



ISARDĀS NĀGAR

ISARDĀS NĀGAR, or Iṣwar Das Nāgar (b. Patan, 1066/1655; d. after 1163/1749), a Brahman of the Nāgar caste from the city of Patan, Gujarat, a Hindu historian writing in Persian. His history, *Fotuḥāt-e ʿālamgiri*, is a contemporary account of the reign of Awrangzēb, starting with the war of succession following Šāh Jahān's illness in 1657, up to the thirty-fourth year of his reign (1101-02/1690-91). The author has provided some autobiographical information in the preface and in the concluding sections. As a young man, he was in the service of Qāzi Šayḵ-al-Eslām b. ʿAbd-al-Wahhāb, the chief judge of the imperial army (*qāzi-e laškar*), until 1684, when the judge resigned from his post and left for a pilgrimage to Mecca. Isardās then passed into the service of Šajāʿat Khan, the governor of Gujarat (1685-1701), who appointed him as revenue collector (*amin*) in Jōḍpur. There he developed strong relations with the Rajput notables, which enabled him to arrange for the submission of Durgādās Rāthor, the Jōḍpur chief, who supported the rebellion of Awrangzēb's fourth son, Moḥammad-Akbar. He also succeeded in recovering Sayf-al-Nesāʾ and Boland Aḵtar, whom their father, Moḥammad-Akbar, had left in the custody of the Rāthors before fleeing to Persia. He personally escorted the two princes to the imperial court. For this diplomatic service, Awrangzēb rewarded him with a robe of honor, a command of 250 men, and a *jāgir* at Mirat. During all this period, as well as the time he was in the service of the Šayḵ-al-Eslām, Isardās was in an excellent position to collect first-hand information about contemporary historical events, both on the authority of high-ranking officers and from his own personal experience and observation.



Two manuscripts of his *Fotuḥāt-e 'ālamgiri* are known to exist (Storey, pp. 587-88). The first one, dated 1246/1830, is kept in the British Library (Add. 23,884; see Rieu, *Persian Manuscripts*, pp. 269-70), and the second one, not dated, at the Edinburgh University Library (no. 218; see Hukk, pp. 188-89). An edited version was published with an English translation in 1995. The edited Persian text is mainly based on the first manuscript but it also includes the variant readings and interpolations noticed in the second manuscript (Isardās Nāgar, 1995, pp. i-iii).

The work had been planned, according to the preface, to be divided into seven sections (*sawānehā*), but this format was not observed throughout, and only the first four chapters are marked by distinct headings; the rest of the chronicle is divided by rubrics that are not numbered (up to twenty-two parts).

The book starts with the account of the war of succession between the four sons of Šāh Jahān and the predominance of Awrangzēb, followed by accounts of Aw-rangzēb's exploits in keeping the empire under control and putting down riots and rebellions. Isardās is obviously indulgent towards Awrangzēb, as were the other Hindu chronicle of his reign (e.g., Sujān Rāi Bhandari and Bhim Sen Saxena; see Waseem, pp. 56-57), but he also demonstrates great regard toward other royal family figures, particularly Awrangzēb's elder brother Dārā Šokōh (q.v.), who is depicted as receiving poor counseling and whose defeat in the war of succession is attributed to treachery. Particularly original and useful is the information concerning Gujarat events and the Mughal-Maratha struggles. The flow of narration is sometimes interrupted by the inclusion of verses with a sententious aim. The last events described are those relating to the dispute between Awrangzēb and Durgadās, in which, as mentioned above, Isardās played a main role.

Fotuḥāt-e 'ālamgiri, an indispensable source for the historical reconstruction of Awrangzēb's reign (Sarkar, 1958, esp. IV, pp. 485-89), seems to have been compiled despite Awrangzēb's banning of the contemporary official chronicles (on this point, see Wasseem, pp. 15-16, 92-98), although it was completed in 1163/1749-50, long after Awrangzēb's death, when the author was at a very advanced age (Ishwar Das, p. v, n. 9). According to the concluding section of the text, the book was written "for the information of . . . Lāla Kōṣṭhāl" (Ishwar Das, 1995, p. 173), possibly a grandson of the author.



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