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'Hashtadun dispute. Notes of Brigadier-General MacLean's interview with the Shah at Brighton.'

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	IOR/L/PS/18/C61
Date(s)	1 Aug 1889 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 folio
Copyright for document	Open Government Licence

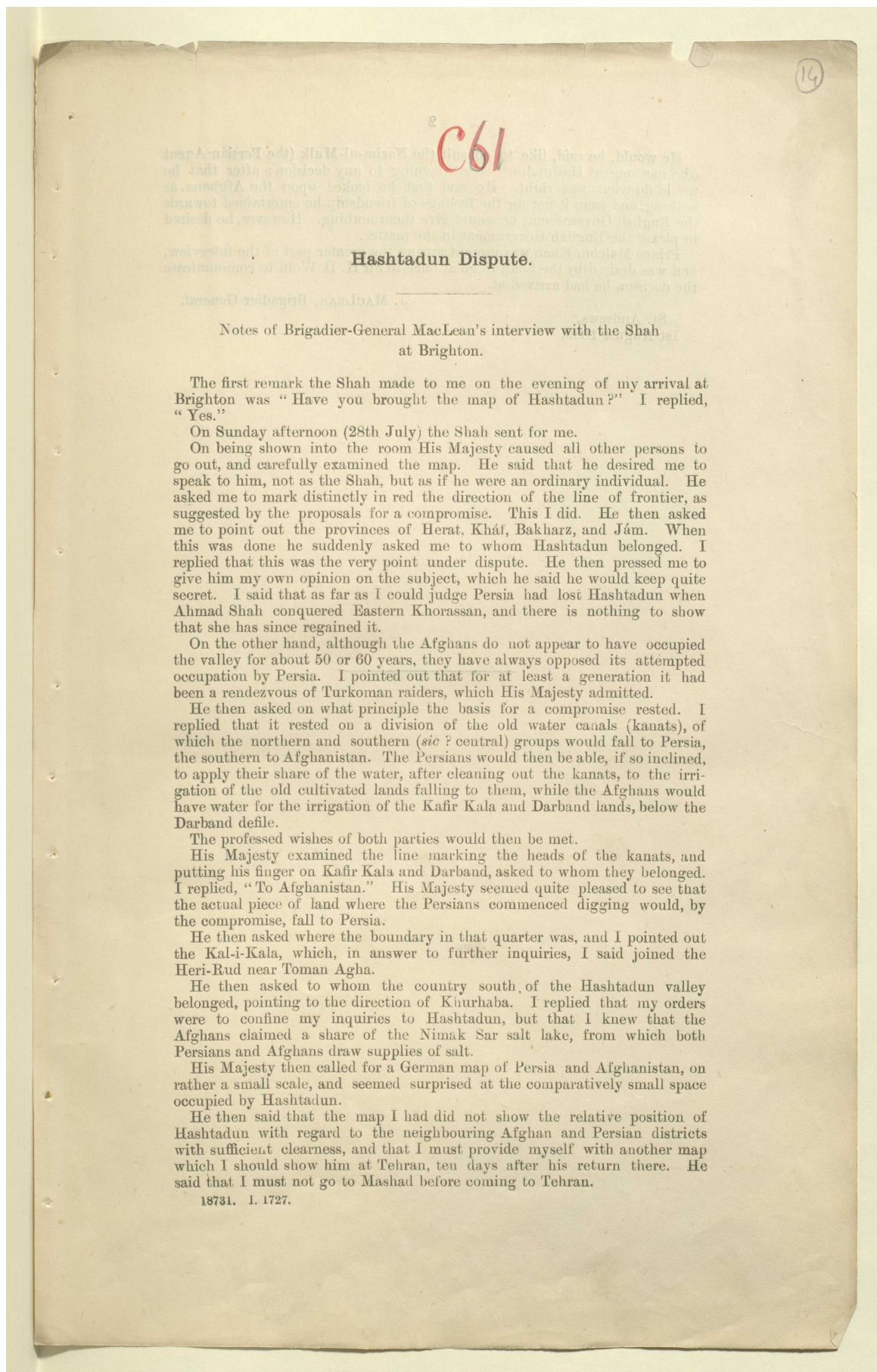


About this record

This document describes an interview between Brigadier-General MacLean and the Shah of Persia [Iran] at Brighton in 1889. The discussion centres on whether Hashtadun [Hashtadan] belongs to Persia or Afghanistan. The division of old water canals between the countries is suggested as a compromise which may settle the dispute.

Please note that Major-General Charles Smith Maclean is mistakenly referred to as Brigadier-General J Maclean in the document.

'Hashtadun dispute. Notes of Brigadier-General MacLean's interview with the Shah at Brighton.' [14r] (1/2)



Hashtadun Dispute.

Notes of Brigadier-General MacLean's interview with the Shah at Brighton.

The first remark the Shah made to me on the evening of my arrival at Brighton was "Have you brought the map of Hashtadun?" I replied, "Yes."

On Sunday afternoon (28th July) the Shah sent for me.

On being shown into the room His Majesty caused all other persons to go out, and carefully examined the map. He said that he desired me to speak to him, not as the Shah, but as if he were an ordinary individual. He asked me to mark distinctly in red the direction of the line of frontier, as suggested by the proposals for a compromise. This I did. He then asked me to point out the provinces of Herat, Kháf, Bakharz, and Jám. When this was done he suddenly asked me to whom Hashtadun belonged. I replied that this was the very point under dispute. He then pressed me to give him my own opinion on the subject, which he said he would keep quite secret. I said that as far as I could judge Persia had lost Hashtadun when Ahmad Shah conquered Eastern Khorassan, and there is nothing to show that she has since regained it.

On the other hand, although the Afghans do not appear to have occupied the valley for about 50 or 60 years, they have always opposed its attempted occupation by Persia. I pointed out that for at least a generation it had been a rendezvous of Turkoman raiders, which His Majesty admitted.

He then asked on what principle the basis for a compromise rested. I replied that it rested on a division of the old water canals (kanats), of which the northern and southern (*sic* ? central) groups would fall to Persia, the southern to Afghanistan. The Persians would then be able, if so inclined, to apply their share of the water, after cleaning out the kanats, to the irrigation of the old cultivated lands falling to them, while the Afghans would have water for the irrigation of the Kafir Kala and Darband lands, below the Darband defile.

The professed wishes of both parties would then be met.

His Majesty examined the line marking the heads of the kanats, and putting his finger on Kafir Kala and Darband, asked to whom they belonged. I replied, "To Afghanistan." His Majesty seemed quite pleased to see that the actual piece of land where the Persians commenced digging would, by the compromise, fall to Persia.

He then asked where the boundary in that quarter was, and I pointed out the Kal-i-Kala, which, in answer to further inquiries, I said joined the Heri-Rud near Toman Agha.

He then asked to whom the country south of the Hashtadun valley belonged, pointing to the direction of Khurhaba. I replied that my orders were to confine my inquiries to Hashtadun, but that I knew that the Afghans claimed a share of the Nimak Sar salt lake, from which both Persians and Afghans draw supplies of salt.

His Majesty then called for a German map of Persia and Afghanistan, on rather a small scale, and seemed surprised at the comparatively small space occupied by Hashtadun.

He then said that the map I had did not show the relative position of Hashtadun with regard to the neighbouring Afghan and Persian districts with sufficient clearness, and that I must provide myself with another map which I should show him at Tehran, ten days after his return there. He said that I must not go to Mashad before coming to Tehran.

18731. I. 1727.

