of that sect was doubtless very objectionable from the ultra-orthodox Turkish point of view.*

The Chairman, when thanking the lecturer, spoke of the excellent selection of pictures with which it was illustrated. Dr. Lockhart was master of his subject and they must thank him warmly in the name of the Society for his excellent lecture.

* Dr. Lockhart has sent the following additional information for inclusion in the Journal:

It seems probable that Nadir chose Ja'far as-Sadiq as the patron saint, so to speak, of the new sect in order to make it more palatable to his subjects, the majority of whom were Shi'as at heart. By so doing, however, he gave offence to the Turkish *'ulama*. The Imam Ja'far had, in fact, formed a sect, known as the Ja'fari, in opposition to the four orthodox sects.

According to the *Qisasu'l-Ulama* (a series of biographies of Shi'a theologians), by Muhammad ibn Sulaiman, of Tunakabun, another attempt to found a Ja'fari sect was made in the Buwaihid period. A certain Sayyid Murtaza urged the Caliph to recognize the Shi'a as a fifth division of the *Ijma'*, under the name of the Ja'fari, in order that, by ranking with the Hanafis, Malikis, Shafi'is and Hanbalis, they would no longer have to practise dissimulation (*taqiyya*). The project fell through, because the Caliph demanded, as the price of his compliance, a sum far beyond the means of Sayyid Murtaza and his adherents.