

Guli Bagh: the last capital of Pakhli, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

FAZAL MUHAMMAD AND SHAKIRULLAH

Abstract

Guli Bagh (meaning Rose Garden) is a well- populated village of Mansehra District to the north-west of the Karakorum Highway. It was the capital of the Turk rulers of Pakhli from AD 1526 to 1713. Very little work has been done in the past on the history and archaeological remains of this area except a few notices of architectural remains of the time of Sultan Mahmud Khurd. An attempt has been made to briefly throw light on the history of the rulers of Guli Bagh.

Keywords: Turks, Pakhli, Tanglai.

Location

Guli Bagh is located about 23 km north-west of Mansehra town (Figure 1) and is known to have been the capital of a state known in the medieval period as Pakhli. This is defined by Abu al-Fazl, the famous historian of the Mughal emperor Akbar, the Great, as comprising the whole of the hill territory between Kashmir in the east and the Indus in the west (see *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. II, pp. 390 sq.). To Pakhli also belonged to the lower valley of the *Kishanganga* and the valley of the streams which flow into the latter from the *Kajna* Range and the mountains to the north-west of Kashmir proper. Whether *Urasa* also formed a part of it, is not known for certain but its proximity to Pakhli suggests that it must have been Guli Bagh which is naturally protected by high mountains of Tanglai, located on its east and north, while from south and west it is protected by the River Siran. The total land of Guli Bagh is 10,000 acre in which the hilly occupied about 4,000 acre and the remaining 6,000 acre is used for cultivation and residential purposes (Census report 1972: 5).

History

After his invasion of Hindustan in 1398-99, Amir Timur, the Gurgan, placed a “ming” comprising one thousand soldiers from Qarluq Turks for the protection of Pakhli. This marked the beginning of the rule of the Timurid Dynasty in Hindustan (Hameed 2012:45). At the beginning of this rule, Pakhli was considered a constituent part under the trustee of a Timurid prince sitting in Kabul. Due to the pleasant climatic condition and strong defence furnished by the Tanglai Mountains and the Siran River, Timur considered it a citadel strong enough to imprison Sultan Ali of Kashmir in it in AD 1423. He is said to have later on died in this citadel (Dedamari 1995: 100). During the civil war in AD 1490, the grandson of Abu Sa'id Sultan and the cousin of Zahir ad-Din Babur known as Shahab ad-Din Babur appeared in Pakhli and started an independent Turk rule in the region; Guli Bagh was declared its capital (Rehman 1987: 143). Pakhal was actually the name of a Turk king often mentioned by historians (Das 1964: 159). Before Amir Timur different parts of Pakhli were known as Urasha, Abisarez and Bal Maik Wesh (Khan 1975: 218).

Table 1: The following Table shows the Great Muhgals and their contemporary rulers of Pakhli

Mughals	Turk Rulers of Guli Bagh
Zahir ad-Din Babur (AD 1525- 1530)	Babur Mirza (AD 1480 - 1526)
Humayun (AD 1531 - 1539)	Faqir ad-Din (AD 1526 - 1537)
Jalal ad-Din Akbar (AD 1556 - 1605)	'Abdullah Khan (AD 1538 - 1548)
Jahangir (AD 1605 - 1627)	Mahmud Kalan (AD 1548 – 1588)
Shah Jahan (AD 1628 - 1658)	Sultan Husain Khan/ Shadman Khan Sultan Mahmud Khurd (AD 1588 - 1713)
Aurangzeb (AD 1659 - 1707)	Shah Mahmud Khurd (AD 1654 - 1713)

The Rulers of Pakhli and their achievements

Babur Mirza, assuming the title of Shahab ad-Din, commenced his independent rule at Pakhal state, laid the foundation of Guli Bagh cantonment and built the fort Feroza with a ditch. Beside this, at the same time, he also constructed two other forts in the area of Chanjal (Bat Gram) and Darband on the bank of the River Indus. After the demise of Babur Mirza, every ruler of Guli Bagh paid their utmost attention to the development and prosperity of the cantonment and the forts. A kiln was made for the bricks some six miles away from the castle in the village of Sikandra. The bricks were said to be transported from the kiln to the site of castle by a six miles long line of men. According to narration the workers moved the bricks from hand to hand until the said material reached the construction site (Khan 1975:132).

Several portions of Fort Feroza were destroyed by different invaders who came to the Pakhal Sarkar from time by time. It was greatly damaged when Syed Jalal came back along with armed Swati forces and attacked the fort. Very little of this fort is now visible as it lies buried underneath the modern buildings (Khan 1976: 161).

After the Shahab ad-Din Mirza, his son Darya Khan alias Sultan Faqir ad-Din became the ruler of Guli Bagh (AD 1526-37) and strengthened the forts of Dhamtor and Mangal. Darya Khan also constructed a fort at Mangal and changed the Mangal into a trade centre. It was easily accessible for the trade goods from Kashmir, Punjab and Northern Areas (Fauq 1910: 61).

Later on Sultan Ghiys ad-Din Abdullah Khan, son of Darya Khan assumed power in the Pakhal region at the time of the Mughal ruler Nasir ad-Din Humayun (AD 1530-1540). Humayun had handed over the control of Kabul to his brother Kamran Mirza. His authority stretched down to the River Indus. Kamran Mirza planned to attack Kashmir with the help of the Turks of Pakhli, and thus successfully entered the Kashmir territory. These armies destroyed Kashmir's defence and reached Srinagar. But when the harsh winter season approached, Kamran Mirza realized that the Kashmiris would retaliate, so he made a ceasefire with them and returned to Pakhli in AD 1531. He was accompanied by the Kashmiri leaders Daulat Chuck and Jahangir Magre, who came to Guli Bagh in

order to give safe passage and honour to the conqueror and then went back (Khan 1975: 171).

In AD 1555, Sultan Mahmud Kalan, son of Ghiyas ad-Din became the ruler of Pakhal in the later days of Humayun. After the death of Humayun in AD 1556, his son Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Akbar came into power. He maintained good relation with Sultan Mahmud Kalan of Guli Bagh. It was Sultan Mahmud Kalan who chose the name of *Nain Sukh* (repose of the eyes) for the river *Kunhar* (Rogers 2001: 126-127). Sultan Mahmud Kalan died in AD 1588, and was succeeded by his elder son Sultan Husain Khan at Pakhal (Khan 1975: 182).

Sultan Husain Khan invited the Mughal king Jahangir to his palace and his request was honoured by Jahangir. The Mughal emperor visited the Feroza castle. During this occasion, the ceremonial of gift exchange between the rulers occurred in the vast lawns of the castle. In the meal, a *tarkan-e-pakhli's* famous drink *sur* was also presented. Jahangir himself admired his hospitality and said that Sultan Husain's senses were keen despite his seventy years of age. On the occasion, Sultan was honored with titles, costumes, a gilded dagger and an elephant. The Mughal emperor was presented rare horses and daggers in return (Khan 1976: 212; Jan 1966: 68).

As Jahangir writes that the houses in Guli Bagh are made of wood on Kashmiri design and that Guava, pear, apricot and peach are the famous fruits of the region. Similarly cows, horses, buffaloes, goats and ponies are the domestic animals. The ponies are small in height and could not lift heavy weight. During his visit in a gathering of Qarluq Turks, Jahangir asked them a question as to what was the name of the leader of the *Hazar ming* appointed by Timur to take care of this territory. They failed to answer this question because, till that time, the original historical records of Bheg, Bashis and Qaans were not yet known. (Rogers 2001: 124-125).

With regard to Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Akbar, Jahangir says that when the former visited Guli Bagh, it was covered with snow. According to King Jahangir, the springs of fresh water at the foot of the Tanglai Mountains and the cold water wells found in the vicinity of the fort Feroza, make this ancient city and the cantonment a green belt. In the south-west of Guli Bagh, there used to be a camp for the elephant riders. In

memory of that camp, some seven miles away, the present village of Bedadi is situated (Rogers 2001: 126).

Jahangir also records that in AD 1623 when Sultan Husain *zamindar* (farmer) of Pakhli passed away. I gave his *mansab* and *jagir* to Shadman, his eldest son (Rogger 2001: 271; Watson 1907: 125). He was a brave person and got the position of commander-in-chief of old Hazara from Shah Jahan (Shahjahannama 1643, Vol-II: 384; Kamboh 1974, Vol-II: 6: 32).

After the death of Sultan Shadman Khan in AD 1660 his son Sultan Mahmud Khurd was appointed ruler of the Pakhal State. He was the last Turkish ruler of this territory. He was brave, able and clever and is said to have introduced some reforms in administration for the consolidation of his rule. Sultan Mahmud Khurd constructed a tomb and prepared a white marble cenotaph for himself during his lifetime to be buried under it. But like his predecessors Sultan Mahmud Khurd, also remained preoccupied in suppressing the border revolts. In connection with the revolt of Yousafzai, he went to Delhi to discuss the problems with the Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. On his return from Delhi, he engaged in military campaigns against the revolts and died defending his country (Rehman 1988:245; Khan 1975: 216). This Mausoleum (Figure 3) is waiting for his coffin for the last 400 years, while his marble cenotaph (Figure 4) is laying out side of the Hazara University Museum. Unfortunately the tomb of Sultan Mahmud Khurd bears no inscription but on the basis of material and architectural style, it can be dated to the last quarter of Shah Jahan's reign (Pani 2001: 63; Shakir 2012: 144-145).

Discussion

Guli Bagh, the capital of the Pakhli State under the Turk rulers, has survived but, when, in the 18th century the Swati's took over this area they made several attacks on the fort Feroza. The Turks failed to defend it and lost their role as leaders. As Sultan Mahmud Khurd, the last ruler of the Turks, died somewhere on his return from Dehli, his successors could not maintain their rule. Some families known as Turks are still living in the same vicinity, but without any leading role in the area. The Guli Bagh (Figure 2) is still a thriving and prosperous town of the Mansehra District and is now occupied by the

Swati tribe. The remains of the demolished fort of Feroza and other structures have survived in a very dilapidated condition.

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Figures

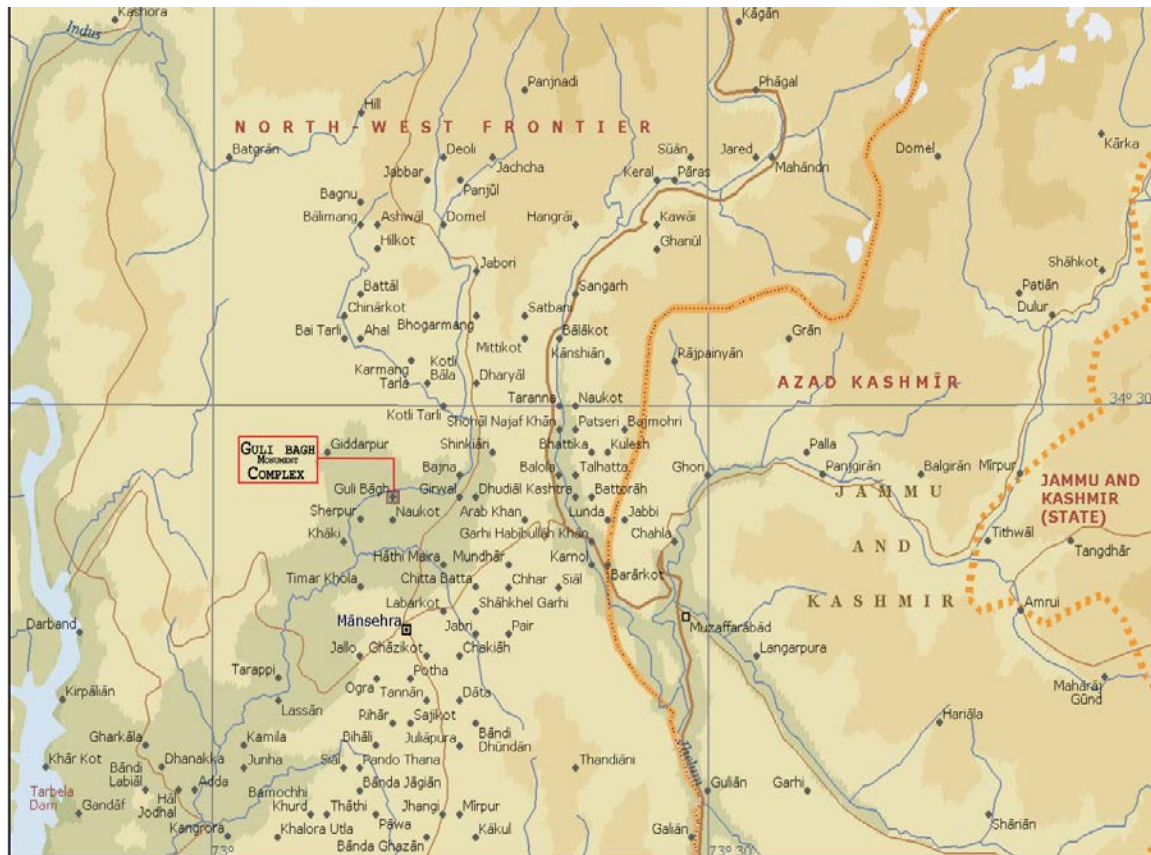


Figure 1: Map Showing Guli Bagh the Capital of Pakhli



Figure 2: Guli Bagh: A General View of the Guli Bagh Monuments



Figure 3: Guli Bagh: North-west corner view of Sultan Mahmud Khurd's tomb



Figure 4: Guli Bagh: Marble Cenotaph of Sultan Mahmud Khurd's tomb

Ethnicity of the Pushtūns / Pakhūns

FAZAL SHER AND ABDUR RAHMAN

The Pushtūns or Pakhtūns occupy vast tracts of land in Pakistān and Afghānistān but their ethnic origin still lies in obscurity this has given rise to pseculatio, very often wild, based merely on emotions rather than reason. The most prominent among the speculators was the highly venerated the Maulānā, ‘Abd al-Qādir, former director of the Pushto Academy, University of Peshāwar, who set forth his views in 1967 in the preface to the Urdu translation of Sir Olaf Caroe’s book, *The Pathans*. It is a lengthy preface spreading over 44 pages, in which the Maulānā, besides telling us how this world came into existence, throws ample light on what, in his view, was the origin of the Pushtūns and their language, Pushto. The oldest part of the world where human race and civilized life appeared first of all, the Maulānā informs us, was Central Asia. In the remotest past, he says, when much of the present world was still under water, Central Asia had all the elements – earth, water, sunshine – the combined effect of which created an environment congenial for the development of human life. God therefore selected this tract of land for the birth of human beings (Banī Ādam). It was in this cradle, he further remarks, that the earliest humans received their training in art and culture and then spread around in the world in search of livelihood which mainly comprised hunting. Some of the hunting groups, the Maulānā says, wandered too far away to be able to return to the homeland and settled in distant lands losing all contacts with the original stock. There they developed their languages in obedience to the climatic conditions of those lands. Those who came back to Bākhtar (Bactria), an important place in Central Asia, and stayed on spoke Pushto which was the mother tongue and spoken all over central Asia. The people who spoke this language consequently came to be known as Pushtūns whose pivotal role in the determination and development of early stages of human life must be recognized. Pushto is the mother tongue, the Maulānā goes on to say, and all other languages in the world are its grand daughters. This relationship is not confined

merely to the languages of the Indo-European Semitic or Avestan families, the Dravidian, Mongolian and Shina also stemmed from the same source. The Maulānā concludes: the most ancient tribe, the bedrock for developing every day human life, is supposed to be Bakhd, Pakht or Pushtūn and the land where this tribe was born and dwelt was called Balkh, Balhika or Pushtūnkhwā. Balkh is the motherland of all nations of the world and Pushtūns are the progenitors of all mankind. Being themselves the primary source, they should not be tied to the tail of any other race.

The Maulānā was in fact responding to some Afghān writers who under the influence of Hitlerian propaganda had proposed an Āryan origin for the Pushtūns. Apparently, the Maulānā wished everything good for the Pushtūns, and in it we sympathize with him, but cannot endorse his views regarding the origin of the universe, Pushtūns and Pashto. Wishful thinking cannot be considered serious history.

But this advice of the Maulānā was not heeded to by Roshan Khān (1980: 50) who tied the Pushtūns to the tail of the Hebrews. The Pakhtūns are descendants of those Bani Israel, says he, who were banished from their homeland in Syria and the neighbouring regions by the Assyrians and Babylonians one after the other and who settled not only in the territories touching on Babylonia but also amongst the Āryans in the vast stretch of land comprising Irān, Khurāsān and the valley of the river Indus. There they first followed the Laws of Moses, and then turned over to Christianity, but when invitation of Ḥazrat Muḥammad (PBUH) reached them, they at once accepted Islam.

Roshan Khān (1977: 333-55) was not the first to suggest Hebraic origin for the Pakhtūns; he was preceded by a whole series of Pakhtūn writers harping on the same tune. The most outstanding of these was Ni‘amat Ullāh Harwī, whose *Makhzan-i Afghāni* (1978) became the main source for subsequent writers to draw upon. Ni‘amat Ullāh’s material regarding genealogies was issued later in many and various forms, including a work of the late eighteenth century entitled *Khulāsāt al-Ansāb* (Genealogical Abstract) composed by the Nawāb Ḥafiz Raḥmat Khān Rohila.