

MULTAN

UNDER THE RULE OF THE LANGĀHS

Shaikh Yūsuf's short rule and occupation of power at Multān by Rā'i Sahra or Sahira has been related by Ferishtā,¹ Nizām al-Dīn,² Nahāwandī,³ Ma'sūm,⁴ Sujān Rā'ī⁵ etc. However, 'Abd al-Ḥaq omits the episode and maintains that on the decline of the political power at Dehli Budhan Klān Sindhi, a leader of the Baluch tribe of the Langāhs collected his followers at Uchchh and marched upon Multān. He expelled Klān Khān and occupied the fort. He assumed the title of Mahmūd Shāh and founded an independent rule. This occurred in 841/1437.⁶ He ruled peacefully for well over sixteen years and died in 865/1460.⁷ We do not know the details of his rule but the achievements of his successor indicate that Maḥmūd Shāh's rule must have been successful in maintaining law and order which provided a solid base for peace and prosperity.

On Maḥmūd Shāh's death his son Qutb al-Dīn succeeded to the throne⁸, who also ruled for sixteen years and died in 874/1469. His eldest son Sulṭān Ḥusain then succeeded to rule the territories.⁹ He has been regarded as the ablest and strongest ruler of the dynasty who extended his kingdom upto Shorekot, Chiniot, Karor and the whole territory upto Dhankot.¹⁰ It appears that immediately after assuming power, he planned to annex the neighbouring territories to this kingdom and the possession of these strong forts greatly enhanced his power and prestige.¹¹ However, the envious eyes of Buhlūl Shāh were constantly on the prosperous province of Multān. Soon after his accession to the Dehli throne, in 856/1451, he set out for Multān to conquer it,¹² but could not achieve his goal as he was forced to return to his capital to check the sudden attack of Maḥmūd Sharqī on Dehli.¹³ After about six years he again planned to recover Multān but he had hardly reached Lahore when again he had to rush back to the capital due to renewed interference of the Sharqī Sulṭān.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Shaikh Yūsuf, the former ruler of Multān who was staying at the court of Buhlūl was constantly persuading and instigating the Lodī king to send expedition against Husain Langāh. Buhlūl then decided to entrust the task to his third son, Bārbak Shāh. Tātār Khān, governor of the Punjab, was directed to accompany the prince.¹⁵ The time of the expedition was well chosen as Husain was engaged in suppressing his brother's revolt at Kot Karor. Bārbak Shāh arrived in the neighbourhood of Multān and encamped at the north of the city. However, before he could assault the fort, Husain had hastened to Multān and entered the fort during the later part of the night. Next morning, he came out of the fort with 12,000 men and ordered them to shoot three successive volleys of arrows at the enemy.¹⁶ The first volley of 12,000 arrows, says Ferishtā, 'created confusion and disorder in the army, the second turned them to a mess and the third put them to flight. They ran in panic and did not halt until they had reached Chiniot where they treacherously killed the keeper of the fort and some of his men.'¹⁷ The phenomenal victory made Sultan Husain immensely strong after which Buhlūl never dared to attack the territories of the Langāh ruler.

The power and prestige thus gained by Sultan Husain not only made him popular among his own people, but also compelled his immediate neighbours to reckon with him as a strong ruler not to be trifled with. It was during his reign that a number of notables of the Baluch tribes living in the territories of Kutch, Makrān and Balūchistān flocked to his court where they were received with favour and were rewarded with jagirs and stipends and were allowed to settle in Sitpur and Dhankot.¹⁸

Buhlul died in 894/1488 and was succeeded by Sikandar Shāh. Husain Langāh availed of this opportunity of establishing cordial relations with Dehli and sought alliance with the new Lodī ruler. He sent an envoy to Dehli with condolence message and good wishes and presents. Sikandar received the envoy warmly and as a result of negotiations, a treaty was concluded between the two governments for mutual cooperation and respect for each other's frontiers.¹⁹

Husain Langāh also maintained friendly relations with Sultān Muzaffar Shāh of Gujerāt. It appears that frequent exchange of envoys was the usual practice between the two neighbourly rulers. In this connection, an interesting episode has been recorded by Ferishtā relating to these contacts. It is said that Husain sent an envoy named Qāzī Muḥammad to the court to Muzaffar who was instructed to study royal palaces of Gujerāt so that the Langāh Sultān might build a palace of

equal grandeur at Multan. On return, the Qāzi submitted that after visiting the magnificent palaces of Gujerāt he was of the view that the entire annual revenue of the kingdom of Multān would not suffice to meet the cost of even one such palace. Husain was very disappointed, but was consoled by his vizier, 'Imad al-Mulk Būbak who remarked 'although the kingdoms of Gujerāt, Mālwa, Bengāl and the Deccan could boast of their wealth and prosperity yet the land of Multān and Uchchh excelled them all for the presence of pious men and scholars, particularly the descendants of Shaikh Bahā'al-Dīn Zakriya, as well as the representatives of the line of Bukhārī saints'. He also mentioned the names of two outstanding scholars of the time, Maulānā Fathallah and the latter's pupil, Maulānā 'Azizallah.²⁰

Husain Langāh reigned for thirty years and gave his people a real taste of peace and prosperity. At his old age, he assigned the task of government to his elder son Firūz Khān and retired. Unfortunately, however, Firūz was an inexperienced and haughty youth who soon picked up quarrel with his vizier 'Imad al-Mulk. During the quarrel, the vizier's son Bilal was killed by a hired slave of the young Sulṭān. The vizier in turn secretly managed to poison Firuz. The tragedy compelled the old Sulṭān to assume once more the reigns of the Government. He called Jam Bayazid from Shorkot for help to get rid of the vizier. The Jām hurried to Multān and lost no time in putting 'Imad al-Mulk under arrest. Sultan Husain appointed Bāyazīd his new minister as well as the guardian of the minor Maḥmūd son of Firūz who was then declared the heir-apparent. A few days later, on Saturday 26 Safar 904/Saturday 13 October 1498 Husain died.²¹

Sulṭān Husain was succeeded by his grandson Maḥmūd. The young king soon indulged himself in pleasures and gathered a band of unworthy men around him. His conduct estranged his relations with Jām Bāyazīd who in disgust gave up his residence at the court and moved to his private residence located in the outskirts of the city. It was from here that he continued to administer the affairs of the kingdom. However, the king was poisoned against Bāyazīd. Disgusted and dismayed, Bāyazīd left for Shorkot. The news alarmed Maḥmūd who immediately sent a detachment to intercept the fugitive. Bāyazīd defeated the detachment and continued his march towards Shorkot. On his arrival there, he severed his relations with Maḥmūd and declared his allegiance to Sikandar Lodī. He sent an emissary to Dehli to inform the Lodī Sulṭān of the new situation.²²

Sikandar was delighted with the news. He received the emissary with rare favour, recognized Bāyazīd as *de facto* ruler of Shorkot and sent robes of honour and presents for him. He also sent instructions to his governor at Lahore, Daulat Khān Lodī, to help Bāyazīd in the event of any trouble which obviously meant Maḥmūd's punitive action against his rebellious minister.²³

Mahmud accordingly made preparations to punish Bāyazīd and marched towards Shorkot with a strong force which encamped at the banks of Rāwī. Daulat Khān also rushed to the scene to help Bāyazīd. However, no fighting ensued as the Lodī governor made the two parties accept a settlement which recognized Bāyazīd as the *de jure* ruler of Shorkot and the Rāwī formed the boundary between him and the Langāh ruler.²⁴

The prestige and power gained by the Langāh rulers in the past decades was now on the wane. Maḥmūd had hardly reconciled himself with the rude shock of his kingdom's bifurcation when news was brought to him of yet another and more serious attack by the Arghūn chief, Shāh Husain, then ruler of Thatta. In 931/1525, he marched towards Uchchh and after reducing the fort, proceeded to Multān.²⁵ Maḥmūd collected a force of 80,000 men and came out of the fort to face the enemy. The skirmishes continued for one month without any result. During this period, his vizier and son-in-law, Shaikh Shujā' Bukhārī, became hostile and poisoned the king.²⁶ Thus ended the checkered but eventful rule of the sixth ruler of the Langāh dynasty who reigned for 27 years.

Mahmud's mother collected senior officers of the army and took them into confidence. It was decided that Mahmud's sudden death should be kept secret for some time to make fresh preparations to face the enemy. However, the strategy could not succeed as the news broke out. On this, the senior amirs and courtiers hastily raised the infant son of Maḥmūd to the throne with the title of Sulṭān Ḥusain II. However, actual power was still wielded by Maḥmūd's old vizier and his suspected murderer. It was decided to send Shaikh Bahā'al-Dīn to Shāh Ḥasan for reconciliation. The Shaikh met the invader in his camp at the bank of Ghara river. After deliberations, it was decided that the river should be made the boundary between the territories of the Arghūns and Langāhs. Thus the agreement further curtailed the jurisdiction of the Langāhs.²⁷

Sultan Ḥusain II proved to be the last of the Langah rulers. Soon after his accession family feuds and court intrigues ensued which the young and inexperienced king was unable to control. Unfortunately,

his minister Shaikh Shujā'al Mulk Bukhārī was equally inexperienced and corrupt²⁸ and therefore unable to render any help to his master. The situation deteriorated gradually to the extent that the people of Multan wished to have a change of rule. In the closing months of 932/1526, Lankar Khan approached the Arghūn ruler and persuaded him to attack Multān.

Arghūn was quick to take advantage of this situation and launched another attack on Multān. Shujā'al-Mulk, knowing that the provisions in the fort would not last more than a month, shut himself up disregarding the advice of the commanders who would have preferred to give battle in the open. The enemy took full advantage of the situation and intensified the siege by guarding communications with the fort so carefully that no help from outside could reach the besieged. The suffering of the people further aggravated by the raids which were carried out on private houses by Shujā'al-Mulk's men to search out hidden stores of grains. Preferring death to such miserable existence, many people climbed the wall of the fort and threw themselves down into the moat.²⁹ The siege dragged on for over a year when in Rabi 'al-Sani 933/January 1527 Arghūn's army entered the fort of Multān.³⁰ The atrocities committed by victorious army in Multān have been described by various authorities.³¹ The unfortunate Husain Langāh and his minister Shujā'al-Mulk were arrested and tortured to the maximum to extract money from them and after some time were put to death.³²

Thus came to an end the rule of Langāhs who had reigned over the province independently for 83 years and bestowed upon it peace and prosperity. Arghūn entrusted the administration of the territory to his deputy, Khwāja Shams al-Dīn and Lankar Khān,³³ and after staying for two months there, returned to Thatta. The task of rehabilitating the ruined country was undertaken by Lankar Khān who succeeded with great difficulty in persuading the scattered people to return to Multan. However, the glory and prosperity of the province which its people had seen during the days of the Langāhs had gone for ever. It had now been reduced to an insignificant principality of the Arghūn kingdom, eventually to be merged with the Moghul empire of India being founded by Zahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābūr.

NOTES

1. *Ferishtā*, vol. ii, 325.
2. *Nizām al-Dīn*, i.
3. *Nahāwandi*, i.
4. *Ma'sūm*, 148 sqq.

5. Sujān Rā'i, 294 sqq;

6. 'Abd al-Haq ff. The time of the founding of the new independent kingdom at Multan does not, however, corroborate with subsequent events of the period. If we accept 847/1443 as the year of Shaiḫ Yūsuf's election it would not be possible for him to take refuge at the court of Buhlūl on his exile after two years later than the above date. Further, none of these historians mention the name of Budhan Khān who assumed the title of Maḥmūd Shāh and the first ruler of the dynasty and ruled as long as 16 years. They begin with Rā'i Sahira who assumed the title of Qutb al-Dīn, in fact the son and successor of Maḥmūd Shāh. Under the circumstances some time the later days of the last Sayyid ruler, 'Alā'al-Dīn 'Ālām Shāh.

7. There is some confusion among the historians about this date, 'Abd al-Haq (f.) records 858/1454, while Nūr al-Haq (f. 2636) gives the date of his accession 841 and says that he ruled for 17 years. This makes 858/1454. But, if we take into account the two years of Shaiḫ Yūsuf's reign who came to the throne in 849/1445, the date would be 865/1460.

8. Ferishta, ii, 325. He does not mention Maḥmūd Shāh and begins his account with Qutb al-Dīn.

9. c.f. *CHI*, iii, 231; *Delhi Sultanate* 153. In fact, the Khalji Sultan had failed to conquer Dehli and on his return wanted to annex the territories of Multan.

10. Modern Dīn Kot located in the District of Miānwālī near Kālābagh.

11. Ferishta, ii, 326.

12. c.f. Ne'matallah, *Tārikh-i-Khān Jahānī*, i, 142; Nizām al-Dīn, i, 301.

13. For a detailed account of these conflicts, see *CHI*, iii, 229 ff. *The Delhi Sultanate*, 140 sqq; Muhammad Sa'id, *The Sharqi Dynasty of Jaunpur*.

14. *Ibid.*, 155; Nizām al-Dīn, i, 307.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Nahāwandī, i, 276; Bhandārī, 293.

17. Ferishta, ii, 326.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Ferishta, ii, 327; Nahāwandī, i, 272; Nizām al-Dīn iii, 530.

20. Ferishta, ii, 327.

21. There is some confusion among the authorities about the exact date of Husain's death and the length of his rule. Nizām al-Dīn (iii, 435) quotes two dates, 904/1498 and 908/1502. Later, however, he confirms the earlier date in connection with the account of his successor, Maḥmūd when he records that Maḥmūd died in 931/1524 after a reign of 27 years (*Ibid.*, 540) Nahāwandī also greatly conforms to these dates but says that Husain ruled for 30 or 34 years (275-281) while Nizām al-Dīn makes it 34 or 36. Ferishta also gives two dates and makes the reign for 32 or 34 years (ii, 328) 'Abd al-Haq, however, reduces it to 30 years (ff.). It has been supported by Nūr al-Haq as well (fol. 270a). Similarly, Ab'ul Faḥl (*A'in*, i, 555) regards the length of the rule as 30 years. The sum total of these variations may be taken to 904/1498 as the date of Husain's death and 30 years as the length of his rule.

22. Ferishta, ii, 329; Ab'ul Faḥl, *A'in*, i, 537.

23. *Ibid.*, Nizām al-Dīn iii, 537.

24. *Ibid.*, Nahāwandī i, 228.

25. See for details Ma'sūm 152 ff.

26. *Ibid.*, 154; Qane' i, 116.
27. Ma'sūm, 154-55, *c.f.* Ferishṭa, i, 331; Nizām al-Dīn, iii, 541; Nahāwandī (i, 281).
28. According to Ma'sūm (154), the vizier was guilty of some corruption for which Mahmūd wanted to punish him and in order to escape punishment the vizier plotted to poison the king.
29. *Ibid.*, 157 ff.
30. Ma'sūm, 159; Ferishṭa (ii, 331) gives 932 while Nizām al-Dīn (iii, 543) says 'end of 932'.
31. Ma'sūm, 159; Nizām al-Dīn, iii, 544; Ferishṭa, ii, 331; Nahāwandī, i, 281.
32. Nizām al-Dīn, iii, 543; Nahāwandī, 283; Haqqī, f. 129. According to Ma'sūm, (159) however, Shaiḫ Baha' al-Dīn presented Sultan Husain and his sister to Hasan Arghun who gave them over to Miskīn Tarkhan, one of his prominent courtiers. (*c.f.* Qane' 205 f.n. 2) Miskīn married the sister and adopted the young prince as his son.
33. Nizām al-Dīn, iii, 544; Ferishṭa, ii, 332; Nahāwandī (i, 284) reads Lashkar Khān instead of Lankar Khān while Ma'sūm (160) mentions Dost Amīr Akhur in place of Lankar or Lashkar Khān.