THE FAMILY OF RASHID KHAN ANSARI

Rashid Khan Ansari, a descendant of Bayazid Ansari, the founder of Roshaniya sect was one of the important noble of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Although the relations between the Mughal Emperor Akbar and Jalal were very hostile and Roshanias were styled as Tarikis.

Bayazid Ansari whose descent is traced to Shaikh Abu Ayub Ansari, one of the companions of the Prophet was born at Jalandhar (Punjab) in 1525, which had a strong Afghan settlement since the time of the Delhi Sultanat. Babur’s invasion followed by Afghan dispersal from Punjab, seems to have compelled Bayazid to move to Roh. He impressed the Afghans of the area with his piety, acts of miracles and revelations. It seems that Bayazid departed from the basic traditional teachings of Islam and allowed his followers to behave freely which is forbidden in

1. He was son of Shaikh Abdullah and was born at Jalandher towards the end of Afghan rule Dabistan-i Mazahib, Nawal Kishore, Kanpur, 304,(Hereafter Dabistan).
2. Zakhirat-ulKhawanin, II,223; Dabistan, 304.
Shari’at.

Bayazid died in Roh leaving behind four sons. Of these, Jalaluddin succeeded him at the age of 14; and it was he who distinguished himself as a spiritual leader (pir) of the Roshaniya sect and a great warrior. He appeared before Akbar at Yulangarh when the latter was returning from Kabul in 1581, and was honoured by the Emperor. But after staying for some time he deserted the imperial camp, retired to Roh and raised the standard of rebellion. This is why the official historian Abul Fazl refers to him derisively as ‘Pir-i Tariki’ and calling him Jalalah perhaps because otherwise Akbar’s name would have been the same as his.

The circumstances leading to Jalaluddin’s conflict with the Mughals which is interpreted by Badauni and Abul Fazl as rebellion. Since Jalauddin was the Pir of tribes naturally his Afghan followers came

3. Dabistan, P. 308 alleges that he regarded himself a prophet. He asked his followers to perform namaz (prayers) and other religious practices, but held that taking of bath with water was not necessary. Raverty says that the followers of Bayazed may be styled Ismailis of Mulahida and that in many respect the tenets of Bayazid are a manifest analogy of those of Hasan Sabah. Notes of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Quetta 1982, II, 389, (Hereforth Notes...); Farid Bhakkari however, says that he brought a large number of people to follow the religion of the Prophet.... His successors (Khulfa), believed in one God; and every one of his followers were pillars of Islam. Zakhirat -ul Khwanin, II, 223.


5. Tuzuk-iJahangiri, 282.
to him to apprise him of their grievances. It may be pointed out that the Mughal-Afghan relations in Roh were far from cordial since the time of Mirza Ulugh Beg and Babur's campaign in 1519. Perhaps in order to keep passage to India free from any strong opposition by the Afghans, Babur had pursued a harsh policy. Several Afghan tribes such as Yusufzais, Mandars, etc., were forced to vacate their original territory and occupy new areas. Seeing the tough resistance offered by the Afghans, Babur reviewed his policy and attempted to win over their confidence by marrying the daughter of Malik Shah Mansur in 1519. Even this could not succeed as is evident from a continuous Afghan resistance specially of Yusufzais throughout the Mughal period. The Mughal Afghan relations over the years became more strained owing to the Mughal keenness to keep the Afghans of Roh under control by force. Afghan reaction to the oppressive behaviour of Musa Khan may be seen in their mobilization against the Mughal forces which was led by Saiyid Hamid Bokhari and his disastrous defeat and death. The Afghans under the leadership of Jalaluddin became more bold and their faith in him

became stronger after this event. Jalaluddin, after this retired to Tiraha\(^9\) (a hilly area south of Peshawar ‘32 Kos long and 12 kos broad’). The Afghan tribes, specially the Afridis who had a large population also rallied around him.\(^{10}\) Jalaluddin blocked the passage to Kabul and India causing a serious threat to the links between Kabul with the Mughal Empire.\(^{11}\) To suppress the Afghans, Akbar appointed Raja Man Singh as Jagirdar of Kabul and despatched him to punish the rebels.\(^{12}\) To reinforce Man Singh Akbar send another army in Safar A.H. 989 (1581) headed by Zain Khan. Sayeed Khan Gakhar, Raja Bir Bal and Shaikh Faizi also accompanied him.\(^{13}\) Jalaluddin and his followers trapped the Mughal reinforcements and inflicted a crushing defeat on 6\(^{th}\) April 1581. Bir Bal, Hasan Khan Panni and Khwaja Arab were killed.\(^{14}\) In the Mughal-Afghan conflict, at least Man Singh succeeded in cornering the Afghans. A large number of Afghans were killed and taken as prisoner including Jalaluddin’s brother Wahdat Ali.\(^{15}\) Despite

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10. In 19\(^{th}\) century Raverty estimated, 40,000 families in Tiraha. Obviously this figure excludes the Afridis who migrated to India during the 17\(^{th}\) & 18\(^{th}\) centuries. Notes on ...I, 94-95.
12. Ibid.
suppression and persecutions, the Afghans continued their rebellious activities under the leadership of Jalaluddin in the Peshawar region and made the Mughal highway to Kabul and India unsafe.  

Jalaluddin died in 1601 and was succeeded by his nephew Ahdad Khan superseding the right to succession by his son Allahdad Khan.  

He continued the struggle with considerable success. 

On his accession to the throne, Jahangir found the North-West Frontier region in turmoil under Ahdad Khan, with a strong Afghan tribal support specially of, Orakzais, Afridis, Sherdad, Karrani, and Dilazr. 

In April 1611 Ahdad Khan was informed that Khan-i Dauran was away from Kabul leaving the charge to Muizul Mulk. He attacked Kabul. Muizul Mulk failed to resist his onslaught and shut himself in the Kabul fort. The fort could be saved only by the gallant resistance of the city dwellers and Farmuli tribals, the adversaries of the Karranis and the Afghans of the Tiraha region. Coming to know of the Afghan attack Nad Ali Maidani rushed from Lohgarh towards Kabul and soon after MuizulMulk also joined to strengthen the Mughal forces. Ahdad's bold enterprise greatly annoyed Jahangir, who summoned Khan-i Dauran

to court. He was replaced by Qulij Khan to lead the campaigns against Ahadad. In 1614 Mughal forces gained success again near Kot Tiraha. The Mughal army continued to put pressure on Ahadad and his followers. A jubilant Jahangir records that Ahadad was pursued from Charkh by Khan-i Duran, he escaped to Qandhar with heavy losses in men and material. It transpires that Ahadad’s son Abdul Qadir later on surrendered to the Mughals and became a mansabdar of 1000.

While Ahadad continued his rebellious attitude, Allahdad Khan was won over by Jahangir. How Allahdad Khan changed side is not clear, however in January 1615 Jahangir records honouring him with a jewelled dagger for his becoming loyal. Apparently Khan-i Jahan played an important role in creating cleavage between Ahadad and Allahdad. The future events and the tremendous rise of Allahdad Khan to power tend to suggest that perhaps Khan-i Dauran encouraged the former to claim the spiritual leadership of his father from Ahadad. Jahangir kept on rewarding Allahdad Khan, but Allahdad Khan was still suspicious of Jahangir’s real intentions: one of the reasons might have been the fact that Harun, brother of Qadir, and Jalal, his son, were still

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20. Tuzuk-Jahangiri, PP. 263-64.
21. Ibid.
kept as hostages at the imperial court. Allahdad Khan rebelled once again, but shortly afterwards he surrendered at the instance of Khan-i Dauran. He was given the title of Khan and promoted to the rank of 2000 Zat 1000 Sawar. Hereafter Allahdad Khan continued to serve Jahangir and Shah Jahan with devotion and loyalty. He was given the title of Rashid Khan in September 1617 by which he is known generally.  

Rashid Khan went on rising in the estimation of Jahangir. He also won the confidence of many nobles such as Mahabat Khan. On his recommendation he was sent to Bangash region with him. Rashid Khan could not decline the appointment but his sympathies with the Afghans made him act with indifference causing difficulties to Mahabat Khan. Jahangir became unhappy with him but at the intercession of Baqir Khan and Itimaduddaulah he was not only pardoned but also promoted to the rank of 2500 Zat 1200 Sawar. He was despatched to Deccan where he rendered valuable services. At the time of the death of Jahangir he held the rank of 2500 Zat 1200 Sawar.

After ascending the throne, Shahjahan conferred on him the rank of 3000 Zat 1500 Sawar and shortly afterwards he was deputed to

26 Ibid, 248.
pursue rebellious Jujhar Singh under the supreme command of Mahabat Khan. Being hotly pursued by the imperial army, and seeing no way out Jujhar Singh submitted before Emperor and his offences were pardoned. He was reinstated but some portions of his Jagir was confiscated and distributed among Mahabat Khan, Rashid Khan Ansari and others. Consequently at the occasion of Nauroz celebration his rank was raised to 3000 Zat 2000 Sawar. In 1631, he was sent to the Deccan with Azam Khan, the viceroy of Deccan. One day while Azam Khan was pitching his camp on the bank of Manjira river, he was surprised by Randola Khan. In this engagements a number of Mughal commander excluding Shahbaz Khan Ruhela were killed and Bahadur Khan, Yusuf were made prisoner. However, Rashid Khan, who was also severely wounded and succeeded in scaping from the battle field.

In 1634, he was chosen to accompany Prince Shuja to beseige the fort of Parenda, though Parenda campaign was unsuccessful but Rashid Khan Ansari gave ample proof of his military skill and received an increase of 1000 Sawar so that his mansab became 3000 Zat 3000 Sawar. After Parenda campaign he continued to serve in the Deccan in Various capacity. Later on, in appreciation of his services rendered in

29. Ibid, 364.
30. Ibid, Part II, 381.
31. Ibid, 42-60.
the Deccan, he was elevated to the rank of 4000 Zat 3000 Sawar.\textsuperscript{32} The author of \textit{Zakhirat-ul Khawanin} writes that Rashid Khan rose into prominence for his sincerity and achievements in the frontier region. In Deccan, the Princes did not take any decision without consulting him. Rashid Khan set a good example of fine administration and rendered valuable service in suppressing the Marathas.\textsuperscript{33} He enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor and had a large following of Afghans. Mahabat Khan became apprehensive of some of his activities and represented to Shahjahan that Rashid Khan had a strong Afghan following and was so endowed with intellect and courage that he might become presumptuous. He advised the Emperor to recall him from Deccan\textsuperscript{34}. He also suggested that Khan-i Zaman should not be posted to the frontier region or Deccan as he was on friendly terms with Rashid Khan.\textsuperscript{35} Farid further adds that due to the friendship of Khan-i Zaman and Rashid Khan, Asaf Khan and Abdullah Khan were hostile to both of them. They apprehended that if the two joined together and rebelled it would lead to a serious situation for the Empire.\textsuperscript{36} Inspite of these machanization Rashid Khan continued to serve as a leading and loyal

\textsuperscript{32} Lahori, vol. II, 91.
\textsuperscript{34} Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, vol. II, 226; Ma‘asir-ul Umar, vol. II, 600.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid
noble. He laid the foundation of Shamshabad (Mau Rashidabad) in modern Farukhabad district and brought the refractory elements under control. He died as subedar of Balaghat (Deccan) in 1648. His followers brought his dead body to Shamshabad where he was buried.\textsuperscript{37}

Hadidad Khan, brother of Rashid Khan, also rose into prominence during his life time, although he lacked his brother’s qualities of leadership. Beginning his career as a mansabdar of 500, he rose to the rank of 2000 Zat 2000 Sawar in the 22 regnal year of Shahjahan when Rashid Khan died.\textsuperscript{38} He was appointed in Rashid Khan’s place to govern Telingana including Nander. He was also promoted to the rank of 2500 Zat 2000 Sawar and given title of Khan. Farid Bhakkari writes that he maintained his full quota of troopers and paid them their salaries regularly.\textsuperscript{39} Hadidad had great love for his tribe and family members. He served in the Deccan faithfully and died in 1656.\textsuperscript{40} He was survived by several sons but none of them got mansab. Two sons of Rashid Khan, Ilhamullah Khan and Asadullah Khan, however, are shown as holding

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Zakhirat-ul-Khwanin}, vol. II, 228-29; The term Subedar has been mentioned by Farid which I have used; although Balaghat was not a Suba under the Muhgals; \textit{Ma’asir-ul-Umara}, II, 600-1.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ma’asir-ul Umara}, vol. I, 597.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Zakhirat-ul Khwanin}, vol. II, 229.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid
the rank of 1500 Zat 1500 Sawar each in the 30th regnal year of
Shahjahan. Both of them served in the Deccan and Ilhamullah Khan
distinguished himself in the battle of Dharmat. In 1658 Aurangzeb
raised him to the rank of 3000 Zat 3000 Sawar and conferred the title of
Rashid Khan held by his father. He served in Assam also. Like his
father and uncle he was appointed Nazim of Nander where he died in the
19th regnal year of Auranzeb.

From the above description it emerges that the descendants of
Bayazid Ansari did not attain very high positions in the Mughal service
although a number of them joined imperial service. Perhaps Khan-i
Jahan’s rebellion made Shahjahan, very cautious as far as the Afghans
were concerned. The descendant of Rashid Khan also vanished from
Shamshabad (Mau Rashidabad). One of the causes of the decline of the
family is attributed to the Afghans themselves who were once his
followers and were persecuted by him to migrate to Shamshabad and
settle there. The new Afghan settlers mostly Karranis and Afridis seems
to have lost their reverence to the descendants of Rashid Khan with the
passage of time. Specially the Afridis who had been recruited by
Mohammad Khan Bangash in the closing years of the 17th and

43. *Alamgirnama*, vol. I, 76.
beginning of the 18th centuries and they used both force and fraud in seizing the Zamindari rights.44 The author of Hal-Tarikh Nawab Rashid gives details of how the descendent of Rashid Khan suffered during the regime of Qaim Khan and Ahmad Khan Bangesh (sons of Muhammad Khan Bangash).45 The Afridis were encouraged by Ahmad Khan Bangash to seize by force the properties of the Khanazads (descendants of Rashid Khan). Unable to resist they left Shamsabad and were ruined. Those who were serving in the Deccan, remained employed but in minor position until the rise of British power.

44. For details see, Iqbal Husain ‘Agrarian Changes in Farrukhabad District in late 18 and first half of the 19th century- A study of Local Collection of Documents, PIHC, 1989, 469-80.