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[Publications](#) [Book reviews](#) [Site search](#) [Internet](#)
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The Dating of the Reign of Muhammad Shah and Nadir Shah’s invasion of India.

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For historical research one often has to convert the Hegira date to an AD date or the other way around. When doing this, one is often confronted with differences. When the difference in date appears to be approximately 11 days, it is clear that this is due to mixing up the Gregorian calendar with the Julian calendar. In the same article, dates can be found either according to the Julian calendar or the Gregorian calendar. When other people refer to these articles, the same mistake is usually copied. It is very important when using original sources (which is always preferred) to realise which era the AD date should be converted to.

Introduction of the Gregorian calendar

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced a new calendar to replace the Julian calendar in which the year was slightly longer. Most Roman-Catholic countries in Europe then adopted the new calendar, but the Protestant as well as the Greek-Orthodox countries changed to it much later¹. England adopted the new calendar in 1752. In that year, the old Julian calendar changed to the new Gregorian calendar, when 3 September 1752 became 14 September 1752. This corresponds to the Hegira month of Dhu’l-Qa’da, AH 1165. This was a 30-day month and the calculation is as follows:

Hegira calendar	Christian Calendar
AH 1165. Dhu’l-Qa’da	AD 1752
1 st to 3 rd	31 st August to 2 nd September - Old Style
4 th to 30 th	14 th September to 10 th October - New Style

Therefore, dates in original British documents, like those of the British East India Company, before the 3rd September 1752 should be calculated according to the Julian calendar. All dates mentioned thereafter correspond to the Julian calendar.

Muhammad Shah’s regnal years

Another mistake sometimes made, is the date from which the regnal years commenced. A notable example is the reign of Muhammad Shah and the dating of Nadir Shah’s invasion of India, which took place during his reign. Pridmore² provides fine tables from all the Mughal emperors from Aurangzeb ‘Alamgir to Shah ‘Alam II and gives the date when the Hegira year commenced as well as the *julus* or regnal year. However, he made a mistake in respect of the date when the regnal years of Muhammad Shah commenced. The date of accession of Muhammad Shah is 15 Dhu’l-Qa’da 1131 AH (19-09-1719) and Pridmore calculated the commencement of the *julus* or regnal years according to this date. According to Khafi Khan³, however, it was settled that the beginning of his reign should date from the deposition of Farrukhsiyar and should be so entered in the Government records. Accordingly, the regnal year of Muhammad Shah commenced from 9th Rab‘i II 1131 = 18 February 1719. This differs 7

months from his actual accession and leads inevitably to misinterpretations of the regnal years and the AH. date shown on his coins. Muhammad Shah ruled for less than 30 lunar years and Pridmore therefore had no explanation for coins with the regnal year 31; but if counted from his adopted accession date from the deposition of Farrukhsiyar, his reign lasted 30 lunar years and 18 days. The coins with regnal year 31 were struck during the period of these 18 days.

During Muhammad Shah's reign the devastating invasion of Nadir Shah took place. Nadir Shah's stay in India lasted for only two months, and with such a discrepancy in regnal years, this soon leads to wrong conclusions.

Table with the commencement of the AH dates and regnal years of Muhammad Shah in accordance with the Julian calendar

Accession date: 15 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1131 AH = 19-09-1719AD.
 Official date of accession is the date of the deposition of Farrukhsiyar: 9 Rab'i II 1131AH = 18-02-1719 AD.

AH date	Commenced AD	Ry.	Date Ry.	Commenced.
1131	13-11-1718	1	18-02-1719	
1132	03-11-1719	2	08-02-1720	
1133	22-10-1720	3	27-01-1721	
1134	11-10-1721	4	16-01-1722	
1135	01-10-1722	5	06-01-1723	
1136	20-09-1723	6	26-12-1723	
1137	09-09-1724	7	15-12-1724	
1138	28-08-1725	8	04-12-1725	
1139	18-08-1726	9	23-11-1726	
1140	08-08-1727	10	13-11-1727	
1141	27-07-1728	11	01-11-1728	
1142	16-07-1729	12	21-10-1729	
1143	06-07-1730	13	11-10-1730	
1144	25-06-1731	14	30-09-1731	
1145	13-06-1732	15	18-09-1732	
1146	03-06-1733	16	08-09-1733	
1147	23-05-1734	17	28-08-1734	
1148	13-05-1735	18	18-08-1735	
1149	01-05-1736	19	06-08-1736	
1150	20-04-1737	20	26-07-1737	
1151	10-04-1738	21	16-07-1738	Nadir Shah in Delhi
1152	30-03-1739	22	05-07-1739	9-XII-1151AH = 09-03-1739
1153	18-03-1740	23	23-06-1740	7-II- 1152AH = 05-05-1739
1154	08-03-1741	24	13-06-1741	
1155	25-02-1742	25	02-06-1742	
1156	14-02-1743	26	22-05-1743	
1157	04-02-1744	27	11-05-1744	
1158	23-01-1745	28	29-04-1745	
1159	13-01-1746	29	20-04-1746	
1160	02-01-1747	30	09-04-1747	
1161	22-12-1747	31	29-03-1748	

Died 26 Rab'i II 1161AH = 15-04-1748
 Length of reign 30 lunar years + 18 days.

Nadir Shah's invasion

Nadir Shah's invasion of India has led to similar errors in the date. Two recent articles, one by Michael Mitchiner and Stan Goron⁴ and another by Ken Wiggins⁵ contain dates which are either according to the Julian or the Gregorian calendar. Both used the present Gregorian calendar for the AD dates, but the conversion of the AH dates were carried out in accordance with the Julian calendar.

For this reason, a short account of Nadir Shah's career and the history of Nadir Shah's invasion of India are given below⁶. Nadir Shah, or Tamasp Quli, was born in 1688 and became king with the title *shahanshah* on 26 February 1736. Early in 1737 he set out for Qandahar to fight the Afghans. On 12-03-1738 Qandahar fell to him and was renamed Nadirabad. As Muhammad Shah did not keep his promise to prevent the Afghans from escaping into Mughal territory, Nadir decided to invade India.

On 5 May 1738 he began his march into Northern Afghanistan. Kabul was taken on 19 June 1738. One month later he left Kabul for Lahore, where he received the keys of the city on 12 January 1739.

On 26 January he continued his invasion of India. On 5 February, Sarhind was reached. The Mughals were much alarmed and prepared for battle near Karnal, which took place on 13 February 1739. Due to the lack of co-ordination between the different armies of the Mughals and an over-rash action from which even the army of the Nizam remained aloof, the Mughals were severely defeated. Sa'adat Khan, the Subahdar of Awadh, surrendered to Nadir Shah and arranged a meeting between Muhammad Shah and Nadir Shah. This was an altogether humiliating affair. After a second visit on 24 February, the Mughal Emperor became virtually imprisoned in Nadir's camp, as a demand for a war indemnity of 20 crores had not yet been paid. In this way the key to open the whole Empire of Hindustan came into the hands of Nadir Shah.

In March 1739 Nadir Shah, with Sa'adat Khan, as the Emperor's representative and Tahmasp Khan Jalair as Nadir's plenipotentiary agent, proceeded to Delhi with a strong Persian escort where on 27 February the keys of the palaces and imperial treasuries were handed over to Tahmasp by Lutfullah Khan, the governor of the city. On the 7th Muhammad Shah, an arrow's flight behind Nadir, arrived at the Shalimar gardens north of Delhi. Next day Muhammad Shah went to his palace to prepare it to receive his "guest".

On 9 March 1739 Nadir Shah entered the city of Delhi, where on the next day he was proclaimed sovereign from the pulpits of the Jama Masjid and other places of prayer.

The Delhi massacre

The same day a rumour started that Nadir Shah had been treacherously shot dead at the instigation of Muhammad Shah, by a woman-guard of the palace. The rumour was readily believed and spread like wildfire and subsequently the Persians in the streets of Delhi were attacked by the local people. The riots went on all-night and about 3000 Persians were killed. Next morning, 11 March, Nadir Shah rode out to the middle of Chandi Chowk, opposite the police station (kotwal) and close to the Sarafa Bazar. After ascertaining himself from which wards and classes of men the crimes of the night before had proceeded, he unsheathed his sword as a signal for the general massacre which lasted from 9 o'clock in the morning to 2 p.m. whereby nearly 20.000 people were slain.

The total indemnity was estimated by Nadir's Secretary at nearly 15 crores of rupees in cash (150,000,000 equal to aprox. 1,695,000 kg in silver or aprox. 113,000 kg in gold), besides a vast amount in jewels, clothing, furniture and other things. The grand total from all sources amounted to 70 crores. Money was extorted from all sources, particularly the merchants and nobility. Whole families were ruined and many committed suicide, like the court agent for the Governor of Bengal who was beaten-up and took poison with his whole family.

During this time Nadir lived at Delhi as king, coins were issued and the public prayer read in his name as sovereign with the title *shahanshah* (king of kings).

Conditions in the province of Bengal

The governors of the provinces of India had to proclaim him as their suzerain and in some instances minted his coins in the provincial mints. Bhattacharyya⁷ gives us an interesting inside view of the conditions in the province of Bengal which comprised Bengal, Orissa and Bihar. While the centre of the Delhi Empire was tottering under the impact of Nadir Shah's invasion, Shuja' al-Din, the Nawab of Bengal (1727-'39) died. His son and successor, Safaraz Khan, received an order from Delhi in March 1739 "to proclaim Shah Nadir and to coin siccās in his name". But even before Nadir Shah's coins could circulate in the market, confusing reports began to arrive from Delhi and created a good deal of panic in the monetary market of the province. In a letter, dated 5 April 1739, addressed by the

Patna factory to the Council in Calcutta it is mentioned: "It is very remarkable that but one man pretends to have seen Nadir Shah and that he has not seated himself on the throne but that Muhammad Shah has still the name of King and that siccās have not yet been stamped in the Persian King's name, though the Nabob of Patna (Ilahwirdi Khan) did, on advice from Delhi, coin in one day's time 1100 gold mohurs and 14.000 siccās, but then immediately put a stop to coining any more in Shah Nadir's name. These rupees are now at 2 per cent discount and the gold mohurs are each four annas worse than Muhammad Shah's - all which seem to confirm the current report that the Persian King is not really in the country."⁸ A rupee in the name of Nadir Shah struck at Patna (on the coins known as Azimabad) is published by Whitehead⁹; of the gold coins, unfortunately, none have come to light so far.

The depreciation of Nadir Shah's coins was also noticeable at Murshidabad, where the money market passed through considerable uncertainty. Bal Mukhtaram Atmaram, a prominent banker, on whom two bills for Rs 50.000 siccās were drawn in favour of the English, was unable to honour them. The council at Kasimbazar therefore wanted a supply of money from Calcutta, "Fatehchand having refused to lend any more unless they would take Nadir Shah's siccās, which pass at present only as Arcot". They were unable to despatch money or treasure to the Kasimbazar factory saying that they could not think it proper to take Shah Nadir's siccās at the rate which Fatehchand offered them, "the loss being so very considerable". The East India Company authority at Calcutta therefore directed the Kasimbazar Council "to take up what sums they might want elsewhere" to carry on their business until they could supply them with proper specie from Calcutta. Dacca seems not to have experienced much difficulty, since the merchants there accepted Madras rupees. By the end of May 1739, the tension caused in Bengal by Nadir Shah's invasion of Delhi seemed to have considerably subsided. Reports about the normal circulation of business began to flow from the imperial capital. It was reported at Murshidabad, before the end of May 1739, that the King of Persia had left Delhi and was gone to the Shalimar Gardens (Lahore) and from there he intended to march back to Persia. Upon this news the Government ordered Nadir's seals (dies) to be broken and new ones to be made in the old King's name.¹⁰

Departure of Nadir Shah

In Delhi, on 1 May 1739, Nadir held a darbar and urged all the nobles and officers of India to obey and please their Emperor. With his own hands, he placed the crown of Hindustan on the head of Muhammad Shah. The Emperor bowed low in gratitude and said "As the generosity of the ShahānShah has made me a second time master of a crown and a throne and exalted me among the crowned heads of the world, I beg to offer as my tribute the provinces of my Empire west of the river Indus, from Kashmir to Sindh, and in addition the subah of Tattha and the ports subordinate to it."¹¹ From now on the trans-Indus provinces and Afghanistan were lost to the Mughal Empire. A considerable territory east of the Indus had also been seized by Nadir by right of victory over local subahdars before the battle of Karnal. His right to their revenue was not disputed, though they continued to be governed by Muhammad Shah's officers. The governor of Lahore signed an agreement to send Nadir Shah 20 lakhs (2,000,000) of rupees annually on this account, to remove the reason for any retention of a Persian garrison being left east of the Indus.

Nadir give them valuable advice on the art of government and decreed that henceforth farmans should be issued again on Muhammad Shah's behalf and the *khutba* and coins should bear his name and title. *Khutba* and coinage in Nadir's name, after having been current in India for two months, were now discontinued. On this day Nadir sent off four farmans of his own to Nasir Jang, Nasir al-Daula, Raja Sahu and the Peshwa Baji Rao, urging them to respect the settlement he had made and to obey Muhammad Shah in future. Then laden with plundered wealth, he left Delhi on the 5 May 1739, and, having made a short halt at Shalimar gardens outside the city, he marched in the direction of Sonapat.

The peasants rose in his rear and plundered stragglers and the hindmost part of his baggage train. It is said that he lost 1000 transport animals before reaching Thanesar. In anger he ordered massacres here and at some other towns on the way. From Sarhind, he proceeded to the foot of the Himalayas. Due to the swollen rivers of the Punjab, he was considerably delayed and finally on 3 July he crossed the Chinab River about 42 miles north of Wazirabad. Zakariya Khan, the subahdar of Lahore and Multan, had accompanied Nadir to this point. Then, by way of the Khaiber Pass the Persians returned to Kabul and out of Hindustan. The immense booty that he carried away from India did not remain long in the royal treasury of Persia. Eight years after this invasion, Nadir Shah was assassinated and in the troubled times that ensued; his hoarded treasures were plundered and dispersed, including the famous Peacock Throne.

The numismatic memory of Nadir Shah's invasion east of the Indus.

In the current catalogues of Krause Mishler, the coins of Nadir Shah struck in India are largely missing. The coins are neither listed under Iran, nor under India. Thus, a complete catalogue of all the coins struck in name of Nadir Shah is listed below including references to the catalogues or journals in which they are published as well as to the cabinets in which they are preserved.

The basic reference is the Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore by R.B. Whitehead, Vol. III, Coins of Nadir Shah and the Durrani Dynasty, Oxford 1934. Here below referred to as 'PMC'.

Denomination	Date	reference	collection
Ahmadabad			
Rupee	1152/-	PMC-11, Pl. I-3, coll. British Museum Idem, Ashmolean Museum	
1/2 rupee	1152/-	White King Sale Catalogue (1905) Part III-2781.	
'Azimabad (Patna)			
Rupee	1151/Ahd	PMC-43, Pl. I-11, coll. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin	
Mohur	1151/Ahd?	Reportedly 1100 mohurs were struck by the Nawab of Patna ¹² , but none have turned up so far.	
Lahore, Dar al-Saltana			
Double mohur ¹³	1151/-	PMC-10, Pl. I-1, coll. British Museum.	
Rupee	1152/-	PMC-49, Pl. I-14 coll. British Museum.	
Double rupee	1152/-	PMC-50, Pl. I-13 coll. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin	
Muhammadabad Banaras			
Rupee	115x/Ahd	Spink Numismatic Circular LXXXVIII, Dec.1980 ONS Newsletter no. 148, Spring 1996, p. 23.	
Multan, Dar al-Aman			
Rupee	1152/-	PMC-58, Pl. II-1 coll. British Museum	
Double rupee	1152/-	PMC-59 coll. Hunterian Coll. Glasgow	
Murshidabad			
Rupee	1151/Ahd	PMC-51, Num. Chronicle 1930, p.216-218, pl.XV-6, coll. Christ Church Library, Oxford.	
Rupee	1152/Ahd	PMC-52, Pl. I-15 coll. Ashmolean Museum Idem, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin	
1/2 rupee	1152/Ahd	PMC-53, Pl. I-16 coll. Ashmolean Museum	
1/4 rupee	1152/Ahd	PMC-54, Pl. I-17 coll. Ashmolean Museum Idem, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin	
1/8 rupee	1152/Ahd	PMC-55, coll. Ashmolean Museum Idem, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin	
1/16 rupee	1152/Ahd	PMC-56, coll. Ashmolean Museum	
Murshidabad (Sarhind)			
Rupee	1152/-	PMC-57, Pl. I-18 coll. British Museum	
This rupee is wrongly attributed by Whitehead and is actually of Dar al-Aman Sarhind. See under Sarhind; it is of a different variety than the rupee published by Whitehead under Sarhind (PMC-40).			
Shahjahanabad, Dar al-Khilafa (Delhi)			
Rupee	1151/-	PMC-41 coll. Punjab Museum, Lahore Idem, Lingen	



Rupee 1152/- PMC-42, Pl. I-10coll. Punjab Museum, Lahore

Sarhind, Dar al-Aman

Rupee 1152/- PMC-40, Pl. I-9 coll. British Museum.

Rupee (var.) 1152/Ahd PMC-57, Pl. I-18coll. British Museum.
Idem, Lingen



The sovereignty of Nadir Shah over Hindustan should be counted from 10 of March 1739, when he was proclaimed sovereign from the pulpit of the Jama Masjid and had the *khutba* read in his name. The Hegira year 1151 terminated on 29 March 1739.

Coins in the name of Nadir Shah with the date AH1152 were produced during the period between 30 March 1739 up to 1 May 1739, when Muhammad Shah was installed again as Emperor of Hindustan.

The interregal period of Nadir Shah took place during the 21st regnal year of Muhammad Shah (16 July 1738 - 4 July 1739). The coins in the name of Muhammad Shah with date AH1151/Ry.21 were struck before Nadir Shah’s invasion and those dated AH1152/Ry.21 after the invasion (1 May 1739 - 4 July 1739).



The suggestion, once made to me, that the coins of Muhammad Shah with regnal year 22 were the freshly minted rupees in the treasury when Nadir occupied Delhi and subsequently formed part of the immense booty taken by Nadir Shah from Delhi, cannot be correct. The story was that the Sikhs and Jats, who rose in his rear during his march back, plundered a portion of his baggage, including the rupees of year 22. The large number of these coins which must have appeared in trade all over Rajasthan may have been the reason that the princely state of Jaisalmer adopted this particular rupee as their own state issue., As shown by the dates above, however, this must be regarded as just another romantic myth.

Coin inscriptions

The following inscriptions and couplets appear on Nadir Shah's coins struck in India.

PMC-10 and 50 (Lahore)

Obv.: *nadir al-sultan*

Nadir the Sultan

Rev.: *zarb dar al-saltana lahor, khallad allah mulkahu (+date)*

Struck at the seat of the Sultanate Lahore, May God perpetuate his Kingdom

PMC-11 (Ahmadabad), 40 (Sarhind), 41 & 42 (Shahjahanabad), 49 (Lahore), 58 & 59 (Multan).

Obv.: *sultan hast bar salatin jahan, shahanshah nadir sahib qiran*

Sultan over the Sultans of the world, King of Kings Nadir, lord of the fortunate conjunction of planets

Rev.: *zarb (mint) khallad allah mulkahu (+ date)*

Struck at (mint), May God perpetuate his Kingdom

PMC-43 ('Azimabad)

Obv.: *sikka mubarak bad shah ghazi nadir shah. (+date)*

Auspicious coin of the victorious king Nadir Shah

Rev.: *zarb 'azimabad sana ahd julus maimanat manus*

Struck at 'Azimabad in the first year of his reign of tranquil prosperity

PMC- 51-56 (Murshidabad)

Obv.: *dadeh zib tazeh ru bar mihr wa mah, sikka nadir shah giif panah (+date)*

Given beauty fresh of face on the sun and moon (gold and silver) by the stamp of Nadir Shah, Asylum of the Universe.

Rev.: *zarb murshidabad sana ahd julus maimanat manus*

Struck at Murshidabad in the first year of his reign of tranquil prosperity

PMC-57 (Sarhind)

Obv.: *sikka mubarak nadir shah bad shah sahib qiran (+date)*

Auspicious coin of king Nadir Shah, lord of the fortunate conjunction of planets.

Rev.: *zarb dar al-aman sarhind sana ahd khallad allah mulkahu wa saltanahu,*

Struck at Dar al-Aman Sarhind in the first year of his reign, May God perpetuate his Kingdom and his autocracy

The Num. Circ. LXXXVIII no.12 / ONS-NL 148 (Muhammadabad Banareas)

Obv.: *sikka mubarak bad shah ghazi nadir shah (+ date)*

Auspicious coin of the victorious king Nadir Shah

Rev.: *zarb muhammadabad banaras sana ahd julus wala (mairanat manus)*

Struck at Muhammadabad Banaras in the first year of his reign (of tranquil prosperity)

1. H. Herrli, Zahlen, Ziffern, Zeitrechnungen; Ein Numismatisch Handbuch, Cologne 1989, pag. 92.
2. F.Pridmore, The Coins of the Commonwealth of Nations; part 4 India, volume I East India Company Presidency Series c1642-1835, London 1976, p. xxi-xxv.
3. S.H. Hodivala, Chronology of the reigns of the Mughal Emperors, Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics, Bombay 1976, p.285.
4. M.B. Mitchiner and S.L. Goron, An Indian rupee struck at Banares in the name of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah, The Numismatic Circular, vol. LXXXVIII-12, December 1980 p.445-446.
5. Ken W. Wiggins, A rupee of Nadir Shah Afshari struck at Benares, ONS Newsletter 148, Spring 1996, p.23.
6. Willam Irvine, Later Mughals,(edited and augmented with the history of Nadir Shah's Invasion by Jadunath Sarkar), reprint New Delhi 1971, p.307-379.
7. S. Bhattacharyya, The East India Company & the Economy of Bengal from 1704 to 1740, Calcutta 1969, p.118-120.
8. Bhattacharyya (1969), quoting from the Consultations, 23 April 1739.
9. R.B. Whitehead, Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore, Vol. III Coins of Nadir Shah and the Durrani Dynasty, Oxford 1934, no.43-pl.I.11.
10. Bhattacharyya (1969), quoting from the Consultations, 31 May 1739.
11. Irvine (1971), p.374.
12. Bhattacharyya (1969), quoting from the Consultations, 23 April 1739.
13. The double mohur is of poor style and abnormal weight (23,74 g.), its genuinity therefore may be doubted. The coin was acquired by the B.M. from Mr. C.J. Rogers, and was published in the Num. Chronicle 1882, Pl.XV.