



BAYRAM KHAN

BAYRAM (or BAYRĀM) KHAN, Moḥammad Kān(-e) Kānān, an illustrious and powerful Iranian noble at the court of the Mughal emperors Homāyūn and Akbar, who may be called the second founder of the Mughal empire after Bābor. The Mughal era might have ended when Emperor Homāyūn (d. 963/1656) was defeated by Šīr Shah Sūrī (d. 950/1543) and fled to Iran, disappearing from the Indian scene for a number of years, were it not for Bayram Khan, who inspired and assisted Homāyūn in reconquering the subcontinent and reestablishing Mughal rule, which lasted up to 1274/1857.

While Bayram represented an amalgam of Iranian and Turkish traditions, his son ‘Abd-al-Raḥīm Kān-e Kānān also incorporated the Indian traditions, thus becoming an ideal representative of the composite Iranian, Turkish, and Indian culture.

Bayram Khan belonged to the **Bahārlū** clan of the Qara Qoyunlū Turkmen (Nehāvandī, I, p. 11), whose descendants still live in the Dārābjerd region of Fārs province (Şafā, IV, p. 13). The Qara Qoyunlūs established their independent rule under Qarā Yūsof (d. 823/1420) in Azarbaijan and the adjoining areas, expanding in later years into Kermān and Fārs, but they were overthrown by the **Āq Qoyunlūs** led by Uzun Ḥasan in 973/1468 (Nehāvandī, I, pp. 16ff.; Şafā, *Adabiyāt* IV, pp. 13ff.).

Bayram Khan was descended from ‘Alī Šokr Biḡ, the ruler of Hamadān and Kurdistan (Nehāvandī, I, p. 46) through his father Sayf-‘Alī Biḡ, son of Bayram Biḡ, son of Sultan Maḥmūd Mirzā, a Timurid prince and governor of Badaḡšān



(Nehāvandī, I, p. 61), who married the daughter of ‘Alī Šokr Bīg, himself married to the daughter of Qarā Sekandar (r. 823-39/1420-35). The uncertain political conditions after the overthrow of the Qara Qoyunlūs compelled Bayram Bīg to migrate to Badaḳšān. Sometime after 911/1505 his son Sayf-‘Alī Bīg was appointed governor of Ġazna by Bābor after his conquest of Kabul and Ġazna. Sayf-‘Alī then led an unsuccessful campaign to Khorasan but seems to have died shortly afterward and was buried at Ġazna (Nehāvandī, I, pp. 62-63; *Dīvān*, introd., p. 2).

Bayram Khan was born at Badaḳšān about 910/1504 (*Dīvān*, introd., p. 2, n. 3). He studied there and later at Balk. By the age of sixteen, he had reputedly mastered the sciences and arts of the day, including sports like *čowgān* (polo) and *qabaq* (marksmanship; Nehāvandī, I, p. 592; *Akbar-nāma*, p. 218). Bābor developed a strong liking for Bayram Khan and treated him almost like his son. He attached him to Prince Homāyūn in 926/1520, when the prince was appointed governor of Badaḳšān (Nehāvandī, I, p. 64), Bayram came to India along with Homāyūn in 936/1529 (*Dīvān*, p. 2, n. 3). During the first phase of Homāyūn’s rule, 937-47/1530-40, Bayram played a vital role in the expansion of the Mughal empire. After Homāyūn was defeated and was fleeing to Iran, Bayram joined him in 950/1543 in Sind (*Akbar-nāma*, p. 185; Nehāvandī, I, p. 558) and escorted him to the court of Shah Ṭahmāsb, who issued a firman to the governor of Herat that a royal welcome should be accorded to Homāyūn and his entourage and that Bayram Khan should be treated with due respect (*Akbar-nāma*, p. 208; Nehāvandī, I, p. 581). At the reception in the Jahānārā garden of Herat the famous singer Šāber Qāq sang a *ḡazal* of Amīr Šāhī in the Se-ḡāh *dastḡāh*, for which Homāyūn rewarded him lavishly (*Akbar-nāma*, p. 214; Nehāvandī, I, p. 588). Bayram and Homāyūn then proceeded to the Safavid capital, Qazvīn, passing through the following places: Torbat-e Jām, where they paid a visit to the tomb of the Sufi Shaikh Aḡmad Jām Zanda-Pīl (d. 536/1141) and inscribed Persian verses on a stone at the shrine; Mašhad, where they paid their respects at the tomb of Imam Reżā; Nīšāpūr, where they visited the famous turquoise mines; Sabzavār; Beštām, where they paid a visit to the shrine of Shaikh Bāyazīd; Dāmḡān; and Semnān, where they went to pray at the tomb of the celebrated Sufi Shaikh ‘Alā’-al-Dawla Semnānī (d. 736/1336), which shows Bayram’s devotion to Sufism (*Akbar-nāma*, p. 215; Nehāvandī, I, pp. 588-89).

Bayram Khan, who served as a link between Shah Ṭahmāsb and Homāyūn, went to see the Iranian monarch at his summer resort in order to arrange the



meeting of the two rulers and was accorded a worthy reception (Nehāvandī, I, p. 590). At the Safavid court, he was given precedence over the Safavid and Mughal nobles. Shah Ṭahmāsb invited Bayram to join the Safavid court and offered him the government of Azarbaijan as held by his ancestors, the Qara Qoyunlūs (Nehāvandī, I, p. 594). Even after he left Iran, the shah spoke highly of him in his letters to the Mughal court (Riazul Islam, p. 49). During their stay in Iran, Bayram and Homāyūn paid a visit to Tabrīz and then to Ardabīl and the shrine of Shaikh Ṣafī-al-Dīn, the ancestor of the Safavids (*Akbar-nāma*, p. 219; Nehāvandī, I, p. 593).

When Homāyūn returned to India, Shah Ṭahmāsb provided a force to accompany him (Nehāvandī, I, pp. 592-93; *Akbar-nāma*, p. 218). For his role in the conquest of Qandahār Homāyūn appointed Bayram governor of the city, a position he held from 952/1545 to 961/1554 (*Dīvān*, introd., pp. 8-9). Bayram celebrated the victory in one of his Persian poems in his *dīvān* (p. 38).

The reconquest of India by Homāyūn in 963/1555 is attributed to the strategy and sagacity of Bayram Khan, and after the death of Homāyūn, Bayram supported the young emperor Akbar and was able to place him firmly on the Mughal throne (Nehāvandī, I, pp. 644ff.). In the end, however, Akbar became suspicious of Bayram's growing influence and decided to remove him from office. He had to flee and was finally killed by an Afghan called Mobārak Khan Lāḥūnī in 968/1561. In 985/1577 his bodily remains were transferred to Mašhad and a mausoleum was built over his grave (*Dīvān*, introd., pp. 14-15).

Bayram's high status at the Mughal court is borne out by the titles bestowed on him: *yār-e wafādār* (loyal friend), *barādar-e nīkū-sīar* (good-natured brother), *farzand-e sa'ādatmand* (fortunate son), and *kān-e kānān* (khan of khans; *Ma'āter al-omarā'* I, pp. 370-71). Emperor Akbar, for whom Bayram Khan served as *atālīq* (tutor) addressed him as Khan Bābā and raised him to the post of *wakīl-al-saltāna* (prime minister). Bayram Khan was married to Salīma Solṭān Bīgom, a daughter of Homāyūn's sister, who composed Persian poetry under the pen name Maḳfī (Nehāvandī, I, p. 658; Jahāngīr p. 132; Ḥasan-'Alī Khan, p. 394).

Bayram Khan's accomplishments were recognized both in Iran and India. He was a perfect master of the sword and the pen. His liberal patronage attracted men of letters and masters of fine arts (Riazul Islam, p. 67). Among them were Mīr 'Abd-al-Laṭīf Qazvīnī, an eminent scholar who later on became the tutor of Akbar, and Taḍarvī Abharī, a Persian poet (Badā'ūnī, III, p. 220). The famous



musicians Rām Dās of Gwalior, Yūsuf Tanbūra, his son Mīrqolī, and Ġawġā'ī the singer were also attached to Bayram Khan (*Dīvān*, introd., p. 16 nn. 6, 7; *Ā'īn-e akbarī*, tr. p. 681 n. 2).

Bayram Khan has left a small *dīvān* of Persian and Turkish verses. The Persian section contains 618 verses, the Turkish 357 verses. However, an earlier copy of his *dīvān* preserved in the library of his son 'Abd-al-Raḥīm consisted of about 2,000 couplets. Bayram Khan, a Shi'ite, praises the imams 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb and 'Alī al-Rezā in his Persian poetry. He also wrote panegyrics glorifying the emperors Homāyūn and Akbar. The few *ġazals* included in the *dīvān* are lucid and sweet and bespeak the deep emotional fervor of the poet. There is also a pungent *qeṭ'a* in which Bayram satirizes a noble who had engraved on his seal *'azza man qana'a* (an honorable person is the contented one) but he himself usurped the belongings of widows and orphans (*Dīvān*, p. 34). In a *robā'ī* Bayram expresses a desire to visit the tomb of Pīr-e Herāt K̄vāja 'Abd-Allāh Anṣārī (*Dīvān*, p. 35).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu'l-Faẓl 'Allāmī, *Ā'īn-e akbarī*, tr. H. Blochmann, ed. S. L. Goomer, Delhi, 1965, pp. 329ff.

Idem, *Akbar-nāma*, Calcutta, 1877.

'Abd-al-Qāder Badā'ūnī, *Montaqab al-tawārīk*, tr. H. Haig, Patna, 1973, III, pp. 265-67.

Bayram Khan, *Dīvān*, ed. S. Husamuddin Rashdi and M. Sabir, Karachi, 1971.

Farīd Bhakkarī, *Daḳīrat al-ḳawānīn*, ed. S. Moinul-Haque, Karachi, 1961, pp. 11-20.

Fakrī Heravī, *Rawzat al-salāṭīn*, ed. Husamuddin Rashdi, Karachi, n.d., pp. 281-96.

Golbadan Bīgom, *Homayūn-nāma*, tr. A. S. Beveridge, London, 1902, p. 160.



Būr-al-Dīn Moḥammad Jahāngīr Gūrkānī, *Jahāngīr-nāma (Tūzok-e jahāngīrī)*, ed. M. Hāšem, Tehran, 1359 Š./1970.

Ḳāfī Khan, *Montakab al-lobāb I*, Calcutta, 1869, pp. 70ff.

Sayyed Ḥasan-‘Alī Khan, *Ṣobḥ-e golšan*, Bhopal, 1295/1878.

Šāhnavāz Khan Awrangābādī, *Ma’āṭer al-omarā’*, tr. H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1888, I, pp. 369ff.

‘Abd-al-Bāqī Nehāvandī, *Ma’āṭer-e raḥīmī*, Calcutta, 1924, I-II.

Qāne‘ Tattavī (Ṭhaṭṭavī), *Maqālāt al-šo‘arā’*, ed. Husamuddin Rashdi, Karachi, 1957, p. 98.

Riāzul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, Tehran, 1970.

Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia*, Calcutta, 1948.

E. D. Ross, *The Persian and Turki Dīvāns of Bayram Khan, Khan-e Khanan*, Calcutta, 1910.