THE FAMILY OF SHAIKH FARID

Shaikh Farid was a great grand son of Shaikh Salim Chisti who enjoyed great reputation as a mystic of his time. Akbar had great regard for the Shaikh and after his death in 1570 his sons, grand sons and sons-in-law were admitted in service. The Shaikh’s daughter served as foster mother to Prince Salim, so that her son Qutubuddin (father of Shaikh Farid) was recognised as Salim’s foster brother (Koka)\(^1\). But the family members attained really large mansabs after the accession of Jahangir. Qutbuddin Khan who held the rank only 500 was now raised to the rank of 5000 Zat 5000 Sawar and also appointed governor of Bengal\(^2\). Similarly Muazzam Khan was promoted to the rank of 3000 and made governor of Delhi\(^3\). Like that several other member of the family were given extraordinary promotion and important offices. It seems that when Mirza Aziz Koka complained about the undue promotions given to Indian Muslim, he had in his mind the members of the family of Shaikh Salim Chisti.

\(^1\) Akbarnama, vol. II, 343-4; Sultan Haider Josh, Nawab Farid, Nizami Press, Badaun,1917; 10-12.
\(^2\) Tuzuk-iJahangiri, 55,81; Ma’asir-ulUmara, vol.I, 483-84.
But the position of the family started declining by 1619. This might have been partly as a result of the increasing influence of Nurjahan’s family with which owing to the fatal incident between Qutbuddin and Sher Afgan, relations were unlikely to have been friendly. The author of *Nawab Farid* is more specific in this connection. While discussing about the career of Shaikh Farid he states that in 1621 the Shaikh was appointed *Hakim* of Badaun. He held the office till 1626 when he was removed and no other appointment was given to him in the life time of Jahangir. Although no reason for his removal from Badaun had been mentioned in any of the contemporary sources, Sultan Haider Josh is of the view that Nurjahan’s hostility with the family was the main cause of his dismissal⁴. Besides that certain high ranking nobles of the family died during this period and after their death in accordance with custom their sons were not given the same high rank as were held by their fathers. In course of time, the family became increasingly less prominent. But Jahangir always kept them in high

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⁴. *Nawab Farid*, 72; 
For details see ‘The family of Shaikh Salim Chisti during the reign of Jahangir’.
regards because of his respect for Shaikh Salim\textsuperscript{5}. Although the family was much reduced in power none of its member joined Shahjahan during his rebellion.

During the accession crisis following the death of Jahangir, Shaikh Farid who was serving under Asaf Khan\textsuperscript{6} (supposedly his father-in-law) openly supported the candidature of Shahjahan Sultan Haider Josh in this connection provides us more details about the role of Shaikh Farid. He writes that at the time of the death of Jahangir when Shahriyar proclaimed himself the Emperor at Lahore and Asaf Khan proceeded towards Lahore to challenge him, Shaikh Farid who had also been informed of these developments also joined him along with his brethrens and whatever force that he could hurryly assemble. In the capture of the fort of Lahore and arrest of Shahriyar Shaikh Farid played an important role\textsuperscript{7}. But the attitude of the other members of the family is not known to us.

\textsuperscript{5} In 1619 at the time of giving promotion to Ikram, Jahangir remarked, 'he is son of Islam Khan who was grandson of the venerable asylum of Pardon Shaikh Salim, whose excellence of person and approved disposition and connection in the blessing with this illustrious family have been described in these pages with the pen of sincerity' \textit{Tuzuk-i-Jahangir}: 278.

\textsuperscript{6} According to family tradition Asaf Khan married his second daughter Shahpura Begum to Shaikh Farid in 1618-19; \textit{Nawab Farid}, 71-72.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Nawab Farid}, 78.
After the accession of Shahjahan, Shaikh Farid was promoted to the rank of 1500 Zat 600 Sawar. However, we have no reference of Shaikh Farid in our sources till 1631 when Asaf Khan returned to court after censuring Mohammad Adil Shah from Balaghat. In the list of nobles, who had accompanied him in the campaign were now rewarded Shaikh Farid is also mentioned. He was promoted to the rank of 1500 Zat 800 Sawar. In the following year he was again given the promotion of 500 Zat and 200 Sawar which raised him to the rank of 2000 Zat 1000 Sawar.

The first important assignment given to him during the time of Shahjahan was against the rebels of the neighbouring villages of Delhi who according to Lahori had made the life of the people miserable. They have become so powerful that they use to loot and kill the inhabitants of Delhi at their will. The situation had became so serious that Shahjahan ordered Shaikh Farid, Shaista Khan and Islam Khan to kill and destroy their villeges and places of shelter. Lahori adds that the imperial army under Shaikh Farid, Shaista Khan and Islam Khan crossed Jamuna and simultaneously attacked their villeges and fortification that

they have built in the forest. In sharp engagement that followed for about twenty two days the rebellion was completely suppressed, the rebel leaders were killed and their families taken prisoner\textsuperscript{11}.

In 1635, Shaikh Farid was deputed alongwith Sayyid Muzaffar Khan to suppress the rebellion of Jujhar Singh Bundela. The army was divided into three division and the commandars was asked to attack the rebel simultaneously. But soon after the Emporer realised that if the commanders failed to cooperate with each other the campaign may collaps. Therefore, Prince Aurangzeb was appointed supreme commander of the campaign and Shaikh Farid and his nephew Shaikh Ilahdiya son of Kishwar Khan along with other commanders were deputed to serve under him. The imperialist captured Khamrawali, Dhamoni and Chauragrh but Jujhar Singh succeede in escaping towards Deccan. However, the commanders continued to pursue him and in the battle that ensued on the way Jujhar Singh lost everything except his life; and fled towards Gondwana where the Gonds killed him\textsuperscript{12}.

Soon after the campaign against Jujhar Singh came to an end Shaikh Farid was again deputed against Sahu Bhonsle under the

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command of Shaista Khan. He was asked to capture the fort of Junair, Sangnair, Nasik and Turbanj. The first important battle was fought at Sangnair where the imperialist defeated Shivaji son of Sahu Bhonsle. The rebels fled to Nasik and started devastating the area. When Shaista Khan came to know of these developments he immediately appointed Shaikh Farid Thanedar of Nasik and asked him to punish the rebels and establish peace and order in the area. With in a very short time after Shaikh Farid’s arrival the rebel fled and peace was restored in Nasik. He remained engaged in bring peace & order in and around Nasik for about an year. Shaikh Farid send an arzdesht to the court detailing his activities in suppressing the rebels. Emperor Shahjahan in response issued a farman in his name to acknowledge the work done in this respect\textsuperscript{13}.

It seems after staying for a year in Nasik, Shaikh Farid came back to presence but soon after he was despatched along with Asalat Khan to suppress the rebels of Pargana Chandawar\textsuperscript{14}.

We have no information in our sources about his activities for about four years. In 1642 he was despatched to suppress Jagat Singh and Rajrup of Mau. From the accout of Badshahnama it appears that this

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campaign was one of the most important campaigns of Shahjahan’s reign because the terrain of Mau was extremely difficult. Shaikh Farid in this campaign showed not only rare valour but great military skill. After the conquest of Mau Shaikh Farid came to court\textsuperscript{15}. While he was still present at the court, it was made known that Shah of Iran had sent an army to conquer Qandhar (1643). Shahjahan immediately ordered mobilization of a large army; Dara Shikoh was made commander of the army and several important military commanders were deputed to serve under him. Shaikh Farid was also asked to join the campaign. He was given a sum of rupees 150000, a flag and Khilat. But when the army reached Kabul and crossed Nilab, it was informed that the ruler of Iran had expired and his infant son came to throne. The Emperor ordered the army to withdraw\textsuperscript{16}.

Sometime in 1644, Shaikh Farid was appointed Subedar of the capital (Agra). Keeping in mind the fact that Agra was the capital of Empire, it was a very significant appointment. But Shaikh Farid could not join immediately because of some other pre occupation. In the meantime Raja Jaswant Singh was asked to look after the work of

\textsuperscript{15} Lahori, PP. 265-66; \textit{Ma’asir-ul Umara}, vol. I, 221.
Nawab Farid, 105-11.

\textsuperscript{16} Lahori, vol. II, 295; \textit{Amal-i Saleh}, vol. II, 303, 363;
Government in his absence. In 1645, Shaikh Farid presented himself at Bhanbhar and was asked by the Emperor to proceed to Agra. He was also promoted to the rank of 3000 Zat 1500 Sawar.\footnote{17}

During his governorship of Agra, Shahjahan sent an army under the command of Prince Murad to conquer Balkhs and Badakhasha, Shaikh Farid was asked to join him along with his nephew Shaikh Allahdiya. Murad, after the conquest of Balkh, in spite of Emperor's firm orders not to leave his post, left Balkh without making proper arrangement. The Emperor despatched Sa'adullah Khan to restrain the Prince, but he continued his journey. In the meantime the officer posted there themselves appointed each of them to maintain peace and order in the conquered area. Shaikh Farid along with Bahadur Khan was appointed to look after the affairs of the Balkh. He remained in the Balkh upto 1648 and protected the city from the onslaught of Almans and Uzbeks. But in the same year he was dismissed from service on the charge that due to jealousy he delayed his march to join Raja Bithal Das who had been appointed to Kabul. He was also deprived of his rank and according to Sultan Haider Josh even his cash and jewellery were

\footnote{17} Lahori, vol. II, 407-11;  
\textit{Ma'asir-ul Umara}, vol. I, 221;  
\textit{Nawab Farid}, 115.
confiscated. He remained out of favour for about eight years\textsuperscript{18}. He was recalled to service again, raised to the rank of 3000 Zat and 2000 Sawar, at the time of the beginning of war of succession and deputed under Raja Jai Singh to check the advancing armies of Shuja who had read Khutba in his name and proceeded towards the capital to challenge Dara. Shuja, as is well known was defeated at Bahadurpur and Shaikh Farid was appointed governor of Bihar with the title of Ikhlas Khan\textsuperscript{19}. But soon after the events turned in favour of Aurangzeb and Shaikh Farid also decided to join him and it seems he was on the side of Aurangzeb in the battle of Samugarh. His son Shaikh Nizam was among the first few to have received the rank of 1000 Zat 400 Sawar immediately after Samugarh. Sahikh Farid himself was despatched towards Allahabad to help Khan-i Dauran and thereafter he continued to hold important position at the court till his death in (1664-65)\textsuperscript{20}.

Shaikh Allahdiya, a nephew of Shaikh Farid served along with his uncle in the campaign against Jujhar Singh. In 1643, he was promoted

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\item \textsuperscript{18} Lahori, vol. II, PP.657-82; \\
Ma'asir-ul Umara, vol. I, P.221; \\
Nawab Farid, PP.115-121.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ma'asir-ul Umara, vol. I, 221; \\
Nawab Farid, 128-30.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ma'asir-ul Umara, vol. I, P.221; Nawab Farid, PP.156.
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to the rank of 1500 Zat 1000 Sawar and made faujdar of Kalinjar\textsuperscript{21}. In 1644, he once again accompanied Shaikh Farid to Balkh and Badakshan. At this time he was promoted to the rank of 2000 Zat 1000 Sawar and title of Ikhlas Khan\textsuperscript{22}. In 1646, when Murad returned to court, on the recommendation of Sa’adullah Khan, he was deputed to look after the administration of Balkh under Shaikh Farid. He was also given promotion of 500 Sawar in his rank. In 1647, he came to court and in the following year he was promoted to the rank of 2500 Zat 2000 Sawar and deputed to serve under Aurangzeb\textsuperscript{23} who was despatched to Qandhar campaign. It is important to note that in the same year Shaikh Farid was dismissed from service. He served Aurangzeb in the second Qandhar campaign also. When Dara Shikoh was deputed in the third Qandhar campaign, Allahdiya who had received the title of Ikhlas Khan had the distinction of being deputed again. From there he accompanied Rustam Khan in the conquest of Bust. Thereafter, in 1645, he accompanied Sa’adullah Khan in the campaign against Chittor. He also served under Aurangzeb in the Deccan and on his recommendation in

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1657 was promoted to the rank of 3000 Zat 1000 Sawar. Nothing more is known about him.

The another important noble of the family was Ikram Khan. During the time of Jahangir he had the rank of 1000 Zat 600 Sawar and also held the important offices. After the accession of Shahjahan he was confirmed rank 2000 Zat 1000 Sawar but no further details about his career and achievements are available. The author of Ma'asir-ul umara writes that in the middle of Shahjahan’s reign he was removed from service. He lived a life a recluse at Fathpur Sikri and had the charge of the shrine of Shaikh Salim Chisti, till his death in 1650.