



KĀKI ŠIRĀZI, ḤASAN BEG

KĀKI ŠIRĀZI, ḤASAN BEG (حسن بیگ خاکی شیرازی, d. 1612), Persian historian and bureaucrat, whose chronicle, titled *Aḥsan al-tavāriq*, is a general history of pre-Islamic and Islamic dynasties of Iran, the Indian subcontinent, and Central Asia.

LIFE

Little is known of Kāki Širāzi's life and career. He came from a family of prominent bureaucrats with a history of administrative service under the [Aq Qoyunlu](#) and the early [Safavids](#) (Aubin, p. 77). Two of Ḥasan Beg's paternal uncles served as army clerk (*lašgar-navis*) under the early Safavids. His father, Moḥammadi held the same post under [Ṭahmāsp I](#) (Monši Torkmān, p. 164; tr., p. 257). Ḥasan Beg's great-grandfather, Šams al-Din 'Abd-Allāh Kāki Širāzi (d. 902/1496-7) held the rank of *baq̄ši* or military intelligence officer under the later Aq Qoyunlu (Kāki Širāzi, fol. 347r; Minorsky, p. 171). The family was originally from Shiraz, but in the latter part of the 15th century, Ḥasan Beg's ancestors ended up residing in [Azarbaijan](#) and 'Erāq-e 'Ajam (Monši Torkmān, p. 164; tr., p. 258). Under Shah Ṭahmāsp, a close relative of Kāki called Maq̄sud Beg was a well-known poet in Tabriz and held the post of *mostawfi* at the Safavid court (Šafavi, p. 60). During the reign of 'Abbās I (1587–1629), two leading members of the Kāki family named Šokr-Allāh and Moḥammad-Šāleḥ served the Safavid provincial bureaucracy in [Fārs](#) and [Kashan](#) (Kuzāni Eṣfahāni, pp. 350, 745, 877)

In one of his reports (*'arz-dāšt*) to emperor [Akbar](#) (1556–1605) detailing his



travels in the Deccan, the poet-laureate of the Mughal court, Abo'l-Fayz b. Šayḵ Mobārak Fayzi Nāgori (1547–95) makes a brief reference to Ḥasan Beg as a former Safavid bureaucrat. In the winter of 1000/1592, Fayzi had a stopover in Dawlatābād, where he received a letter from Ḳāki. Fayzi tells us about Ḥasan Beg's career in Safavid Iran, clarifying that before embarking for India, he had worked as an army clerk and a *mok̄ber* or intelligence officer for Ya'qub Khan Du'l-Qadr, the unruly governor of Fārs. According to Fayzi, Ḳāki had fled Iran together with his family immediately after Ya'qub Khan's downfall in 999/1591 and the subsequent bloodshed in Shiraz that claimed the life of many of his local allies and cronies. Ḳāki had traveled by boat from [Hormuz](#) to Bombay in the company of a group of former allies of Ya'qub Khan in Shiraz led by Ḥosayn-Qoli Beg Afšār, a Qezelbāš emir from [Isfahan](#) (Fayzi, p. 118; Alam and Subrahmanyam, p. 287). For a while, Ḳāki took up residence in Chaul, a rural coastal town some sixty miles south of the port city of Bombay, whence he wrote to Fayzi asking for his recommendation so that he could find a job at the Mughal court (Fayzi, p. 119).

In the latter part of 1598, Ḳāki was appointed to army clerk in Gujarat (Ḳāki Širāzi, fol. 577v). He appears to have remained in this post for more than a decade up until the winter of 1019/1611, when emperor [Jahāngir](#) (1605-27) promoted him to provincial governor or *subadar* of Bihar. He held this post for the rest of his life (Ḳāki Širāzi, fol. 583v; Balyāni Ešfahāni, II, p. 1222; Bhopali, p. 150; Ašḡar, pp. 232-34).

WORK

Ḥasan Beg is the author of *Aḡsan al-tavāriḳ*, or the *Montaqab al-tavāriḳ*, a general history of the world in Persian. Two catalogues of Persian manuscripts and one study of Persian historiography in Mughal India have described the contents and organization of Ḳāki's *Aḡsan al-tavāriḳ* in detail (Rieu, III, pp. 886-87; Ashraf, pp. 303-5; Ašḡar, 233-35). Dated 1060/1650, the oldest known manuscript of Ḳāki's chronicle is in the Mulla Firuz Library in Bombay (Rehatsek, pp. 84-85). Excerpts from this chronicle are translated into English (Elliot, VI, pp. 201-6). Ḥasan Beg claims that he finished his chronicle on 20 Rajab 1019/8 October 1610 (fol. 4v), but there are at least two references to the events that occurred under the years 1020/1611 and 1021/1612 (fols. 188r and 583v), indicating that he had continued working on its earlier drafts shortly before his death.

The contents of Ḳāki's *Aḡsan al-tavāriḳ* can be divided into three parts. The



first part deals with the lives and times of fifty prophets and dynastic histories of pre-Islamic Iranians, Jews, Greeks, Ethiopians, Yemenites, Turks, Tartars, and Mongols. The second part is devoted to the history of the four rightly guided caliphs, the Shi'ite imams, the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphs, and dynastic history of Iran, Asia Minor, Egypt, Central Asia, the Deccan, and Kashmir in Islamic period. The history of the dynasties who ruled in Iran, Asia Minor, and India during the 15th and 16th centuries is discussed and illuminated in the third part. Kāki Širāzi's chronological lists of the [Arsacid](#) and the [Sasanian](#) kings helped 19th-century historians have a better understanding of the dynastic history of pre-Islamic Iran (Kennedy, p. 52).

Under each dynasty Ḥasan Beg synthesizes the reign of its rulers with special attention to major battles and diplomatic relations. Here and there, Kāki records the dates of important events. His coverage of the crisis that engulfed the Aq Qoyunlu in the closing decades of the 15th century is significantly detailed, providing us with important pieces of information concerning military alliances and battles in Azarbaijan and eastern Anatolia during the years leading up to Shah Esmā'il's rise to power. Kāki's chronicle closes with an account of the dynastic history of the Safavids (fols. 584r-630v), from the establishment of the Şafavīyya order under Sheikh Şafi al-Din Işhāq Ardabili (d. 735/1334) up until the downfall of Kāki's patron in Fārs, Ya'qub Khan Du'l-Qadr and Shah 'Abbas' seizure of Shiraz, which took place in the early winter of 999/1591. The section dealing with the Safavids gets more detailed as it draws closer to the reign of Shah 'Abbās, furnishing us with a chronologically accurate, albeit sketchy, account of the civil war that broke out following the death of Shah Ṭahmāsp in Iran in the spring of 984/1576.

In 1010/1601-2, at the request of Ḥasan Beg Kāki, 'Abd al-Laṭif b. 'Abd-Allāh 'Abbāsi al-Şufi, a native of Māzandarān who worked for the Mughal bureaucracy in the provinces of Bengal and Odisha, embarked on preparing a *tazkera* volume titled *bot-kāna* ('Abbāsi, fol. 2r; Aşgar, p. 232). This volume contains the full-text of the *divāns* of more than forty Persian poets. Thomas W. Beale (p. 146) attributes the authorship of a *divān* to Kāki Širāzi, but this volume is yet to be found. In the preface to this *tazkera* volume, 'Abd al-Laṭif 'Abbāsi confirms that in preparing it he had consulted an assortment of Persian chronicles, including an early version of Ḥasan Beg's *Aḥsan al-tavāriḳ* ('Abbāsi, fol. 4r), suggesting that Kāki had spent more than a decade working on various drafts of his chronicle.



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