

A Survey of the Lives and Times of Baghi Mohammad Khan and Vali Mohammad Khan Ashtarkhan as Reflected in the Moghimkhani Biographies and other Authentic Historical Documents

Mohammad Geraili Kerapi

Department of History ,Ali Abad katoul branch, Islamic Azad University, Ali abad katoul, Iran

Abstract: Baghi Mohammad Khan was the establisher of Ashtar government in the central Asia. They governed in Transoxiana from 1119 A.D. up to 1598 A.D. Baghi Mohammad Khan who was the founder of the government could defeat Pir-Mohammad Khan Sheybani and established Ashtar Khanyan government in Transoxiana. He could capture Samarqand, the main city, Balkh, Bokhara and Badakhshan. Then he became an uncontested ruler in the area. He was thinking about being protected by a strong government in the area, and although he was in conflict with Safaviyan troops. He wanted to have a relationship with them. Moreover, their protection could multiply his authority in Transoxiana which its explanation is stated in the article. But his rule was not longer than that. And he died in 1114 A.D.S. And Valli-Mohammad Khan became his successor. He was not an efficient successor to the government and he was always acting tyrannically in Bokhara. His unjust acts over peasants were a symbol of the weaknesses of his government, therefore he yielded Balkh to his nephew, Imam Qoli Khan and they were frequently in quarrel with each other. Finally, he was killed in a battle against Imam Qloi Khan's troops near Samarqand. What is regarded in this paper is studying and examining the government of Baghi Mohammad Khan and Valli Mohammad Khan-e- Ashtar Khan in the sensitive area, the Transoxiana, which is a kind of survey through the brilliant history of the area which has observed numerous ups and downs within the history. This is an area which is always regarded by today's powerful kings including Safaviyyah. The researcher attempted to state a small part of Transoxiana history to those who are interested in the history of Transoxiana.

[Mohammad Geraili Kerapi. **A Survey of the Lives and Times of Baghi Mohammad Khan and Vali Mohammad Khan Ashtarkhan as Reflected in the Moghimkhani Biographies and other Authentic Historical Documents.** *J Am Sci* 2013;9(2s):6-9]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.jofamericanscience.org>. 2

Key Words: Ashtar khaniyan Government, Bahgi Mohammad khan-e-Ashtarkhani, ValliMohammad khan-e-Ashtarkhani, Transoxiana area, Qabchaq plain

Introduction

Astrakhans were a people who first came to power in Mavaranahre, reigning for more than 200 years in that region. They were descendents of a certain Janie Beik, himself a descendent of Joji, the youngest son of Changiz Khan, the Mongol. The founder of this dynasty was a man called Baghi Mohammad Khan. Of importance for us is the role these khans have played in clarifying the historical epochs Of Middle Asia, and also their authority and influences during the reign of Safavi monarchy in Iran. We may, for instance, refer to the clash which they had with the troops of Shah Abbas, the Safavi, upon which they had to retreat from the region. They, of course, did not mean to fight against the Safavis. Therefore, when the Safavi troops invaded the city of Ghadooos, the Khans did not venture upon taking it back until Shah Abbas returned of his own considering the invasion no longer to advantage. As historians have pointed out Ashtarkhanis, especially Baghi Mohammad Khan, sought friendly terms with the Safavis so that they could ask them for help when faced with a domineering enemy.

Next to him, his brother, Vali Mohammad Khan, succeeded to the throne. He was neither as much an able king as his brother in the affairs of the government and politics, nor in practical rule of the

state. He, for example, left the government of the then important city of Balkh to Beig Kocktash with devastating consequences. Also of importance in his reign was the invasion and loss of Bokhara by Imam Gholi Khan, whereupon he fled to the Safavi court. Later on, although, with the help of Safavis, he could take Bokhara back, upon his exercise of too severe and violent measures leading to bloodsheds in Bokhara his rule and authority was shaken loose and finally ended following his second defeat and death by Imam Gholi in 1020 AH in Samarkand. Based on authentic historical documents, this article has aimed at illuminating some historical realities of the time Baghi and Vali Mohammad Khan Ashtarkhani, as they have certainly been highly influential in shaping the history of that time.

The Astrakhans

Ashtarkhanis, also called Hashterkhanis, Janis, Sultans and Astrakhans, were Turks who came to rule after Shibanian in Mavaranahre, and ruled for more than 200 years in that region. An important king of this line was Baghi Mohammad Khan who succeeded to the throne when his elder brother, Din Mohammad Khan, was slain in war against Shah Abbas, the Safavi, in 1007 AH (Zariab 1998, 316). He is reported to have been killed in a war and his body found among the

dead. Another story goes that he had been wounded, fled to somewhere near Marochagh to Ghaghchi tribe while deadly bleeding. Those accompanying him found him a safe place to rest while themselves went out in search of food to Ghaghchi. So when they were away the Shah's soldiers found and killed him (Rezvani 1998, 574). His two other brothers, Baghi and Vali Mohammad Khan, went to Mavarannahre taking the news of his death to the elders of Bukhara who welcomed them and crowned Baghi as their ruler, and sent Vali to rule over Balkh (Moghimkani 2001,124). When Baghi Mohammad Khan was ruling in Bukhara, there were two centers of political centers of power in the region; one was held by Baghi himself and another was that of Balkh where his appointed warriors, known as Ataligh, were ruling. This duality of power then led to the weakening of the central government of the Khan, causing many unrests and internal clashes among the successors and the throne (Safa 1993, 525-6).

Following the measures that Baghi Mohammad Khan took to fortify his central government, he appointed his brother, Vali Mohammad Khan to the governorship of Balkh meaning to withhold Shah Abbas' further expansion into Mavarannahre. Upheaval and chaos had then come to a height upon which the people had helplessly called upon Ibrahim Khan from Khorasan to be their ruler. Ibrahim Khan, not a Muslim in faith, had, in fact, grown up among those people, and had concealed his religious creed from them. Then, in less than two months, he took to martyring Muslims during the nights when they happen to pass lonely through the alleys. A feeling of terror grew among the people as they found the corpses of the dead left on the streets with no sign whatever of the murderer. It was finally found out that Ibrahim Khan himself was the one who committed the murders with a gang of his marauding rascals as accomplices. Upon such realization and hearing of the then prosperous state of Vali Mohammad Khan, Balkhians took heart and sent words of allegiance to his court, while pretending to fake loyalty toward Ibrahim Khan ensuring him of their help and support in the case of war. They then enthused him into war with Vali Mohammad Khan, taking him to site called Siah Jerd, two miles out of the town. They also appointed some people to guard the entrances into the town so that no one may get out. As the armies were ranged against each other, every warrior going out to fight against Vali Mohammad Khan was slain. Then Ibrahim Khan, seeing all in vain, wanted to escape as to save his life when men from both parties chased, caught and beheaded him, tossing his head under the feet of the horse of Vali Mohammad. Congratulating Vali Mohammad Khan on his victory over Ibrahim Khan, the Balkhians then welcomed him to their town, swearing oaths of allegiance. So, he was elected as the governor of Balkh.

They also benefited from Shah Abbas's wars in Northwest of Iran, and set out to repress the Imagh tribe, known as Gharaie, in Khorasan that had helped the Iranians in killing their elder brother Din Mohammad Khan. With a great army they set out to go to that land, crossing the Jayhoon River. An army from Baghi Mohammad Khan also joined them both determined on avenging that people. Hearing of such eminent war against themselves, Gharaies soon chose one as their chief and added fortifications to their fort. They intended to defend their settlements, deeming that doing so no one could approach their fort. Vali Mohammad Khan, however, assigned some men to dig a tunnel under the fort, put explosives into it and exploded the walls down and finally found a way into it. Soon afterwards the fort settlers had to give up. Upon this victory Baghi Mohammad Khan returned to Baghchagh (Anoosheh 2001 , 82).

Following such events, Shah Abbas II, leading a great army, came out to Khorasan in 1011AH, meaning to first repress the Astrakhans in Balkh, and then go up to Mavarannahre, crossing Ammo River. Coming from Marv, he managed to reach Andkhai, Shaberghan and Aghchi, getting to the walls of Balkh, besieging the city. He, after sometime, had to retreat due to some uncertain reason. Some historical documents state that when he had the city in his command, Baghi Mohammad Khan was hiding in the fort and would come out to fight. Shah Abbas , then, sent him a sword and scarf, saying that "if a man you are, come to fight with this sword, if not wear the scarf over your head and flee for you are a woman." To this Baghi answered that he took both, the scarf to stay as a woman in the fort, and the sword to fight as a man when necessary (Falsafi 1975, 127). Others state that Shah Abbas sent in a man to kill Baghi while pretending to be taking a letter to him. He was declared with a dagger in his sleeve at the gate and killed (Velayati 2004, 34-5).

Upon Shah Abbas' retreat from Balkh, Vali Mohammad Khan came to Jayhoon with his troops. They crossed the river with Vali believing they could pass if they were right, and would die if they were not. He joined his brother, both setting out to war. It is said that the Ghezelbash (Shah Abbas) went as far as a land called Baba Abdal symmetry where there grew Gaz trees in plenty, No one, however, could take a twig from the trees. Ghezelbash troops broke off many branches to make for their fires and cook, but anyone eating the food made thereof, suffered a severe stomachache and died. Meanwhile, the troops of Khan arrived and killed the remaining soldiers of Shah Abbas who with a small number of remaining troops had to retreat to Iran (Still other resources have reported that while besieging Balkh, there appeared pestilence! among the Iranian troops ravaging at least half of them. So, the Shah had to go back, and with great trouble arrived at Andkhai.

As the people living in Andkhoi had shown hypocrisy and indifference when Shah had been passing there to Balkh, and were as much inconsiderate in his way back, he ordered all the nobles, authorities and magistrates, and leaders to leave their town. Each family was forced to load one a camel and go to Iraq or Khorasan, so that the town became empty of people. The remaining others were also gathered from whom the men were separated, some killed and- some enslaved, and their houses were occupied by the troops. The town on the whole was raided and destroyed. The buildings of the region were pulled down, and most of its suburban, especially Shabarghan, was also attacked and robbed, as the Shah's troops were short of food and facilities getting more and more destitute. Shah Abbas objected to the troop's passivity, saying that "Uzbeks have before this raided Esfaraian, Mashhad, and Sabzevar many times, killing many of our people and selling many others as slaves. Now we must try to keep clear the lands that we have taken back. Their lords and peasant should be our servants. He finally decided to take many at the captivated people from those lands as prisoners & slaves to Iran (Moghimkani 2001,124). So, Shah Abbas returned to Iran and Baghi Mohammad Khan to Bukhara.

Just then Baghi Mohammad Khan decided on conquering Bada Khshan and Killing its ruler who was subjugated to Mohammad Jahangir Khan, the Mongol king of India, thus, he make an attack on that town and won over it. Historians have pointed out that in the last few years at his reign, Baghi was about to come to terms with Iranian court, decreeing his border guards to be kind towards Iranian merchants (Mirkhond 1998, 34-5).

The Death of Baghi Mohammad Khan

As by God's will, Khan became sick, his sickness lasting for more than a year. This gave peoples from different regions such as Cossack and Gharaghlian a chance to embolden upon raiding his lands, forcing the residents to move to other safe places. The elders and nobles of the town then got bored with the long illness of the Khan, and upon asking about the truth of his state, they found that his sickness is deadly and he would not recover.

They believed that "this is God's will that if there blew a breeze from the sea and goes over the surface of the water, the health or death of the sick would be Known." The elders took this as good omen taking the king to the banks of Jihoon thereupon. Themselves went out to the city of Balkh in search of a medicine which they thought useful to the king. That very day, however, there came the word that the Khan had died. He ruled for 7 years and died in 1014 when only 50 years of age. He was buried in Khajeh Baha-odin Naghshband symmetry (Monjem 1986, 283).

The Reign Vali Mohammad Khan

After the death of Baghi Mohammad Khan, the nobles of Bukhara sent a group of their representatives to Vali Mohammad Khan, and asked him to take the throne, however bohemian he was (Moghimkani 2001,134). There had scarcely passed one year of his government when the elders again wrote a letter to Imam Gholi Khan to enthrone him to the throne of Bukhara. Vali, however, sent Shah Beik Kokeltush, together with his nephews, to the government of Balkh. He ruled oppressively in Balkh doing people severe repressions. The people finally lost all patience and wrote letters to Vali Mohammad Khan, asking for his abdication. Upon Vali's agreement people attacked him, found him hidden in the school of Abdullah Khan, and killed him. During the same time, Imam Gholi Khan, a pretender to the throne, found a chance for raising his opposition (Monjem 1986, 434).

When the news of his deviation reached Vali Mohammad Khan, he immediately prepared an army from Balkh and Badakhshan in search of him. When they came face to face in a clash, Vali Mohammad Khan decided to go to Khorasan. He took his two children and set out toward Shah Abbas court, Iran's king. Shah Abbas ordered to welcome him warmly and all through his way from Khorasan to Isfahan Iranian rulers and governors of different towns received him with kindness. Shah Abbas himself came as far as Dolat Abad, 3 miles out of Isfahan to his reception. He also decreed to decorate the city all over and to the honor of Vali Mohammad Khan, king of Bukhara held a grand banquet, because the his arrival added to the honor and authority of Safavi dynasty and made up for Shah Abbas's failure in 1010 AH. Shah Abbas started to negotiate with the Uzbek king, and upon the discussion about the situation of Mavarannah, Shah Abbas found out that Vali Mohammad Khan had come to ask for Iran's help in taking back his lost throne. Historians have variously reported Shah Abbas' help to the king of Bukhara. Iranian historians, for example, have written that Vali Mohammad Khan expected the Shah to send a great army to his support, but nothing of the sort happened. Shah Abbas did not provide much help, and excused that Ottoman Turks are about to attack Azerbaijan. He asked the Khan to stay in Iran till the next year when he might come to friendly terms with the Ottomans. Historians from Bukhara, however, have said of an army of eighty thousand soldiers as Shah Abbas' assistance to the Khan. Indian historians have also reported about an army but much smaller than that (Falsafi 1975, 233, 238).

At last, when Shah Abbas saw Vali determined will for going, provided him with horse-load packages of his necessary provisions. He also wrote to the ruler of Marv to provide the Khan with some horse-mounted guards to accompany him. Mehrab Khan, the governor of Balkh, provided him with some more soldiers on

horseback. Then they heard that Imam Gholi had left Bukhara to fight against Cossaks in Samarkand. So he quickly went there and with the help of some Uzbek elders managed to take back his throne with any violence. Vali Mohammad Khan collected an army of 17000 soldiers and went out to conquer Ghershi as Imam Gholi was said to be residing there. Hearing of their attack, Imam Gholi left the town and fled to Samarkand accompanied with his brother Nader Mohammad. Armies of Samarkand and Bukhara finally came face to face in 1020, where that of Bukhara had to stand against 20000 soldiers from Samarkand. The support of Iranian musketeers and 5000 Cossacks who had come to assist Vali Mohammad Khan were also of great help to Bukhara. Finally the nobles from Naghshband intervened in favor of Imam Gholi causing a division in Vali's troops.

History has recorded the help of Naghshband to Imam Gholi in these words: Also in historical texts, we read that when a duality appeared in the troops at Vali Mohammad Khan, the war changed all over, and as Imam Gholi's men came to attack them, those of Vali Mohammad Khan scattered and left the scene. With 300 warriors left to him, Vali Mohammad Khan, surged at the army of Imam Gholi and fought to his death still hopefully, but Imam Gholi Khan outnumbered them, wounded, captivated and took him to Imam Goli who finally issued his verdict of death (Mirkhond 1998, 409-10).

Conclusion

The Astrakhans, a dynasty of rulers in Mavaranahre from 1119 to 1598, were descendents of Khans ruling over Ashtar Khan or Hajitarkhan, a city near the Caspian sea. After these Khans were defeated by the Russians in the year 963(AH), they went to Bukhara, the capital of Shibanian, whom they replaced, taking with them the surname Astrakhan. Baghi Mohammad Khan was ruling in Samarkand when he knew of the weakness of the court of Pir Mohammad Shibani in Bukhara, whom he attacked and defeated in 1007 (AH) and mounted to the throne. Baghi Mohammad Khan then added Balkh and Badakhshan to his domain, and managed to draw back the Turkmens who were allied with Shah Abbas Safavi. His reign did not last long, however, and died in 1014(AH). His brother Vali Mohammad Khan, then, succeeded to the throne. He was not a well-qualified man for such post, and, for instance, left the rule of Balkh to his nephew, Imam Goli Khan, whose oppressive measures brought about widespread discontent among the people. Imam Gholi set out against Vali Mohammad Khan and invaded his crown, forcing him out of city, upon which

event, Vali Mohammad Khan had to escape to the court of Savais in Iran where he could not get much help. When Imam Gholi was absent from Bukhara, he went back to his throne without any violence, but was finally raged against Imam Gholi in a war in which he was defeated and slain. Of importance to our discussion is the rule that the Astrakhan khans had over middle Asia, as they could turn an illuminating page in the history of this area. Also their attempts for having relationships with the Safavi kings for fortifying their authority, directing the attention of the Safavis to the region, making a historical epoch. We have tried to work out a sketch of a historical time in the lives of its two important rulers; Baghi and Vali Mohammad Khan Astrakhan as reflected in authentic historical resources we hope that the provided discussion would interest the readers helping them know more about the political structure of the region as a significant part in Middle Asia.

References:

1. Mir Khand Mohammad-Ibn-Borhan-al-din Khavand Shah, Sermons of Safa (Rozeye Safa) summarized by Abbas Zaryab Khooyi, volume 8, Tehran, Scientific Press, 1998.
2. Blau, Louis Louyi, biography of Shah Abbas, translated and summarized by Vallallah Shadan, Tehran. Asatir Press, 2000.
3. Maneshi Iskandar Bik Torkaman, History of Alam Araye Abbasi, corrected by Mohammad Ismaeel Rezvani, Tehran, World of book (Donyaye ketab), 1988.
4. Maneshi, Mohammad Yousof Khaje Baqa, biography of Moqim Khani, corrected by Fereshteh Sarafan, Mirase Maktoob Press, 2001.
5. Safa. Zabi-aalah, History of literature, Tehran, Ferdovski Press, 1993.
6. Falsafi Nasr-aalah. Shah Abbas's biography, Tehran, Tehran university Press. 1975.
7. Velayati, Ali Akbar, History of Iran relationship with foreign countries during the time of Shah Abbas Safavi, Tehran, Ministry of foreign sciences press, 2004.
8. Monjem. MollaJalal-al-din, Abbasi's history wrote by Seifallah Vahid Niya, Tehran, Vahid Press, 1986.
9. Anoshe, Hassan, encyclopedia of Persian literature in the central Asia, Ministry of Islamic education and cultural Press, 2001.
10. Islamic encyclopedia, Tehran, Islamic encyclopedia Press, 1991.
11. Shokri, Yadallah, Alam Araye Safavi, compiled by Yadallah Shokri, Tehran, institution of cultural research, 1971.
12. Stanley, Linpool, Naseri estate, compiled by Stanley Linpool, Tehran, world of book (Donyaye ketab) press, 1984.
13. Hossien, Mirza Bik, sermons of Safaviyyeh (Rozeye-al-Safaviyyeh), compiled by Mirza Bik Hassan Ibn Hosseiny, Tehran, Literature and historical Press, 1989.