

Sources of the Yūsufzai History: A Reappraisal

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Tawārīk Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khānī

Literary sources of the great Yūsufzai tribe are scarce .The most important of these, *The Tawārīkh Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khānī*, in its present form, is an abridged edition of an old work ,*The Tārīkh-i Afāghana* (History of the Afghāns), also called *Tārīkh-i Khān Kajū* (History of Khān Kajū), composed in Pashto in about AD 1624 (Shahjahanpuri 1977:3), by a certain Khwājū Matizai, Khalīl (Roshan Khan 1986:5). Khwājū's work may still be lying in the dark corners of a private library but it has not been noticed since 1801. Allāh Yār Khān, son of the Ḥāfiz, Raḥmat Khān is said to have made a vain attempt in 1229H/1814 to trace out the original manuscript but without any success. Curiously Allāh Yār Khan assigns the authorship of this work to a certain Shaikh Mīrdād Motizai (Matizai), Khalīl (Kamil, n.d.: 11). Roshan Khan (*op.cit.*) says that Khwājū was a descendant of the Shaikh , Mīrdād.

The Shaikh is mentioned at three different places in the *Tawārīkh Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khānī*. At two places (pp 102 and 104) he is styled as Qutb al-Zamān Shaikh Mīrdād Afghān Matizai Khalīl Tarnakai; at one place (p. 231) he is referred to merely as Qutb al-‘Ālam (Pole of the world) Shaikh Mīrdād Matizai. The titles Qutb al-‘Ālam and Qutb al-Zamān (Pole of the Age) show that Mīrdād was a holy personage and was widely venerated among the Afghāns as a saint. His other titles make it clear that he belonged to the Matizai, a sub-section of the Khalīl tribe. A reference to his name in the context of the battle of Shaikh Tapūr indicates that he had died long before this battle and therefore was not the original author of the *Tārīkh-i Afāghana*. A summary of the relevant paragraph is given below:

As the Khalīl *Lashkar* (force) alighted at Shaikh Tapūr with a thunderous noise, The *Tawārīkh Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khānī* reads, everyone in the Yūsufzai camp got anxiously aware of the impending danger. The fact that the Khalīl *lashkar* mainly consisted of horse riders clad in armour and fully “sunk in iron” was a matter of serious concern. The visible show of strength of the Khalīl force seemingly sent

out chilling waves of terror to the Yūsufzai camp, where, except for Khān Kajū and the Gagiānīs, the inveterate enemies of the Khalīls, almost the whole Yūsufzai *lashkar*, out of sheer alarm, got inclined to find out a peaceful solution. It was agreed among some important leaders that should the Khalīls send to Khān Kajū a delegation comprising:

1. One or two respectable elderly leaders,
2. Two elderly ladies of the family of Malik Bāzīd,
3. Grandson of the Qutb al-‘Ālam Shaikh Mīrdād Matizai, it would be accepted as sufficient justification for reconsidering the matter.

Although the proposal merely sensitized Khān Kajū who speedily snubbed his companions for showing this weakness, it is important for us for the present to know that a reference is here made to the “grandsons” of the Shaikh, Mīrdād, not to the Shaikh himself, nor his son or sons. Had he been alive, it is probable that the all-important Shaikh would have personally been called upon, or at least his name included in the list to make the proposal all the more weighty and credible. If however the Shaikh was not alive at the time of this battle, there is no reason to believe that he would have written its history. Roshan Khan therefore correctly remarks that the earliest writer of the *Tārīkh-i Afāghana* was Khwājū, not Shaikh Mīrdād. Pīr Mu‘azzam Shāh (Roshan Khan 1977: 162, 207, 245, 248), and Habībī (1343: 368) as well consider Khwājū as the first writer.

We have not seen Khwājū’s actual work and know it from the Pīr Mū‘azzam Shāh’s abridged edition, As the Pīr allegedly neither changed the order of chapters, nor introduced any new material, we can get a fairly good picture of Khwājū’s work, which is as given below:

1. Khwājū’s work called *Tārīkh-i Afāghana*, narrated the history of the Khashi and Ghorīākhel septs, particularly the Yūsufzais.
2. The language was Pashto loaded with Persian.
3. Its comparison with Akhund Darweza’s *Tazkira* showed that its narration of historical events was based on truth.

4. Because of its useless and repetitive discourses and disputations mixed with anecdotes and misplaced Persian couplets, it was considered drab and dull fit only for rewriting.

The historian Khwājū does not mention the date of the composition of his work, though a fairly accurate time period may be worked out from other dates given in the text. Of these the earliest is the Hijri year 1031/1621-22. Last year, says he, in the Hijri 1031, Malik Haibū's armour taken off his body by Mīr Jamāl Khān was put to the sale but the sum of money offered (Rs.300) was so meagre that he refused to sell it (Roshan Khān 1977: 107-08). The words "last year" show that Khwājū was writing in the Hijri year 1032, the year following 1031 in which the event is said to have taken place. The year 1032 or 1033 is also directly mentioned in connection with other events. In the year 1033/ 1623-24, Khwājū remarks, a certain Saudā – a respectable elderly person, son of the Malik, Zewar – was still alive, while some persons of the house of Shāh Manṣūr, a cousin of the more famous the Malik, Aḥmad, were in the service of the emperor Nūr ad-Dīn Muḥammad Jahāngīr (1014-1037 H/1605-1627). The year 1033 which falls in the reign of Jahāngīr seemingly marks the end of the time-bracket, for, the narration stops there at this point and no event of the successive periods is hereafter mentioned.

The *Tārīkh-i Afāghana* (or the *Tawārīkh Ḥāfīz Raḥmat Khānī* in its new garb) traces the history of the Yūsufzais from their earliest appearance in Gārah and Neshki to their final occupation of the Peshāwar valley. This covers a period of more than a century between AD 1475 and 1586, though the earlier end of this bracket may be extended further, for, the exact date of their eviction from Gārah and Neshki is not recorded.

The book comprises seven chapters, each highlighting a particularly significant feature of the unfolding story. Chapter 1 throws light on the tense relation between the Yūsufzais and the Gagiānīs in their original habitat; Mirzā Ulugh Beg's resolve to crush the Gagiānīs and, then patching up with them, to crush the Yūsufzais; and murder of a number of Yūsufzais *maliks* by stratagem and their expulsion from Afghānistān.

In chapter 2 we are told how the Yūsufzais, particularly Malik Aḥmad, requested the Dilazāks of Peshāwar for a piece of land where they could settle down away from the

reach of Ulugh Beg, and how, after their arrival in the Doāba allotted to them by the Dilazāks, the Yūsufzais tried to consolidate their position.

The Yūsufzais then turned their attention to the rich valley of the river Swāt with a view to capturing more lands. Meanwhile the emperor Zahīr ad-Dīn Bābur demanded of Malik Aḥmad to present himself to the court at Kābul. This is the main theme of chapter 3.

Just like the Yūsufzais the Gagiānīs too found it difficult to live in the Kābul valley and requested Malik Aḥmad for the assignment of some territory where they could graze their cattle and settle down in peace. Their request was accepted. About this time the emperor Bābur let loose his forces on the Dilazāks of Kalpānī. Chapter 4 throws light on these developments.

In chapter 5 we are told how the Dilazāks, suspecting the Gagiānīs and blaming them for their sufferings at the hands of Bābur, chashed with them.

Having tightened their grip over the conquered territories Shaikh Mali and Malik Aḥmad sat down to distribute the whole land amongst the conquerors. After the death of Shaikh Mali and Malik Aḥmad, Khān Kajū/Gajū, son of Malik Qarā became the chief of the Yūsufzais and Mandanr septs. This part of the story is narrated in chapter 6.

In chapter 7 are given details regarding the battle of Shaikh Tapūr and Khān Kajū's exploits in the neighborhood.

The author of the abridged edition, the Pīr, Mu'azzam Shāh, son of the Pīr, Muḥammad Fāzil of the village Pīr Sabāk (in Swābi), in his introductory note explains the circumstances which led him to take up the assignment of re-writing Khwājū's work. The Nawāb Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khān, the ruler of Rohīlkhand, he records, was a very learned person and fond of reading books. It so happened that one day he received a manuscript from the library of the Nawāb, Bahādur Khān, Dā'ūdai Khalīl, located at Shāhjahānpur. Having gone through it the Nawāb found that the manuscript contained almost the same account regarding the movement and migrations of the Khashi and Ghorīā Khel septs as found in the much credited work of Akhūnd Darweza, namely, the *Tazkirat al-Abrār wa'l-Ashrār*, but the narration was marred by misplaced Persian couplets, repetitive

statements and unnecessary detail which needed to be weeded out to make the work readable. The Nawāb therefore instructed this humble servant (i.e. Mu‘azzam Shāh) to rephrase the entire work taking care not to lose the original sense. The result was the present abridged edition entitled the *Tawārīkh Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khāni*.

At the end of the work Mu‘azzam Shāh, in a poem, mentions Muḥ‘arram 1181 H/ May 1767 as the date of its completion. A copy of this work was prepared by Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Qandhāri for Major H.G Raverty. A note written in Arabic by the Qandhāri at the end of this copy records 26 July 1864 as the date of its completion. This manuscript is now there in the British Museum but the original from which it was copied is not known to us.

The Pashto Academy (University of Peshāwar) in the later half of the last century managed to get a microfilm (Qādari 1977) or a Photostat copy (Rasā 1977: 27) of this work which subsequently generated much discussion and received utmost attention of the Academy’s scholars. In 1971 it was published in its original Pashto form. Shortly afterwards it was realized that, for a wider circulation of the information it contained, it was better to render it into Urdu. This job was assigned to an experienced translator of the Academy, Maulvi Muḥammad Isrā‘īl (Bokhāri 1977: 18) whose translation was edited and, along with prodigious notes and lengthy comments, published by Roshan Khan in 1977 under the auspices of the Pashto Academy.

Dost Muhammad Kāmil in his introduction to the *Tārīkh-i Muraṣṣa’* (n.d. 11) informs us that an abridgement of Khwājū’s *Tārīkh-i Afāghana* was prepared in Persian as well under the title the *Tawārīkh Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khāni* by the Ḥāfiz, Muḥammad Saddīq. A paragraph reproduced by Muhammad Nawāz Tā‘ir (1977) says that this Ḥāfiz was a resident of Naltū in Attock and that the work was completed in 1184 H/ 177-71, that is, hardly three years subsequent to the publications of Mu‘azzam Shāh work. It is interesting to note that both the works have the same title. Now, there was a good reason for Mu‘azzam Shāh to adopt this title, for he was an employee of the Ḥāfiz, Raḥmat Khān, the ruler of Rohilkhand, and ostensibly desired to please his boss, but, if the Ḥāfiz of Naltu was not in the service of Raḥmat Khān, he was under no obligation to stick to the same old title and follow in the footsteps of Mu‘azzam Shāh. It seems therefore that

shortly after the completion of Mu‘azzam Shāh’s work, Raḥmat Khān felt the need of having a version in Persian – the *lingua-franca* of those times – and consequently commissioned the Ḥāfiz of Naltū to do this job. In this case there was no need of changing the book title. If however this was not the case then the Ḥāfiz had to look for a wealthy sponsor who could defray the expenses involved in the production of a book the sale of which could hardly be expected to recover its cost. Given the veracity of Kāmil’s statement, we may reasonably assume that two abridged addition- one in Pashto and the other in Persian – existed side by side.

Sir Olaf Caroe’s remarks in his *Pathāns* (p. 169) similarly point to the existence of a Persian copy. “there are several compilation”, he states, “purporting to be histories of the Yūsufzais and kindred tribes, the best known of which, cited by Mounstuart Elphinstone, and Bernard Dorn, the Russian professor who was the Elphinstone’s contemporary, is known as the *Tārīkh-i Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khāni*. It was written in Persian in the Hijri year 1184/ 1770-71, and according to Raverty is based on much older non-existent prose writing in Pakhtu by Shaikh Mali and Khān Kajū, the Yūsufzai notables of the first half of the sixteenth century”. We do not know wherefrom Raverty got his information, though a paragraph reproduced by Tā’ir (1977) from the work of an unnamed orientalist has exactly the same information.

Professor Dorn’s research is inaccessible to us for the moment but Elphinstone’s two volumes entitled *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, are readily available for further guidance. This is what he says:

“The following account is abstracted from a history of the Eusofzyes, written in a mixture of Pushtoo and Persian, in the year 1184 of the Hejira (AD 1770-71). The original history is of considerable of length, and mixed with such fables as the superstitious and romantic notions of the country suggest, it has consistency and an appearance of truth and exactness” (Elphinstone 1815: ii, 8-9).

In spite of all this Tā’ir insists that “The compiler of this work was not Ḥāfiz Saddīq of Naltu, but the Pīr, Mū‘azzam Shāh of Pīr Sabāk alone” suggesting that there was no such thing as a Persian copy and that the work (*Tawārīkh Ḥāfiz Raḥmat Khāni*) was written only in Pashto. In a footnote on the same page he further adds that Olaf

Caroe has admitted in a letter written to him that he had not seen the actual work personally. Tā'ir seems to suggest that had Caroe seen the actual work, he would have come to know that it was not written in Persian, for, such a version did not exist at all. Further on he blames Raverty for confusing the matter and misguiding those who followed him in this respect.

But there is evidence to show that Tā'ir is wrong. Annette S. Beveridge in her translation of the Bābur- Nāma (Appendix K) writes:

“My husband’s article in the Asiatic Quarterly Review of April 1901, begins with an account of the two MSS from which it is drawn, viz I.O. 581 in Pashtu and I.O. 582 in Persian. Both are mainly occupied with an account of the Yusufzai.” Further details make it absolutely clear that here we have the Persian and Pashto copies of the *Tawārikh Ḥāfiẓ Raḥmat Khānī*. It is to this Persian text that Raverty, Elphinstone and Caroe seem to have referred in their accounts of the Yūsufzais. Thus no body seems to have confused the matter more than Tā'ir himself.

The next important source is the *Tazkirat al – Abrār wa al – Ashrār* written in 1021 H/ 1612-13 by the most celebrated saint of the Afghāns and a learned Ṣūfi, the Akhūnd, Darweza, who after an eventful life, died in Peshāwar and was buried in the Hazār Khāni graveyard not very far from the ancient ruins of Shāhji-Ki-Dheri- the site of the famous Kanishka vihāra. He was born in 956 H/ 1549 (Dani 1969: 183).

The Akhūnd was not a professional historian, nor is his *Tazkira* a book on history . He was in fact a religious scholar who illustrated his teachings with examples from history. In this way he mentions some historical events related to the history of the Yūsufzais and of some other tribes in order to draw moral lessons. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, he is certainly the most reliable and trustworthy, for his source of information was not any previously written documents but his own parents who stood with the Yūsufzais through thick and thin and hand first- had knowledge of their movements. His importance lies in the fact that he was certainly the first to write down this information.

The Akhūnd was himself a Turk (Akhūnd 1960: 105) and native of the territory called Nangrahār (ancient Nagarahāra). His great grandfather Darghan came from Mohmand and settled in the town of Pāpīn which appears to have been situated in the darah of Hisārak –i Shāhi (Raverty 1878: 57) in eastern Afghanistan. This place the Sultan Bahṛām, a descendant of the Sultān of Pīch, who claimed descent from a son of Alexander named Shamūs, brought under his control and extended his rule as far as the Safed Koh of Nangrahār, and drove out the Budnis who comprised several tribes and in the past predominated over the country of Nangrahār.

The grandfather of the Akhūnd, Shaikh Sa‘adī, left his native country and accompanied the Yūsufzais in their migration eastward, as their Peshwā or sPiritual guide and received his share in the distribution made by Shaikh Mali. He was accounted among the Mandizai section of the Daulatzai division of the Malizais in the distribution of lands, and was assigned a share for thirty persons, the number of his family and dependants (Akhūnd 1960:107). Subsequently the ruler of the country (probably Mirzā Kāmṛān) had occasion to chastise the ulūs (people in general), and despatched the Amīr, Qodānī, with a body of horse, to make a raid upon them. Some of these horsemen fell in with Shaikh Sa‘adī and his family, and taking him for one of the Afghān ulūs, put him to death; and carried away his son Gadāi, captive. Soon after it was found, through the Amīr, Qodānī’s inquiries about the Shaikh, that he had been unjustly put to death; the horsemen involved in this gory act were severely punished, there was no remedy for what was past. However the Amīr forthwith set Gadāi at liberty and, for the late Shaikh’s sake liberated all the other captives in his custody. Subsequently for some cause or the other, Gadāi left the Mandizai Malizais, and joined the Ismā‘īlzai Khel of Chagharzai Malizai, and by them he was given a share of land for ten persons. This Gadāi was the Akhūnd’s father and that share of land they still enjoyed at the time when the Akhūnd completed his *Tazkira*. This shows how closely associated the Akhūnd was with the Yūsufzais and was not in need of any previously written material to write their history as it was known to him through his family’s personal experiences.

The rest of the historical works may be described as merely marginally relevant. Of these Ni‘amat Ullāh Harwī’s *Makhzan-i Afghānī* completed 1021 H/ 1613 during his stay at Malkāpur near Burhānpur in the Deccan (South India) contains a very interesting

paragraph regarding the Yūsufzais. It reads: “Bihzād b. Sado b. Utmān had two sons named ‘Alī and Qarā. Khan Kajū, also called Naulakhi, to whom the whole Yūsufzai tribe, stood in unquestioning obedience, was the only son of this Qarā. After Sulemān Shāh’s nephew, Malik Aḥmad, who was a very great King, it is related, that no other ruler of the calibre of Khān Kajū was born among the Yūsufzais. Khwāja Khizar is said to have met him. Equating himself with the ruler of Hindūstān (India), Sher Shāh Sūri, he clashed with him. That Khān Kajū met Khwāja Khizar is also related in the *Tawārikh Ḥāfīz Raḥmat Khānī* (p.252) but the rest of the information is new.

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