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THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY IN AFGHANISTAN (XVIITH–XXTH CENTURIES)

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical trajectory of the Armenian diaspora in Afghanistan, an understudied ethnic and religious minority. The study focuses on the modern period, tracing the community's full life cycle from its rise as an influential trade and craft group and integration into the elite Afghan society, to its subsequent rapid decline. The research emphasizes the mechanisms used to preserve collective identity within a foreign cultural environment, reconstructing the daily life and cultural practices of the Armenians using memoir sources. It is argued that the community's initial stability was due to the region's unique environment of religious tolerance prevalent in Afghan society at the time. The diaspora's crisis is attributed to both internal and external factors. A critical turning point was the loss of political immunity during the centralization of the state under Emir Abdur Rahman Khan. Ironically, their successful integration, culminating in a dynastic marriage during Dost Mohammad Khan's reign, eventually led to their vulnerability, making them hostages in local power struggles. Global geopolitical shifts, such as increased British influence and changing trade routes, further eroded the community's economic base. The conclusion highlights the need for continued comprehensive research, utilizing archival materials and future field studies in Afghanistan to further explore this subject.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Armenians, Armenian community

Author Info: Nessar, Omar M. — Ph.D. in History, Senior Researcher, Center for Near and Middle East Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russian Federation). E-mail: nessar@yandex.ru

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