



## 'ALI MARDĀN KHAN

---

'ALI-MARDĀN KHAN (d. Lahore, 1657), military leader and administrator under Safavid kings [Shah 'Abbās I](#) and Shah Ṣafi, and Mughal ruler Shah Jahān. The son of the Safavid official [Ganj-'Ali Khan](#) (d. 1624), he was a governor of Kandahar who surrendered the city to the Mughals in 1638. He was also an important patron of building projects in Kandahar and Lahore.

*Youth.* 'Ali-Mardān Khan's father, Ganj-'Ali Khan, was a military leader and the governor of Kerman, Sistān, and Kandahar under Shah 'Abbās I (r. 1588-1629). He was revered by the Shah, who bestowed him with the appellation of *Bābā* ('father') and ordered him to reside in Kandahar (Eskandar Beg, p. 1041), a location of strategic importance to both the Safavids and the Mughals (Richards, pp. 133-35). Ganj-'Ali Khan ruled over Kandahar for six years and died there in 1624. The details of 'Ali-Mardān Khan's early years remain obscure, but his name apparently first appeared in the Safavid chronicles when Shah 'Abbās appointed him to the governorships previously held by his father and honored him with the appellation of *Bābā-ye t̄āni* ('the second father') in 1624 (Eskandar Beg, p. 1041). 'Ali-Mardān Khan governed the regions under his control from Kandahar, but in 1625 Ṭahmāsp-Qoli Khan was appointed as the governor of Kerman in order to avoid interruption in the affairs of the city (Bāstāni Pārizi, 1974, pp. 32-33).

*The surrender of Safavid Kandahar to the Mughals.* 'Ali-Mardān Khan's name appears again in the Safavid and Mughal chronicles when he handed over the territories under his control, including the city of Kandahar, to the Mughal



emperor Shah Jahān in 1638. The surrender of Kandahar is highlighted in both Safavid and Mughal chronicles. As may be expected, Safavid historians condemned the event while Mughal historians applauded it. These varying accounts, affected by the authors' own partisan outlook, provide different explanations of the causes as well as the consequences of 'Ali-Mardān Khan's controversial decision to surrender the city. However, a distinct thread that runs through most historical accounts is 'Ali-Mardān Khan's suspicion that Shah Ṣafi intended to kill him. Given the distinguished role of Ganj-'Ali Khan's family as high-ranking and trusted figures of the Safavid dynasty, and considering the fact that 'Ali-Mardān Khan handed over Kandahar nine years after Shah Ṣafi's accession to the throne without previously showing signs of inclination toward the Mughals, this seems to be a plausible explanation. 'Ali-Mardān Khan even mentioned his background as a loyal servant to the Safavid kings when he was joining the Mughal court (Lāhuri, p. 33). 'Ali-Mardān Khan's fears also seem well founded in the light of Shah Ṣafi's often erratic behavior, which had led to the death or disappearance of nearly all chief ministers, prominent generals, and governors, as well as some of his own family members. In fact, 'Ali-Mardān Khan's brother-in-law, Mirzā Ṭāleb Ordubādi, a chief minister of Shah 'Abbās and Shah Ṣafi, along with his relatives and family members, were to be put to death on the orders of Shah Ṣafi some time before 'Ali-Mardān Khan escaped the situation (Bāstāni Pārizi, 1974, pp. 33-34). Apparently, the new chief vizier, Mirzā Taqī Māzandarāni, a rival of Mirzā Ṭāleb, was influential in motivating Shah Ṣafi to move against 'Ali-Mardān Khan (ibid; Hedāyat, p. 6898).

The surrender of Kandahar occurred following a series of exchanges between 'Ali-Mardān Khan and the Mughal court. In March 1632 'Ali-Mardān Khan sent a letter to Shah Jahān, in which he expressed his fear for his own life as well as his loyalty to the Mughal crown and his desire to surrender the fortress of Kandahar to the servants of the Mughal king ('Enayat Khan, pp. 221-22). It was in this year that Shah Jahān decided to retrieve Kandahar from his Safavid rival. He therefore ordered Sa'id Khan, the governor of Kabul, to send a trusted emissary to Kandahar, in order to persuade 'Ali-Mardān Khan to join the Mughal cause as well as to evaluate the state of Kandahar's fortifications and military provisions in case of a probable confrontation. 'Ali-Mardān Khan received the messenger warmly and promised to respond later. A letter was later sent to Sa'id Khan (Lāhuri, pp. 27-31), in which 'Ali-Mardān Khan seemingly proposed that in case of a Persian advance on Kandahar, he would deliver the fortress to Sa'id Khan, provided that the latter would hasten



immediately to his aid (‘Enayat Khan, p. 222). Yet he still seemed interested in remaining on the Persian side, given the fact that after the Mughal army postponed the military campaign to the following year, ‘Ali-Mardān Khan wrote a letter to Shah Ṣafi and informed him of the possibility of a military campaign against Kandahar by the Mughal army and asked for assistance (Lāhūrī, pp. 28-30). At the same time, he carried on an intensive construction plan buttressing the fortifications of Kandahar in the course of forty days (‘Enayat Khan, p. 222). Shah Ṣafi did not take the risk seriously and instead became even more suspicious of ‘Ali-Mardān Khan upon hearing about the new fortification constructions in Kandahar. He summoned ‘Ali-Mardān Khan’s eldest son, ‘Ali Beg, to the court and directed his commander-in-chief, Siāvoṣ Qollār Āḡāsi, to march toward Kandahar in order to detain or kill ‘Ali-Mardān Khan while pretending to hasten to his assistance (ibid; Kanbu, II, p. 227; Lāhūrī, pp. 30-31). When ‘Ali-Mardān Khan learned of the Shah’s plans, he wrote three letters, all soliciting reinforcements, to the appointees of Shah Jahān, including Sa‘id Khan and the governors of neighboring provinces of Ghazni and Multan. He also wrote a fourth letter to the Mughal royal court. In compliance with previous agreements, four detachments were dispatched to Kandahar. Upon the arrival of the first governor, that of Ghazni, on 23 Ṣawwāl 1047/9 March 1638, ‘Ali-Mardān Khan ordered a *koṭba* (the formal intercessory prayer) to be recited in honor of Shah Jahān and the local coinage to be embellished with the inscription of his name. Sa‘id Khan was instructed by Shah Jahān to give ‘Ali-Mardān Khan 100,000 rupees as a present, and to escort him and his dependents to Kabul and from there to Lahore, while Mughal forces awaited battle with Safavid troops. Through one of his ranking officers (*maṣṣabdārs*), Shah Jahān also sent a royal order (*farmān*) along with precious presents to ‘Ali-Mardān Khan (‘Enayat Khan, pp. 226-27; Kanbu, II, pp. 227-28; Lāhūrī, p. 36).

*‘Ali-Mardān Khan as a Mughal official.* ‘Ali-Mardān Khan was not only received by Shah Jahān warmly and respectfully, but was also given a crucial role in the administrative, political, and military affairs of the Mughal empire, eventually being honored with the highest possible ranking in the Mughal court. Shortly after he joined the Mughal court, during the festival of Nowruz held on 4 Du‘l-qa‘da 1047/19 March 1638, he was invested with a present and a rank (*maṣṣab*) of 5,000 (or of 6000; Kanbu, II, p. 247). Thanks to such promotions, accompanied by boundless royal favors on each occasion (‘Enayat Khan, pp. 251-54, 261, 264, 275), ‘Ali-Mardān Khan rose to the highest rank in the hierarchy of Mughal nobles, namely a rank of 7,000 *dāt* ‘infantry’ and



7,000 *sowār* ‘cavalry’ with 5,000 of the latter being of the grade of *do-aspa* and *se-aspa* with his annual stipend amounting to 30 lakhs (each lakh being equivalent to 100,00 rupees). He received his final promotion on 24 Šawwāl 1052/15 January 1643. On this occasion he was also distinguished with the title of Amir al-Omarā (‘lord of the lords’; ‘Enayat Khan, pp. 299, 541; Kanbu, II, pp. 314-15; Lāhūrī, pp. 320-21).

‘Ali-Mardān Khan was a noble highly favored by Shah Jahān. Five occasions have been recorded when the king honored him with a visit to his mansion (‘Enayat Khan, p. 253; Kanbu, II, pp. 229, 315, 383, 391; Lāhūrī, p. 322). On one occasion, when the king was traveling through Kabul on his way to Balkh, he resided in ‘Ali-Mardān Khan’s mansion on 28 Rabī‘ II 1056/1646 and stayed there until the middle of the next month since the royal buildings of Kabul were not yet completed. On 22 Rajab 1048/29 November 1638, Shah Jahān appointed ‘Ali-Mardān Khan as the governor of the paradise-like province of Kashmir, for he was habituated to the climate of Iran and the king did not want him to suffer from the burning heat of Hindustan (‘Enayat Khan, p. 252; Kanbu, II, p. 238; Lāhūrī, p. 125). Soon thereafter, ‘Ali-Mardān Khan was also invested with the overall administration of Punjab, allowing him to pass both summer and winter in perfect ease by changing his residence (‘Enayat Khan, p. 261). However, he was later appointed to a more strategic post as the governor of Kabul (*idem*, p. 275), which he held until his death. Kabul was the farthest provincial center of the northwestern territories of the Mughal Empire and thus had a strategic role in dispatching detachments and provisions for wars with the two permanent enemies of the Mughal Empire, the Safavids and the Uzbek tribes, which were undertaken either for defensive purposes or for territorial expansion (Richards, pp. 132-33; Lāhūrī, p. 127). Accordingly, ‘Ali-Mardān Khan spent the remaining years of his life as a chief general, particularly in wars against the Uzbeks (‘Enāyat Khan, pp. 332, 336-71, 342-49, 353, 383-90, 400-402; Kanbu, II, pp. 352-79, 393-405, 443-56). In December 1649, the province of Kashmir was bestowed on ‘Ali-Mardān Khan as his *jāgir* (‘revenue-producing land assigned for salary’; Richards, p. 299; ‘Enāyat Khan, p. 444).

In the summer of 1657 ‘Ali-Mardān Khan was afflicted by a severe ailment following a pandemic in the Subcontinent and passed away in the same year. His body was brought back to Lahore by his son Ebrāhim Khan and was buried in the tomb of ‘Ali-Mardān Khan’s mother (‘Enāyat Khan, p. 541).

*Patronage of architecture.* Besides political history, ‘Ali-Mardān Khan’s name is



closely associated with the construction of several buildings. In the province of Kerman, the cistern of the Ganj-‘Ali Khan complex bears the name of ‘Ali-Mardān Khan (Bāstāni Pārizi, 1983, pp. 416-17). He has also been credited with building of Bāg-e Naẓar in Kandahar, alongside two of his father’s gardens, namely, ‘Abbāsābād and Ganjābād (‘Enāyat Khan, p. 428; Mār‘aši, pp. 14-15). During his governorship, he restored the old fortifications of Kandahar and founded a new fort on the summit of the Mount Laka, which commanded the outer fortifications of the city (‘Enāyat Khan, pp. 222, 436). His most distinctive work, however, is a canal which brought water from the Rāvi River to the suburbs of old Lahore, contributing to the construction of the most prominent garden of Mughal history, the Šalamar Garden of Lahore (‘Enayat Khan, pp. 277, 298; Kanbu, II, pp. 259-60, 283; Lāhuri, p. 315). Apparently a neighborhood and a bridge in Kabul also bear the name of ‘Ali-Mardān Khan (Bāstāni Pārizi, 1974, p. 37). A beautiful garden was laid out by him in Šāh Jahānābād, north of the Kashmiri gate on the Jumna River (Yamonā; Wescoat and Wolschke-Bulmahn, p. 172). Within the city of New Delhi, ‘Ali-Mardān Khan resided in one of the largest palaces belonging to the great Mughal nobles (idem, p. 182). In addition, he had ordered his mansion in Peshawar as well as a sheltered bazaar in the city to be build based on the architecture of Iran, Shah Jahān became so enamored with this Bazaar that he ordered the building of its replica in Šāh Jahānābād (Kanbu, II, p. 391). The tomb of ‘Ali-Mardān Khan’s mother, where he too was later buried, must have also been constructed upon his order. Some other works that have been associated with him are a village called Ebrāhimābād, a garden in Peshawar, a bazaar in Kabul, and some bridges and canals (Bāstani Pārizi, 1983, pp. 441-43, Kanbu, II, p. 354).

*Descendants.* After the surrender of Kandahar in 1638, Ganj-‘Ali Khan’s clan was apparently wiped out in Iran (Bāstani Pārizi, 1974, pp. 35-36.) Of ‘Ali-Mardān Khan’s sons, ‘Ali Beg, the eldest, is mentioned in historical sources because he was summoned as a hostage to the Safavid court (‘Enayat Khan, p. 222; Kanbu, II, p. 226). Chardin (p. 62) mentions a visit to a mansion in Isfahan, allegedly belonging to this person. Another son, Ebrāhim Beg, was promoted in Shah Jahān’s court to the title of Ebrāhim Khan (‘Enāyat Khan, p. 479) and was named as the governor of Bengal during the reign of Awrangzeb (Richards, p. 247). Yet another one of his sons, Karam-Allāh, was also among the officers of Shah Jahān. A fourth son, named ‘Abd-Allāh Beg, was entitled Ganj-‘Ali Khan, after his grandfather, during the time of Awrangzeb. Two other sons, Eshāq Beg and Esmā‘il Beg were among ranked officers of Awrangzeb’s administration (Bāstani Pārizi, 1983, pp. 444-45).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

### *Primary sources.*

Jean Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient ...*, ed. Louis Langlès, 10 vols., Paris, 1811; tr. Ronald W. Ferrier, as *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire*, London, 1996.

'Enāyat Khan, *The Shah Jahan nama of 'Inayat Khan*, ed. and tr. W. E. Begley and Z. A. Desai, Delhi and New York, 1990.

Eskandar Beg Torkamān Monši, *Tāriḳ-e 'ālamārā-ye 'abbāsi*, ed. I. Afšār, 2 vols., Tehran, 1955-56.

Rezāqoli Khan Hedāyat, *Tāriḳ-e rawzat al-ṣafā-ye nāšeri*, 2 vols., Tehran, 1853-56.

Moḥammad-Šāleh Kanbu, *Amal-e Šāleh (Šāh Jahān Nāma)*, ed. Ğ. Yazdāni and V. Qoreyši, 2 vols., Lahore, 1965.

'Abd-al-Ḥamid Lāhuri and Moḥammad Wāreṭ, *Padšāh-nāma*, 2 vols., ed. K. Aḥmad and 'Abd-al-Raḥim, Calcutta, 1866-72.

Moḥammad-Ḳalil Mar'aši, *Majma' al-tawāriḳ*, ed. 'Abbās Eqbāl Aštiāni, Tehran, 1983.

### *Secondary sources.*

M. E. Bāstāni Pārizi, *Ganj-'Ali Ḳān va ḳeyrāt-e u*, Kerman, 1974.

Idem, *Ganj-'Ali Khan*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1983.

Muḥammad Bāqir, *Lahore: Past and Present*, Lahore, 1952.

J. F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, New York, 1993; 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1995.

J. L. Wescoat and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Mughal gardens: sources, places, representations, and prospects*, Washington, D.C., 1996.