

Malik Aḥmad: Life and Times (Part-II)

Abdur Rahman, Fazal Sher and Shakirullah

Abstract: This article is about the life and times of Malik Ahmad, a chief of the Yusufzai Pakhtuns. Since it is a long history of the chief so it has been divided into three parts. Here the 2nd part is focused whereas the first and third are published elsewhere.

Keywords: Malik Ahmad, Yusufzai, Hashtnagar, Swat, Kabul

Ever since the prediction of Shaikh Zangi b. Mullā Khalil, Rānrizai, Khwāzah Khel: “O Yūsufzais, go Swāt is our country, God has bestowed it upon us”, made at the time when the forces of Mīrzā Ulugh Beg made, it difficult for the Yūsufzais to live in the Kābul valley, the latter had a greedy eye on the fertile valley of the river Swāt; and when they succeeded in snatching Hashtnagar from the governor of Sultān Awes, the ruler of Swāt, the urge to grab Swāt accelerated and they initiated steps to give it a practical shape.

The precise date of this event has gone that AD 1515 would not be far wrong. If this is correct we can find the initial date of this what in modern terminology may be called the ‘Swāt operation’, for, we know from Khwāju (p.172) that conquest of that part of Swāt which was under the control of Sultān Awes took sixteen years. In the seventeenth year the remaining part then under the control of the Mitrāwis was also conquered. Thus it took the Yūsufzais nearly seventeen years to conquer the whole of Swāt. Deducting 17 from 1515 we get 1498. This then was the initial year of the ‘Swāt operation’.

Another important detail recorded by Khwāju is that Sultān Awes, the ruler of Swāt wedded a sister of Malik Aḥmad. Under what name this sister of Aḥmad was known is not mentioned. Nor does he give the date of this wedding. Some people might think that Khwāju, himself being a Pakhtūn, was bound by the Pakhtūn tradition

which discourages mentioning the names of ladies. But this does not appear to be the case, for, Khwāju very clearly mentions (p.76) Fātimah – the name of another sister of Malik Aḥmad. Commenting on the basic reason why the Gagiānis took sides with Mīrzā Ulugh Beg, the ruler of Kābul, Viś-à-viś the Khakhays, he says that Fātimah, daughter of Sultān Shāh and sister of Malik Aḥmad was initially betrothed to one of the relations of Shibli b. Tūri and Ḥasan b. Changā – both Changāzai, Mūsāzai Gagiānis. Another prospective suitor was a certain Ibrāhim b. Gadāi, Ilyāszai Yūsufzai, who was also promised the hand of Fātimah. But somehow or other Fātimah was finally betrothed to the Gagiāni. When Ibrahim came to know about it, he in desperation eloped with the girl taking her from Kābul to Kormah in the Keshki territory (Khwāju 1977: 76). This according to Khwāju became the main cause behind enmity between the Yūsufzais and Gagiānis, for, the latter thought that such an abduction was not possible without the considered connivance of Malik Sulimān, the Yūsufzai chief. The father of the girl, Sultān Shāh was still alive, and abducting the notice of the powerful Yūsufzai chief would have created a great turmoil and insurmountable problems for the abductor, had it not been done with the secret consent of Malik Sulimān.

The first time the Gagiānis gave full expression to this enmity was at the time of the battle of Ghwarah Marghah of which the exact date is not known, but as it took place shortly before the

Kābul message (c. 1485), there is reason to date it to about AD 1483. Now the normal marriageable age for a girl being twenty, Fatima must have reached this age limit at the time of her abduction. Deducting 20 from 1483 would give us the date of birth of Fātimah. According to this computation she was born about AD 1463. This shows that she was an elder sister of Malik Aḥmad who, as seen above, was born in about AD 1470.

How old was the other sister who was given in marriage to Sultān Awes at the time of her marriage we do not know. Neither is it plausible to think that the marriage would have taken place after the usurpation of almost half of the Sultān's dominions (from Hashtnagar to Mora) by the Yūsufzais in about AD 1495. The most likely time for such an occasion was when the destitute Yūsufzais reached the Doābah about AD 1490 and were in need of a helping hand which only the Sultān could provide. The Yūsufzais at the time of their arrival in the Doābah, remarks Khwāju, were poverty-stricken and without even the basic necessities of life. They often visited Swāt to sell their products such as Gur (raw sugar) and mats to earn their bread. It is from these merchants, we are told, that the Sultān came to know about Malik Aḥmad and his virgin sister sitting home unmarried. The Sultān proposed marriage, which was accepted. He then dispatched a high level delegation to fetch the bride to Swāt.

It must have taken two to three years for the information to trickle down through ordinary commercial contacts to the king. A date around AD 1492-93 may therefore be a reasonable guess. It is obvious that by the year 1493 Malik Aḥmad was 23 years old, and if his unnamed sister was three years younger, she would be 20, and if older than him, she would be 26. The latter seems to be the most probable case, for, it fits snugly into the unnaturally wide gap extending over seven years between the dates of birth of Malik Aḥmad

(1470) and that of his eldest sister Fatimah (1463). Thus the unnamed sister of Malik Aḥmad was born about AD 1466, and was approximately 27 at the time of her marriage, which by ordinary standards would be judged as a late marriage. Now wonder she did not have any children. She probably did not enjoy good health and died soon afterwards, almost five years after her marriage and before at least the commencement of the Swāt war (about 1498). This health problem may also be noticed in the early death of Malik Aḥmad who died at the age of 65 as mentioned above.

The family pattern that emerges is: two girls first, followed by one boy. Fātimah, the eldest, was followed by the nameless girl, then comes Malik Aḥmad.

The decision to invade Swāt was unanimously made in a meeting attended by Malik Aḥmad, Shaikh Mali, Malik Qarah, Mahmūd b. Yahya Akozai, 'Alāūdinzai and other Yūsufzai chiefs. It was decided to scale the mountainous border of Swāt at Moraḥ Ghākhay (pass). All the chiefs were accordingly instructed to bring their men and assemble at a point near the Pass. Akhūnd Darwezā (1960: 95) says it was the Shāh Kot Pass which the Afghāns were encamped before, but Khwāju states plainly that it was the Moraḥ Ghākhay (p.138). Perhaps they were threatening both, for, although the Shāh Kot is situated about midway between the Moraḥ and Mālākand Passes, the routes leading to the Moraḥ and Shāh Kot passes both branch off from Palai and Zormandai (old market) the one to the right, the mother to the left. Necessary information about Swāt had already been collected from merchants who went to and fro for trading salt and mats. It was with a view of getting a footing in Swāt that Malik Aḥmad gave his sister in marriage to the Sultān, Khwāju remarks. Some, indeed, say that numbers of the Yūsufzais and Mandanrs took service with the Sultān, Khwāju for this particular purpose. It was with a view to stopping leakage of information, Khwāju says, that the Sultān

himself stabbed his wife, the sister of Malik Aḥmad, to death.

Be it as it may, the Afghāns assembled their forces and endeavoured to get into Swāt by the Moraḥ Pass and several times attempted to force it without success. After spending nearly two months in this attempt the Afghān chiefs sent spies to attempt the Mālākand Pass, father to the west. The report they received was that the garrison which was commanded by Shāh Awes and Farrukhzād, two of the greatest of Sultān Awes Dihgān nobles, was negligent and might be easily surprised. Knowing that the Moraḥ was commanded by the redoubtable Mīr Handā who had thrown up breastworks and *sangars* at different points and was in a unique position to hurl rolleys of stones on the invaders which made it impossible to proceed any further, the Yūsufzai chiefs decided to move to the Mālākand during the night.

It was determined therefore that after the evening meal the major portion of the force should stay behind in the old camp and kindle watch-fires as usual, so that the Swātis should imagine that the whole of the Afghāns were in camp. The Afghān women began to sing songs in which they boasted of the prowess of their tribes, and the want of manhood of their opponents, and that they should be brought to battle next day. The Swātis noticing this directed all their watchfulness to this point and neglected to guard the Mālākand Pass as cautiously as before.

The main force marched at night and at dawn the next morning; reached the position occupied by the Swātis in the Mālākand Ghākhay, and found the garrison asleep. The Yūsufzais and their allies fell upon them and began to slaughter them. Shāh Awes (or Wes) and Farrukhzād, with the remnant, fled towards Tānrah (present Thāna); Mīr Handā, who had held the Moraḥ Pass so well, on hearing that the other had been forced, retired from it with his forces, and also made towards

Thāna to secure his own home.

Tānrah, Khwāju says (p.135) is actually “Atan-Jāe” which in the Gibari language means the “Place of Jirgaḥ”. Whenever there is a problem the ruling class get together at this place for consultation. The language of the ruling class, he further remarks, is Gibari while the natives speak their own (Kohistani) language. It is the same place, Khwāju continues, in the vicinity of which, at an earlier occasion, when Malik Aḥmad arrived in Swāt to condole the death of his sister, was told to stay at a place which subsequently came to be known as Bakhtay Dheri, after the name of Bakhtay son of Mīr Jān Shāh Sadozai. This was an uneven place and, at the time when Khwāju wrote, there was a mosque here at the top of a high spot.

Khwāju also narrates a story concerning this place, which on the face of it appears to be an attempt to highlight the rudeness of the enemy vis-a-vis the polite demeanour of the Yūsufzais. As the story goes Malik Aḥmad went to offer condolence for the second time. He was still with the Shāh Awes, when Mīr Handā suddenly appeared in the camp of Malik Aḥmad at Bakhtay Dheri. He was given full respect by those in the camp including servants. But Mīr Handā behaved high-handedly. Using provocative language he spurted out: “I have heard that you intend to conquer Swāt! (let Sevāt alone) If you have any courage come and face me, I challenge you”. The Yūsufzais kept quiet and went on praising him. But his anger rose higher and higher every moment. At last a Yūsufzai young man named Karimdād, son of ‘Usmān Abāzai accepted the challenge saying “as you said that if the Yūsufzai come, I shall do this and this to them. All right, I am an ordinary Yūsufzai; we shall decide the matter right now”. Mīr Handā flared up at this. Calling him dog and Gujar, he said “how dare you utter such words”. But others intervened and stopped Karimdād from going any further.

Meanwhile Sultān Awes' servants brought food for the guests. As a token of respect, they first placed it before Mīr Handā who took a pinch and then ordered it to be thrown on the ground. The Yūsufzais picked up cooked rice from the floor and ate them. At this time Malik Aḥmad also arrived and saw what was going on. When he was apprized of the situation, he took it for a good omen. The Swātis, he said, have thrown Swāt on the ground and we have picked it up. This is a clear sign that we shall conquer Swāt. The Yūsufzais with these remarks returned and got busy in making preparation for the invasion of Swāt.

Having gained possession of the pass, the Afghāns descended on the north side and first reached a strong castle which they found abandoned. The castle was known as MalaKūt. It contained a vast quantity of stores and then pushed on for a distance of two Kuroh and encamped in the country (Dāg) which contained a number of villages and was known as Khār or Shāhr. About three miles from Tānrah it held a central position in the surrounding villages, while the river Swāt flowed nearby. It is undoubtedly the present Batkhela which has now developed into a sizeable town. The Yūsufai *lashkar* then moved to Allah – Dand and Shinkar villages and their horses grazed in the crops belonging to Swātis and lived on the food provided by them.

Having learnt about these developments the Sultān moved from Mangalawar, his capital, to Tānrah (Thānah) and made full preparations to face the enemy. Confident perhaps to dispel the impending danger with a single powerful stroke, he moved out of Tānrah about one and a half mile in order to engage the enemy. But luck did not smile on him. He was utterly defeated and lost many of his generals including Shāh Wes, Farrukhād and Sanju (p.141), and several family members. As the Swātis fled from the battlefield, the Yūsufzais chased them to Tirhang opposite Landakai on the right bank of the river about

twelve miles to the east, and then returned to Tānrah. Khwāju gives an interesting detail about Mīr Handā. Which may or may not be correct. When the battle lines drew nearer and actual fight began Mīr Handā, perhaps by chance, came face to face with Karimdād whom he had earlier insulted at Bakhti Dheri as mentioned above. The Yūsufzais, Khwāju says, had recently come from Kābul and spoke Persian very well. Both challenged each other in Persian to take the first turn, and then both attacked each other with spears simultaneously. But their spears did no harm to anyone of them because both were wearing armour. Meanwhile the Swātis could not bear the brunt of the Yūsufzai *lashkar* and fled in all directions. Seeing this Mīr Handā also did the same, but he was chased hot in the heels by Karimdād who tried to thrust his spear at his back but the spear got stuck in the armour and could not be freed. Mīr Handā realizing that Karimdād had no intention to give up the chase requested help from Haft Mani – one of his companions – who hit Karimdād with an arrow and killed him. According to Khwāju, Karimdād was the only one from the Yūsufzai side who was killed in this battle, whereas the Swātis suffered great casualties. But this seems to be a mis-statement, for further (p.208), he tells us that Jānag, a brother of Khān Kaju was killed in the Swāt war. Moreover, the Swātis were not standing in the battle field hand-cuffed and blindfolded. They must have also killed a number of their enemies. A balanced view would be that casualties occurred on both sides, but Swātis, were after a well contested battle, were eventually overpowered by the invaders.

With his disastrous defeat in the battle of Tānrah which most of his kinsmen and chiefs lay dead on the field, the Sultān fled across the river to Jirhang. Which the victors returned towards Tānrah.

Here again Khwāju resorts to fanciful tale-telling with regard to how the Sultān escaped and could

not be captured or killed. Having separated from the main body of the *lashkar* when the Sultān was fleeing from the battle for his life, Khwāju says (p.142), he was spotted by a few Yūsufzai horsemen who pursued him, not knowing who he was. When they covered some distance in pursuit, they saw an handkerchief on the road. On seeing it they stopped and picked it up. When they untied the knot they found two gold earrings. As they took some time pondering upon the curious find, the Sultān who was also riding a horse of a superior breed made good his escape. The Yūsufzai horsemen returned to Tānra disappointed. These rings, Khwāju says, were purposefully dropped by the Sultān for he knew that if somebody saw him wearing gold rings, he would immediately recognize and put him to death. It was a common practice with the rulers of Swāt, Khwāju says, to wear gold earrings at the time of accession to the throne. Nobody else was allowed to do this, for, it was a royal privilege. The nobles and other great-men could wear but only silver earrings. When the Yūsufzais occupied Swāt they also, at the beginning wore gold earrings in obedience to this custom, but these were more decorated and beautiful like those of the KashMiris. Among the Mandanrs, Bihzād Khel Sadozai and of the Yūsufzais Akozai, in particular Asākhel Malizai, wore such rings.

While he was fleeing across the river the fear of landing in the territory of Ḥasan Mitrāwi, his deadliest enemy haunted him all the time. On reaching Tirhang he therefore kept to the right hand side along the foothills and finally reached sue-gali where he lost his way and entered a defile called “But or Bhat” in which there were numerous Buddhist images, broken subsequently by the Yūsufzais when they occupied that place, as the ascent was steep and difficult, Khwāju tells us, the Sultān left his horse and royal robe behind and climbed on foot. After three days of exertion, he eventually made it. On reaching Damghār, he

crossed the river once again and reached his capital, Manglawar.

After some days the Yūsufzai and Mandanrs *lashkar* marched towards Manglawar. Having passed to hold a conference to decide what to do next. The Yūsufzais suggested not to go any further. In support of this view they pointed out the narrowness of the road, the solidity and strength of the castle and the presence of the Sultān which could boost the courage of the Swāti *lashkar*. Because of these reasons they suggested not to invade Manglawar but harass and plunder the country side, instead. The Swātis in this way would be so hard put as to leave the country by themselves.

The Mandanrs however disagreed and Alki b. Bihzād Mandanr, Sadozai, a real brother of Malik Qarah, who wanted nothing less than an invasion, crossed the river with his companions and attacked Manglawar. He found the castle too strong for him to do any damage but, having plundered the city outside the castle, went away. With this the Yūsufzais and Mandanrs decamped and went home without achieving much. But the demonstration of their power and continued plundering on the countryside which the Sultān could not stop forced him to find a way out other than confrontation.

When the Yūsufzai force smashed the Sultān’s defence line on the Mālākand and entered Swāt, the Sultān remarked: “The ghost has entered Swāt and no it would be difficult to exorcise him”. This was symptomatic of what was on his mind. After suffering enormously at the hands of the inexorcizable “ghost”, he began seriously thinking of leaving Swāt to him and go somewhere else. For this he selected Nihāk Darah in the Swāt Kohistān, which could be comparatively easily defended as it was surrounded by high mountains on all the sides. On this project he started working and in the course of about sixteen years (Akhūnd Darwezā

syas twelve) that the Yūsufzai took to conquer Swāt, he erect a strong castle there and brought the whole of Nihāk Darah under his control. Even though the Yūsufzais and Mandanrs could not dislodge him, but, after sixteen long years, much to their delight, one fine day they came to know that the Sultān had himself evacuated Manglawar. They entered the castle and destroyed the palaces and gardens – almost everything except the walls which were too solid for them to be easily pulled down.

Nihāk, Niā-kah, or Ni-āk, as it is variously written is the name of a Darah about nine miles in length. The village and small fort at its entrance is called Lāhor. In about the middle of the valley is a small town called Danbrah and, higher up, towards its head, is shigai. Sultān Awes, as we have seen above, son of Sultān Pakhal, having been overthrown by the Khashi Afghāns in several engagements, abandoned his capital and the Darah of Swāt and took up his residence in the Nihāk Darah, styled Nihāk of Kāfiristān. There he built a strong fortress among the hills, and there he continued to dwell till his death. He had married, among other wives, a sister of Malik Aḥmad, but she was dead long previous to this. He left two sons, Firuz Shāh and Qazān Shāh, but not by her.

Qazān Shāh took up his residence in the mountains bounding Swāt north west of Manglawar, while the Ilyaszais occupied the country close to the river Swāt as far as Darwesh Khel, Baz Khel, Chandah Khwaray, and Sue-gali. Qazān Shāh made constant raids upon them; and when Khān Kaju took the field against the Ghoriakhel, the Ilyazai were unable to send their contingent to his army on account of Qazān Shāh. On hearing of Khān Kaju's movements, Qazān Shāh went off to Kāshghar (Qashqār), which territory lay very near Swāt. The ruling race all Muslims of the Sunni faith, but the bulk of the subjects were *Kāfirs* or infidels. From Qazān Shāh brought a considerable force against the

Yūsufzais, plundered Deolai, Chandah Khwarey, and other places, as far down as the last named village, killing and making captive the people and taking possession of their cattle and other property.

Succours soon turned out, however, from other Yūsufzai villages, attacked Qazān and his force, and defeated him. He retired towards the mountains again, and the Afghāns followed in pursuit, until they drove him beyond the Kar Ghākhay, beyond which was Qazān Shāh's boundary. This Ghākhay is in upper Swāt, west of Deolai, in the direction of Darwesh Khel, in the mountains forming the northern boundary of Swāt.

About a month after these events, the festival of Basant or spring came round, which it was usual among the Swātis to celebrate. Knowing that such was the custom the Afghāns sent spies to ascertain when and where the Basant would be held, and organized an expedition with the object of attacking unawares. Having obtained the information, the Yūsufzais made a forced march during the night preceding the festival day and concealed themselves before the day broke among the ravines and other convenient places near, fell upon Qazān Shāh during the celebrations of the festival, slaughtered his followers and himself, cut off his head, and retired. This head was brought to Khān Kaju when encamped opposite sheikh Tapūr to attack the Ghoriakhel.

The other son of Sultān Awes, Firūz Shāh, ruled over the parts to the north for many years. He was succeeded by his son, Sultān Mah, and he, by his son, Sultān Zain 'Ali; and in the same manner, for generations, the descendants of Sultān Awes continued to rule over these parts.

The Tālāsh Valley

The Yūsufzai *lashkar* was still in Damaghār when the Eid festival came round. They therefore

returned to Thānra for the celebration. A number of the youngmen came out to take part in different kinds of sports. Of these a few “drunk with their youthfulness (bad mast), went off without intimating their elders to carry out a raid in the Tālāsh valley 15 to 16 miles north of Thanra across the river Swāt and 7 to 8 miles from PanjKhora (Khwāju 1977:), then inhabited by Dihqān infidels. There was an ancient castle on the declivity of mountain (perhaps the one now known as Gumbatūna fort) in front of which were gardens of pomegranates. The valley on the whole was very fertile and the Dihqāns renowned for their bravery. The Yūsufzai marauders entered the valley through Kat Kalah, also pronounced as Kat Galah, harried some villages and drove off some of the cattle.

When the Dihqān, also called Talashis, came to know about it they thought of intercepting the marauders at Kat Kalah, but by the time they reached there, the raiders had crossed it. Thus they could not retrieve the animal, but instead had a skirmish with the Yūsufzai horsemen pushed further into the valley and reached an ancient village called Rabāt having buildings of Kilnburnt bricks situated on the steep bank of a deep seasonal stream. A Talashi standing there stretched his hand to get hold of Mahmūd b. Shāyān Yūsufzai, but the latter jumped down from the horseback and both engaged in a close fight. In the course of grappling both fell down in the stream but Mahmūd luckily fell upon the Talashi and stabbed him to death. He removed the silver earrings of the dead man and rode off to join his companions.

Another incident is related to Mazid (*Akhūnd* Darwezā calls him Bar Mazid), a full brother to the renowned Khān Kaju, who perceived a Dihqān on the hills on the north side of the defile, and made after him. The Dihqān jumped down into a gorge and began to climb the cliff to get away. He had just gained the top of the cliff when Mazid urged on his Irāqi horse – it was a dark

brown steed – in pursuit of him. The animal leaped across the gorge, and just managed to plant its fore feet on the top near the edge of the cliff, with its hind legs lower: the horse could not manage to reach the top with his hind ones, but he planted his hoofs firmly where he was. At the very instant of reaching the opposite side, without knowing, in the excitement of the moment, the dangerous position of his horse, Mazid ran the Talashi Dihqān through with his spear, its head coming out on the other side. As this crisis another Mandanrs, Ismā’il by name, came to Mazid’s assistance, and cut down the Dihqān with his sword, releasing Mazid from all further trouble with him. The latter, only now, perceived the dangerous position of his horse, leaped off his back, seized the bridle, and drew him up to the level space, and rejoined his companions. The place where Mazid’s horse made his leap was measured and found to be nine Akbari gaz, just twenty five feet. On each side of the ravine two little hillocks of stones marked the spot.

The Mitrāwis

Sultān Awes’ departure from Manglawar made it easier for the Yūsufzais to direct their full attention to the Mitrāwis who held a fairly large tract of Swāt extending from the top of Shāh Melay to Landākai and Mora (perhaps Rāmoraḥ), a very green and fertile land (Khwāju 1977: 114). It took them sixteen years to conquer that part of Swāt which was under the control of Sultān Awes, in the seventeenth year they marched on the Mitrāwi country to the south of the river Swāt.

When Malik Ḥasan, the Mitrāwi chief, came to know about it he collected all his forces and took shelter behind the walls of Bālgrām – a very strong fort on the top of a mountain. The Yūsufzai *lashkar* encamped at Kāt Gali – the only level ground in the mostly hilly Mitrāwi country. Skirmishes took place nearly every day. One night Rahimdād b. Malik Aḥmad Khadarzai quietly occupied a top which commanded

Bālgrām the Yūsufzais harried the country side and made life difficult for the people. One day they came in a body and attempted to besiege Bālgrām. The Mitrāwis came out with a view to repulsing them. This turned into a veritably fight in which a certain Pāi (Bāizai, Yūsufzai) took the initiative and attached Hāji Shāh who had earlier killed his brother, Zangi. Another Mitrāwi, named Fakhr, struck Pāi with his lance which got stuck in the armour of Pāi. When Pīr Ali b. Mīrak saw this he cut the lance into two with his sword so that one half it remained in the hand of the Mitrāwi and the other half the armour of Pāi. With this the fighting intensified but when the Mitrāwis saw Rahimdād coming down the top he had occupied at night, they got completely perplexed and withdrew within the fort, which the Yūsufzais immediately besieged. The Mitrāwis, who believed that they were descendants of the Yūsufzais and that they had separated from them at the time when the latter were living at Gārki and Neshki in the vicinity of Qadahār (Khwāju: 141), became extremely alarmed and apprehensive of the security arrangements and started making plans how to escape. Accordingly, when one pahar (three hours) of the night had passed, they all escaped through a point which because of high earthen mounds was left unguarded by the besiegers, leaving behind a few to make noise to show that the whole force was inside the fort, with instructions to slip away early in the morning. In the morning the Yūsufzais, to their great surprise, discovered that the Bālgrām ort had been evacuated and these was nothing except great quantities of supplies which they took over, distributed among themselves. Thus the whole of Swāt came under their control. The *lashkar* was disbanded and everyone went back home. After some time the Mitrāwis, except Malik Ḥasan and his family, returned and served the Yūsufzais as agricultural labour with no property rights, as for, the land belonged only to the victors.

Bābur and the Yūsufzais

Zahir ad-Din Bābur, the founder of the Mughal EmPīre in India in AD 1526, was a man of great qualities of head and heart. His uncle, Ulugh Beg Mīrzā, accused by Yūsufzais of the murder of a number of their maliks (chiefs) died in AD 1501 and was succeeded by his son ‘Abd ar-Razzāq Mīrzā who was too young to control the situation created by selfish aMīrs pulling in different directions to achieve their selfish ends. Taking advantage of his young age, Sherim Zkr, one of his Begs, pushed the young king out of Kābul and usurped his authority. ‘Abd ar-Razzāq fled to the Tarklānri Afghāns towards Lamghān; but the usurper too could not rule for long and was murdered by other Begs. Durin the subsequent confusion Muhammad Muqim Beg, son of Zun-nūn Arghūn got possession of Kābul in AD 1502-03 and married a sister of ‘Abd ar-Razzāq in order perhaps to making his usurpation somewhat legal. Things were in this state when Zahir ad-Din Bābur appeared on the scene. “It was in the last ten days of the second Rabi (October 1504) that without a fight”, remarks Bābur “by Almighty God’s bounty and mercy, I obtained and made subject to me Kābul and Ghazni and their dependent districts (Bābur nāma 1987: 189). Muqim Beg was given a safe passage to Qandahār.

Bābur had his eyes on India but he first wanted to make his line of communication between Kābul and the Panjab safe and secure. His first expedition took place in Sha‘bān 910 H/Jan. 1505. Till that time he had never seen a hot country or the border – land of Hindūstan. On reaching Nangarhār, he says, another world came to view – other grasses, other trees, other animals, other birds etc. He was amazed to see all this. (crossing the Khyber Pass in one march he dismounted at Jam (Jamrūd). Much had been told, he says, about “Gur-Khattri”; it was said to be a holy place of the Joqis and Hindū who come from long distances to shave their heads and

beards there. It was from Jamrūd that he made a dash for Bigrām (Peshawar). There he saw the famous bangan tree but his guide, a certain Malik Būsa‘id Kamari, did not reveal to him the location of “Gur-Khattri” fearing perhaps that Bābur might be annoyed at seeing direty piles of hair lying around this place. Back at Jamrud however the guide told them that “Gur-Khattri” was very much there is Peshawar but he hesitated to reveal its location because of its confined cells and narrow passages (where the emperor had to bend to pass through, a circumstance which he might have distastefully avoided).

Bābur was very much desirous of visiting the lands across the Indus, but in the ‘war council’ held at Jamrud, he was advised to go to Kohat instead, which, he was told, might yield vast quantities of plunder. Accordingly the Mughal army forded the Bāra river and dismounted just in front of the Muhammad mountain (present Dara Adam Khel). At night they broke the camp, crossed the Kotal (pass) and fell upon Kohat by breakfast time. Many cattle and buffalo and great quantity of corn fell into their hands. After spending two nights at Kohat, it was decided to overrun Bangash and Bannu. At Hangu he was told that the people have made a sangur on top of a hill. “I first heard the word sangur”, he remarks “after coming to Kābul where people describe fortifying themselves on a hill as making a sangur”. (p.232). at Hangu an action took place in a glen so closely described by Bābur that it is still possible to recognize the gorge between the villages of Ustarzai and Ra ‘isān. Bābur here describes the old Pathān custom, observed by him for the first time, hweeby tribesmen made captive and suing for mercy appeared with grass in their teeth, exclaiming “I am your ox”. From Hangu he went to Tal (or Thal) and thence, following a narrow path, where he lost much of his plunder, to Bannu. He then first to Ghazni and then to Kabūl. This incursion did no harm to the Yūsufzais but its mention was important as it

instilled fear into the mind of the Afghān people in general. Bābur’s name became the terror of the entire tribal belt so much so that even the Wazir, for the first and the last time, paid him tribute comprising three hundred sheep (p.413). Bābur reached Kābul in the month of Zu’l-hijja (May 1505).

In the following year Bābur remained busy un the affairs if central Asia except for a few forays to collect revenues (P-253) and to chastise the Hazara Turk mans (P-251). In 1507 he rode out of of Kabūl with the intention of over-running The Ghiljis. Crossing the plain of Kattawaz at night, he fell, upon the Ghiljism Masses of sheep fell in the hands of the cirvaders, more than in any other raid. From what was written down, Bābur says (P-325), fifth (set aside for him) cane out at 16,000, that is to say, this 16,000 was the fifth of 80,000 sheep; no question however but that with those lost and those not asked for, a lac (100,000) of sheep had been taken. He alos speaks of Khwaja Khizr Luhani, a well know and respected Afgan merchant who was murdered and his head brought to him (P-235).

There is a gap between 1508 to 1509 in Bābur’s Memories. Therefore we do not know from his own pen what happened in these years, except for his annual invasions of Qandahar. Apparent he wanted to secure his grip on the Kabūl-ndahar line before attnpting furhterr incursions towards India.

Although Khawaja does not mention dates, but it is obvious that negotiatins must have taken place between the Yūsufzai, who had occupied a vast tract of land comprising Bajure, Dir, Swāt and Hushtnager, and Bābur who wanted to secure the route for his future and ultimate plan (viz the conquest of India), during this gap. With this objective in view Bābur invited Malik Ahmad to attend his court at Kabūl. The story “dressed up in traditional garb”, as Caroe remarks (P-159), is

only a way of conveying what was clearly Bābur's intention, to reduce the powerful Yūsufzai tribes.

The Yūsufzais collected some gifts and Malik Ahmad, together with Malik Mahmud b. Yahya Akozai 'Ala ud-Dinzai and some other chiefs took the road to Swāt from Samah, and then to sultan Shahi where they stayed at the house of Malik Mubarik b. Paindaah Akozai, from him they took a minstrel named Adu with them, and the same morning passing through Tangi and Kat Kalah reached trail where they crossed the river Panj Khorā and reached Bājaur. In Bājaur they halted at the place freshly occupied by the Yūsufzais, and then through Nawgai and Kunar reached Kabūl and presented themselves to the King as required. They were given warm welcome and a place of honour. But Malik Ahmad, as Khwajir says, all the time he was in Kabūl suspected Bābur of foul play. But on the contrary, they were given *Khil'ats* (Robes of honour) and allowed to go back. The rest of the details given by Khwāju - Malik Ahmad and his companions discussed how to escape. Malik Ahmad uncovers his chest for Bābur to shoot at, he makes a speech which pleases Bābur, Ahmad drinks with Bābur excessively without getting drunk, Bābur is irreverent tells Ahmad "I am your minstrel", Bābur offers his qaba (long over garment), sword and gold necklace to Ahmad who puts on the royal robe etc. are all mere embellishments and embroidery and should be given no importance.

The next year Malik Ahmad was once again summoned at the court, but he apologized and sent his cousin Shah Mansur, son of Malik Suliman instead that Bābur wanted to kill Malik Ahmad (he could do that any time if he wanted to), no circumstantial evidence exist to prove, albeit Malik Ahmad was himself conscious of the fact that he had in the past committed aggressions against the 'Umskel Dilazāks of Bājaur, Shalmanis of Hashtnagar, Sultan Awes and

Mitrawis of Swāt and knew that this information had reached Bābur who might hold him to account for all these land grasping actions. Although Bābur did nothing to harm him, for, he was in need of friends not foes, for his ultimate objective, but the guilty conscience of Ahmad suspected anything could happen any time. "In order to conciliate the Yūsufzai horde", Bābur writes (P-375) "I had asked for a daughter of one of my well-wishers Malik Suliman Shah's son Malik Shah Manssur, at the time he came to me as envoy from the Yūsufzai Afghāns.

When the memories reopen in 1519, we find Bābur in Chandawal (present Jandul), the lower part of which was hit by a violent earthquake on Monday, the first day of the month of Muharram (Jan-3) Marching at dawn the following day he dismounted near the "fort of Bājaur" (perhaps Khar). A trustworthy Dilazāk Afghān was sent to advise the sultan, perhaps Mir Haider Ali Gibari himself or his nephew (the actual name is not mentioned) to surrender, but he got as rude negative reply. On Friday the 5th Muharram (Jan. 7), the fort was stormed and taken. The Sultan and his chiefs were beheaded and the country of Bājaur was bestowed upon Khwaja Kalan (P-370) with a strong reinforcement to help him. "On January 8," Bābur says we dismounted by the spring of Bābur Qara (down the Rud towards the east). At Khwaja Kalan's request the rest of the prisoners were pardoned" (P-371), Shah Mansur was also with him at that time and witnessed all that happened to the Giaris of Bājaur. After putting a coat on him and after writing a threatening letter, he was allowed to go back.

On January 27 (Thursday) Bābur moved to the village called Mandish in the trough of the Kahraj valley, for the purpose of getting corn for the army. On a height in the middle of the valley he had a platform built of stones, so large that it held the tents of the advance-camp (P-375). Bābur was still there when news came that Shah Mansur's younger, Tous Khān, was bringing

the above mentioned daughter of his brother, named Bibi Mubarikah, Khwāju gives a romantic touch to this marriage and says that Bābur was in the neighbourhood of the Mount Mora when he heard about the beauty of this girl----- the daughter of Shah Mansur who lived in a tented house on one of the tops of the same mountain. In order to confirm what he had heard, he took the tattered clothes of a medicant and approached the house of Shah Mansure begging for food. There he saw the girl by himself and fell in love with her. After this he asked for hand in marriage. But the story is inconsistent with general attitude of Bābur towards women. There is no doubt that he respected women but whether he over them as well is not known for certain. He admits that his wife Masumah loved him, but he tells nothing of his own feelings towards her. How much he could be expected to have fallen in love with a girl may also be known from his own statement that he was after scolded by his mother for not visiting the zenanah (ladies apartments) as after as desirable.

A meeting was held on February 8 in which the begs and the Dilazāk Afgan headmen were invited to discuss the original plan regarding the chastisement of the Yūsufzais of Swāt (we have seen above that Malik Ahmad did not respond positively when he was summoned the second time). In the meeting it was decided that instead of going to Swāt where the army was likely to face scarcity of corn, it would be better to surprise the Yūsufzais and Muhammadzais in the Hashtnagar. In the following year, it was suggested, Swāt would be the first priority. Therefore the next day horses and robes were bestowed upon Sultan Awes and Sultan Ala ud-Din of Swāt and given leave to go.

Leaving Bibi Mubarakah in the Bājaur fort Bābur dashed to Hashtnagar but found nothing substantial, for, Malik Ahmad had already alerted the tribesmen of the impending danger and had told them to take shelter in the gorges of the Mora mountain. On February 14 Bābur encamped

between Katlang and Maqam where a man of Shāh Mansur also arrived (P-377). The next day the baggage train also rejoined them at Maqam. There he came to know about a heretic qalandar named Shahbaz whose tomb was situated upon a free and dominating off-shoot of the Maqam mountain. Bābur did not like the tomb of a heretic on such a beautiful spot and ordered it to be leveled to the ground. The place was so charming and open that he opted to sit there for some time and eat a confection (majun).

Khwāju (P-159ff) however gives a different account of these events. What follows is an outline Khaju's statement. Bābur had a laan toi devastate the Yūsufzai country because of Malik Ahmad's refusal to attend his court at Kabūl. He collected therefore a huge army and took the route passing through Bājaur. When he reached Chandawal (present Jandul) he thought of dealing first with Mir Haider 'Ali Gibari who had been rude to his uncle Morza Ulugh Beg. The Gibaris were a brave people and their castle built of stones was very strong. Bābur encamped near the castle while the Gibaris shut themselves in. It so happened that one day a cousin of Mir Haider Ali, in consultation with some of the like-minded gibaris, wrote to Bābur that he with all his kith and kin was ready to submit if was acceptable to the King. Bābur agreed to the proposal and encouraged them to do so.

When Mir Haider Ali's cousin presented himself to the King, a Khil'at was endowed upon him and his companions were treated with great kindness and favour. This encouraged other Gibaris to follow the same course to protect their lives. In due course Mir Haider 'Ali who was a great tyrant came to know about it and got frightened because he thought that these hypocrites would one day hand him over to the enemy. Instead of being put to shame this way, he poisoned himself to death. The Gibari capital fell into Bābur's hand without shooting a single arrow. Mir Haider 'Ali's cousin was enthroned and nobody was killed except a

few who were opposed to the new king. Having disposed of the Bābur took the road to Swāt. Meanwhile he wrote several letters to Malik Ahmad and assured him of his safety on oath, but the latter took no notice of them and continued to strengthen his Mora where he built a strong *sangar*.

Disappointed with Ahmad's attitude, Bābur turned his attention to the invasion of Manglawar, the capital of Sultān Awes, in upper Swāt. The mountain top scaled by him, Khwāju says, is still known as "Bābur Sar" (Bābur Top). He passed through Damaghār and at Husain Dheri crossed the river Swāt. In Manglawar he found the castle too strong for him and therefore contented merely to devastate the countryside before beating retreat.

Once again Bābur appeared on the scene. This time he was induced by Malik Hamzah, one of the Gagiāni chiefs who had been in his service to make a raid upon the 'Umr Khel Dilazāks, under the plea that they annoyed and molested the Gagiāni traders on their way to and from Hindūstān, they having to proceed through the Kālah Pānri district then to Jānqur, Sunyālah, crossing the Landay river at the Sargh-warai ferry and thence to Nilāb. The object of the Gagiāni chiefs was partly against the Yūsufzai and Mandanrs to whom Bābur was still hostile.

The 'Umr Khels held the Kālah Pānri district, which was covered everywhere here and there with cane forests in which canes six and seven gaz in length – from 18 to 20 feet – were to be found and which forests were infested by man-eating tigers and gave shelter to rhinoceros. The bed of the Kālah Pānri was narrower than today; and to the 'Umr Khel had two villages on its banks opposite each other connected by a bridge. The exact position of these villages is not known, though, in all probability, they may have been somewhere near Hoti-Mardan. The Mughals and their allies – Gagianis, Akozais and Ilyāszais – surprised the western most village and secured

the bridgehead. Only then Malik Jahān Shah Dilazāk came to know that some unknown enemy had attacked them. The "Umr Khel defended the bridge with great obstinacy and held the invaders at bay until Bābur himself led them on. The bridge and the other village fell to the invaders but lay this time the 'Umr Khel found time to send away their families, cattle and other effects to the Karah – Mār hills.

To put a little more life in the story Khwāju has introduced a new character – Shah Borāe – a brave Dilazāk lady who perished while saving the life of her husband Rustum. She wore male attire previous to her marriage, and was famed for her warlike prowess, and, subsequently used to accompany her husband in military expeditions with her face veiled. Rustum was laid down with fever, and was unable to fly, and there was no means of removing him when the Mughals attacked the place. She defended him valiantly, and the enemy, who took her for a man, had great difficulty in overcoming her. She and her husband were both killed. When this matter was reported to Bābur he scolded the persons involved in her death and said that such a brave lady should have been captured alive. He expressed his sorrow upon her death and thereafter always praised the bravery of the 'Umr Khels (p.186).

Bābur chased the fugitive 'Umr Khels for nine to ten miles when night fell and camped at the place, Khwāju says (p.186) where subsequently the fort of Langarkt was built. The Akozai and Ilyāszai also camped nearby at some distance. During this affair Malik Sarabdāl played a prominent role and because of this became very close to the king.

In the morning some kind of a Skirmish broke out among the Akozais and the Ilyāszais and arrows began to fly from each side. Bābur suspected treachery and was ready to fly when Malik Sarabdāl understood the situation and assured Bābur that there was nothing wrong for such brawls often take place among the Pakhtūns. After

this Bābur returned from the Doābah to Kābul (p.189) Malik Sarabdāl, riding his horse went out to cool down the fight when he was hit by an arrow coming from the Ilyāszai. He fell down and died shortly after wards.

The above story, to say the least, is baseless and self-contradictory. Neither is it borne out by the Memoirs – our most trustworthy source. How stubbornly the Gibaris of Bājaur resisted Bābur's investment of their fort, in contradiction to Khwāju's peaceful take-over, is detailed in the Memoirs. Moreover, Khwāju's statement about Bābur's invasion of Manglawar is incorrect because the rulers of Manglawar Sultān Awes and his brother were already with Bābur and, after the Bājaur meeting decided not to invade Swāt, they were given robes of honour and allowed to go back. The Dilazāks headmen were invited and were there in the Bājaur meeting, there was a Dilazāk contingent in the army of Bābur was in Hashtnagar. Why then he is said to have destroyed the Kālh Pānri villages of the 'Umr Khel Dilazāks? It does not appeal to reason. There is no doubt that the story is not true and is certainly concocted by Khwāju. This may cast aspersions on his being a truthful reporter of historical events.

After this long digression we come back to the place where we left Bābur. It is now known as Shāhbāzgarhi. The river Maqām divides the modern hamlets into two groups – those lying on the Western bank bear the name of Balagrahi and those on the eastern are properly called Shāhbāzgarhi. The hamlets stand immediately at the foot of the hill of Zarrai, the Maqam hill of Bābur, that abruptly ends at this point, but on the other side it curves to join the Balbul ghundai so as to form a definite arc of a circle. Within this circle stood the ancient city now mostly covered by Shāhbāzgarhi. At the western end of Bulbul ghundai overlooking the city stand the famous rock edicts of As'oka written in the Kharoshthi writing on two separate rocks.

At Shāhbāzgarhi a meeting was held to discuss the future course of action. Bābur had Bhira on the Jehlam on his mind but other commanders opposed this idea on various grounds – part of the army had been left behind in Kabūl, another part in Bājaur, some troops had gone back to Lamghān because their horses were worn out. But Bābur clung to his own view because troops had got nothing from Hashtnagar and it was expected that Bhira would yield enough revenues to fill their pockets. Mir Muhammad the raftsmen and his elder and younger brethren were therefore sent with a few braves to examine the Sind river above and below the ford (Hund). Meanwhile he found some time to hunt rhinoceros on the Swāti (actually Swābi) side which is also known as Karg-Khāna (Rhino-home). This Rhino-home was probably the marshy land south of Yār Hussain and Babo dheri. Both the sites have huge mounds now being plundered for manure. On February 17 he crossed the river. Bābur was across the river for just over a month. On his way back he crossed the Indus below Attock which did not exist at that time. He bestowed robes of honour on Shah Mansur and other Yūsufzais who accompanied him (p.400) and went back to Kabūl. With this the second expedition was over.

Bābur wanted to put down the Yūsufzais of Swāt but the Dilazāk chiefs Bu Khān and Musa set forth before him that there was a large horde of the Yūsufzais in Hashtnagar and that much corn was to be had there. They persistently urged to go there. As he was told that there was much corn in Hashtnagar, he planned to repair the forts of Hashtnagar and Peshawar to store the corn there and leave a strong contingent for its protection. On September, 28, the same year (1519), marching on at dawn he crossed the narrows of the Khaiber Pass and dismounted at 'Ali Masjid. On the following day he crossed the Kabūl river and his scouts fled and were in flight. Bābur moved on quickly but not even a fourth of the promised corn could be had. The plan of fitting

up Hashtnagar fort came to nothing. The Dilazāk Afghāns who had urged him to come to Hashtnagar were ashamed.

In a meeting held there it was decided to over run the Afrīdis. He marched to Ali Masjid with this objective in view but this plan also failed because bad news arrived that Sultan Sa‘īd Khān was proceeding to Badakhshān. On this the begs were once again summoned to advise on this new development. It was decided to go back to Kabūl and then proceed to Badakhshān. The idea of strengthening and victualising the fort of Peshawar was abandoned. On the way back however he took care to plunder the Khizar Khel who had been doing improper things to the tail end of his army whenever he passed through their territory. Owing to this punitive raid, the Waziri Afghāns who never had given in their tribute well, brought 300 sheep. Next day came Afghān chiefs leading the Khirilchi (and) Samu Khail. The Dilazāk Afghān chiefs entreated pardon for them. They were pardoned and the captured were

set free (p.413). This expedition, Caroe remarks (p.163), was no doubt effective in spreading the fear of Bābur’s name among the Afrīdis, Shinwaris and Peshawar tribes on the direct route towards Hindustan through the Khaiber Pass.

Bābur’s diary breaks off here for five years and ten months (Jan 2, 1520 to November 17, 1525). The fourth expedition took place in 1520 during the unrecorded period. So, we do not know much about his activities. After his return from Lamghān, chronicled in the diary, he marched out from Kabūl as soon as muster and equipment was ready (p.429). This time it was made through Bājaur where refractory tribes were brought to order. The Indus will have been crossed at the usual place (Hund), Bhira was traversed and advance was made beyond lands yet occupied, to Sialkot and Sidhpur in its neighbourhood. But this really falls outside the scope of this story. Bābur got busy with his Indian campaign and the tribes were left alone to adjust their positions vis-à-vis each other.

References

(All secondary sources are deliberately leftout)

Akhund Darweza, (1960). *Tazkirt al-Abrar wa al-Ashrar*, Peshawar.

Beveridge, A. S. (1987). *Baur-Nama* (or Memoirs) Sang-e-Meel Publication, Lahore repr.

Khawāju (1977). *Tārīkh Afāghana*, as abridged and rewritten by Pīr Mu‘azzam Shah and the title *Tawārīkh Hāfiz Raḥmat Khāni*, trans. Into Urdu by Maulwi Muḥammad Israīl; ed. Roshan Khān with prodigious notes (mostly irrelevant), Pashto Academy, Peshawar University.