

The Tazkirat ul-Muluk by Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi: As a Source on the History of Akbar's Reign

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The Tazkirat ul-Muluk, a chronicle dealing primarily with the history of the 'Adli Shahi Kingdom of Bijapur, was compiled in 1017-20 A.H./1608-1612 A.D. by Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi, then a high official in the service of Ibrahim Adil Shah (987-1035 A.H./1579-1626 A.D.). Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi was born in Persia around 947 A.H./1540-41 A.D. He came to India in 967 A.H./1559-60 A.D. as a trader,¹ and during the subsequent four or five years, in connection with his business, travelled across Gujarat, Malwa and the Gangetic Plains. Around 972 A.H./1564-65 A.D., he settled in the Deccan and five years later took up service under 'Ali 'Adil Shah (965-87 A.H./1557-79 A.D.) of Bijapur as a *khawan-salar*? In the service of the rulers of Bijapur, he rose to the position of a high ranking official. Ibrahim 'Adil Shah (987-1035 A.H./1579-1626 A.D.) made him the commandant of the fort of Bijapur and the Master of the Mint.³ That he was still alive in 1028 A.H./1618-19 A.D. is evident from a contemporary treatise by a Mughal *mansabdar* at Lahore which makes reference to his reputation as a man of wide learning.⁴

The *Tazkirat ul-Muluk* comprises ten chapters (*fasls*), each of which is divided into a number of sections carrying different subheadings. While Chapters I-V and VII-VIII deal with the history of the Bijapur kingdom, the remaining three chapters contain notices on the kings of Chajurat

¹C.A. Storey, *Persian literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, Vol. 1, Part 1, London, 1970, pp. 742-43; Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. II, 1879 A.D., p. 316 (b); Eibe, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts of the Library of India Office*, Vol. I, 1903 A.D., pp. 1538-39.

²*Tazkirat Ul-Muluk*, Br. Museum, Add. 23,883, ff. 107b, 195r. In his chapter (*fasl*) on Akbar, which he completed during 1018 A.H./1609-10 A.D., at one place Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi claims that at the time of writing, 46 years had elapsed since he came to Deccan from North India. From this, one may infer that he came to Deccan in 972 A.H./1564-65 A.D. In the same passage, he says that he took up service "in the the Department of *Darwan*" five or six years after coming to Deccan, i.e., in 977 or 978 A.H./1575-76 A.D.

³*Tazkirat ul-Muluk*, f. 153r.

⁴Mirza Kamran, *Afruznamah*, text and English translation published by Hadrat Iqbal in *The Journal of Azad Society of Bengal*, 1911.

(Chapter VI), the first two Timurid rulers of India (Chapter IX) and the history of Akbar's reign (Chapter X). A considerable portion of Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi's narrative on the developments of Akbar's reign consists of the events to which he was an eye-witness during his stay in North India between 1560 and 1564 A.D.

The *Tazkirat ul-Muluk* has been used as source material primarily for the history of Bijapur; and frequently also in researches on the early history of the Bahmani empire. But somehow, the portions dealing with Akbar's reign have not been analyzed or even been properly noticed. It would, therefore, be useful to assess its veracity and relevance as source material for the history of Akbar's reign.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to bring out the significance of its evidence by identifying the sections that appear to be based on the author's personal observation or on reliable information accessible to him. While trying to do so, some of the more interesting passages of the text have been reproduced in English for the benefit of scholars not having direct access to any one of the extant manuscripts. For this study, the manuscript preserved in the British Museum has been used. This manuscript written in *nastaliq* was transcribed by a certain Khirman Singh in 1832 A.D.⁵

Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi came to Delhi from Gujarat in Zil Hijj 967 A.H./August-September 1560 A.D.,⁶ when the tussle between Bairam Khan and the nobles who were responsible for persuading Akbar to announce his dismissal was at its peak. In the first-half of August 1560 A.D., Bairam Khan was still at large mobilizing his supporters in the Punjab for a showdown with the royalists, which finally came around 23 August 1560 A.D.⁷ when he was defeated at the hands of Shamsuddin Muhammad Atka near Philaur (Distt. Jullunder). Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi appears to have been in Delhi during these crucial days before proceeding to Sagar some time in 968 A.H./22 September 1560—10 September 1561 A.D.⁸ No definite information is, however, available about Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi's whereabouts during the next one year. Possibly he was at Sagar till he came to Ali Quli Khan's camp

⁵ Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. II, p. 316 (b).

⁶ *Tazkirat ul-Muluk*, f. 189a.

⁷ Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, ed. by Agha Ahmad Ali, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. II, p. 112.

⁸ Sagar, District Headquarter in Madhya Pradesh or Sagar in Chhottanagpur District of Karnataka. It is more likely to be a reference to the last mentioned place which was famous for a particular kind of cloth (*valat saghara*). Cf. *India's Cloth*, Nawal Kishore, 1916 A.D., p. 71.

ment of Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi is partly corroborated by the fact that on Akbar's orders 'Shakhis' belonging to a particular order of *galandars* were exchanged in Bakkar and Gaudahar for *farman* horses.²¹

The general characterisation of Akbar's religious policy by Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi is basically the same as that of Badami. "Deviating from the religion of his forefathers," writes Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi, "the (Akbar) started worshipping idols and also adopted the dress and eating habits of idol worshippers. He openly dissuaded people from following the religion of Muhammad (peace be on him). If he would come to know that some one performs *namaz* (regularly), he would make it a point to inform him. During Ramadan, if a person is not chewing betel (*paan*), he (Akbar) would suspect him of observing fast and would humiliate that person (by excluding him from the (royal) company in future. He perished in oppressing the 'Ulamas, some of whom were expelled, others fled out of fear. The *khairis* and *ahimsa* were abandoned. He prohibited the congregations of the Muslims. The mosques were converted into store-houses and huts. Every day at the time of day break and sun-set, he would stand facing the sun and worship in the Brahmanic fashion, a practice called by the Brahmins *sandhya*. He (Akbar) nursed a grievance against the Holy Prophet on account of his being the last of the prophets. (He thought that it) the Holy Prophet would not have made such a claim, he (Akbar) could have claimed the position of a prophet for himself without facing opposition from any quarter. For about forty years, he endeavoured to establish a religion of his own (*millat-i-khud*) and (eventually) succeeded in establishing one. That religion is still in vogue. Sultan Salim was not attracted to this religion during his father's life-time. But after his (Akbar's) death, (Sultan Salim) has conformed to the same religion. (It) is in vogue to this date which is 1018th year since *hijrat*."²²

S.R. Sharma has referred to this assessment in the passing. He brushes it aside as a view based on rumours about Akbar's apostasy reigning in Deccan and argues that if there was any substance in these rumours, Prince Salim, while in revolt, could have found his father's apostasy a very powerful weapon against him. "But neither Jahangir nor his historians use this argument to justify his rebellion."²³ One might, however, suggest that S.R. Sharma has not given sufficient attention to Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi's evidence on this count. Otherwise, the significance of Rafi'uddin's observation about the change that came in Salim's outlook after his first

²¹ Abdul Qadar Badami, *Mintakhab ul-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1893, p. 11

p. 299.

²² *Tazkhat ul-Muluk*, II, 231b-232a.

²³ *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, pp. 47-48.

ding the throne would not have been missed by context Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi pointedly refer Salim during his rebellion in which the following are "At the instigation of some mischievous persons, my the arrangements for the maintenance of *khairis*, *miras* the mosques and has prohibited the performance of *namaz*. He has converted many of the mosques into store houses. It was improper on his part to have acted in this manner. The *farmans* of the *farmanis* should resume paying stipends for the imams, the mosques, the *khairis*, the *miras* and the *imams* and should inform the people to offer prayers. Any one showing slackness in this regard would be duly punished." According to Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi, who one of these *farmans* was brought to Akbar's notice at Burhanpur, remarked: "Sultan Salim has tried to protect me. He has held other people responsible for my actions."²⁴ This evidence altogether demolishes S.R. Sharma's arguments refuting Badami's testimony regarding Akbar's deviation from Islam and his policy of withdrawing financial support from Muslim religious institutions. On the other hand, it conforms to similar evidence marshalled by M. Athar Ali in his recent paper, "Akbar and Islam."²⁵

III

Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi's evidence on Akbar's reign based on his personal observation (falling under category 'a'), is of two types. On the one hand are scattered pieces of information providing incidental but significant insights into social and economic conditions as well as the political developments of the early years of Akbar's reign. And, on the other hand, there are included in the *Tazkhat ul-Muluk* a number of sections entirely devoted to hitherto unnoticed developments on the eastern frontier of the Mughal empire during 1560-64 A.D.

The scattered information of this category covers a variety of subjects ranging from measures of weight current in North India and their exchange value of different currencies, existence of a library at Burhanpur containing one thousand books, the location and features of the fort of Rohas, monuments and landmarks indicating the layout of the townships of Delhi, Jaunpur and Sasaram, proposal by one of Badami Khan's adherents in July 1560 to set up Mirza Hakim against Akbar, ten delightful amusing anecdotes depicting Akbar's youthful misadventures and pranks and his unconventional behaviour that caused no much worry

²⁴ *Tazkhat ul-Muluk*, f. 224b.

²⁵ Presented at the Indian History Congress, Calcutta, 1976, A.D.