“Amal-I Salih” As an Important Historical Source

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Abstract: Manuscripts play an important role to fill the gaps and disclose uncertain pages of history. They provide us with the information of witnesses and stories had happened prior to the author who had heard from contemporaries. Besides that, there are some manuscripts that were written by several authors and generations. The manuscript of “Amal-i Salih” is a two-volume source written by Muhammad Salih Kambu of Baburid period in India. The manuscript provides valuable information about political and diplomatic relations between Ashtarkhanids and India, information about the genealogy of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty, information about the representatives of the political, cultural, and spiritual spheres of Central Asia.

Keywords: Amal-i Salih, Muhammad Salih, India, Bukhara, Ashtarkhanids, Baburids.

Introduction

Political, social, economic, and cultural activity of the treatise “Amal-i Salih” was prolonged to another several hundred years due to the endavours of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530), one of the Timurids, who established an empire in India. During this period (from 1526 to 1858), a great deal of welfare and harmonious policy was run in Indian land because of the efforts of the dynasty, originating from Timurids, while we know them mostly as Baburids. All these positive transformations are illustrated in dozens and even hundreds of historical sources that encompass the history of the period related to the Babur dynasty. Besides that, Uzbek scientific community and Uzbek people are not still aware of a complete idea of Babur’s activities related to various directions in India. The reason for this is clear: the historical sources regarding the issue are understudied in our country. We consider that from now on, the Baburids period will become crucial in the scientific research of Uzbek scientists, in particular, in the work of introducing historical sources into scientific circulation. The topic that we want to delve below is devoted to the same issue.

Main part

One of the most effective periods of Baburids in India was the period of Shah Jahan (1628-1658). The history of political, social, economic and cultural relations in the country during thirty years is reflected in a number of sources. For example, there can be mentioned “Shahjahannama” by Mirza Muhammad Jalaluddin Tabotabai, “Padishahnama” by Mirza Muhammad Amir Qazvini, “Padishahnama” by Mirza Abu Talib Kalim, “Padishahnama” by Abdulhamid Lohuri, “Amal-i Salih al-mawsum ba Shahjahannama” by Muhammad Salih Kambu among them. In general, the number of historical sources that illustrate Shah Jahan’s period in one way or another is in dozens [1].

The work of Muhammad Salih Kambu “Amal-i Salih” has a special peculiarity among these many historical works.

There is no clear evidence regarding the year of Muhammad Salih’s birth. The land he was born is nearby Lahore. It is also difficult to say any idea why he got the nickname Kambu. However,
there have been put forward different opinions on this matter. For instance, according to Sheikh Zayn al-Abiddin, the author of “Misbah al-Arifin”, Kamb (Kanb) is a town near Ghaznin. Kamb is also associated with the name of the Kambokh river flowing from the north of Samarkand [2]. However, one thing is clear that the Kambu lived mainly in Punjab region and his nickname is connected with the name of the place [3].

The details about the author's family have not been found yet. What is known so far is that the finalizing part of “Amal-i Salih” devoted to the life and activities of Shah Jahan’s contemporaries such as sayyids, sheikhs, scholars, poets and emirs, provides some information that give an opportunity to have an idea about the life of Muhammad Salih. For example, while writing about the virtues who served in the chancellery, he affirms “Sheikh Inayat Ullah is the master and brother [ustad and biradar-i kalan] of the one who writing (these) lines”... “He is my mentor and spiritual and practical benefactor” [4]. Considering that, Sheikh Inayat Ullah can be said to be his brother. However, Dr. Ghulam Yazdani, who prepared “Amal-i Salih” for the edition, interprets the brotherhood in this testimony as a sign of closeness and respect in the general sense, and doubts the family relationship between Muhammad Salih and Sheikh Inayat Ullah [5]. In our opinion, the following words of Muhammad Salih about Sheikh Inayat Ullah can help to disclose the issue: “[Sheikh Inayat Ullah] has been paying his highest attention to the upbringing of this humble person since his [Muhammad Salih] childhood years up to these days” [6]. Taking into consideration that being together since childhood, gaining mutual respect, and education are usually more common between those who are connected by family ties, it would be more correct to consider the brotherhood between Muhammad Salih and Sheikh Inayat Ullah as a historical authenticity. More precisely, they may not be even siblings by birth, but they were probably related to each other by the same family chain as cousins. This gives us an opportunity to determine the approximate time of Muhammad Salih’s birth. Because according to the author's confirmation, Sheikh Inayat Ullah died on September 23, 1671 (19 Friday 1, 1082) at the age of sixty-five [6]. His year of birth is 1018/1609. It becomes clear that Muhammad Salih was born after 1609. Accordingly, it can be assumed that his birth time corresponds to either the twenties or the thirties of the 17th century.

It is known that there was another scholar who had influence on Muhammad Salih’s development. That is, Mawlana Abul Barakat “Munir” (died in 1644) was one of the outstanding sages of Shah Jahan’s era [7]. In a word, Muhammad Salih, in addition to being in the circles of many knowledgeable people of the time he lived, he enjoyed the experience and teachings of scholars such as Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Mawlana Munir since he was close to them. Furthermore, these two persons were considered to be leaders of the chancellery department in Shah Jahan’s palace. As is known, Muhammad Salih also worked in the same office. It is clear that Sheikh Inayat Ullah also had contributions to the author’s motivation for history writing. Because Sheikh Inayat Ullah is the author of works such as “Takmilayi Akbarnama”, “Tarih-i dilgo’sho”, “Bahor-i donish” which are dedicated in general to Timurids and in particular, to Shah Jahan [8].

Muhammad Salih did also write numerous works. “Bahor-i sukhan” (in two editions: 1655 and 663-1664) and the campaign of Murad Bakhshi, Shah Jahan’ son, to Balkh in 1646 are among them [9].

The date of Muhammad Salih’s death is not known either. According to Sayyid Muhammad Latif, Muhammad Salih passed away in 1085/1674-1675 [10]. There are those who believe that the author of “Amal-i Salih” died in 1075/1664-1665 [11]. However, this is wrong, because as is seen above, Muhammad Salih was alive in 1082/1671-1672. An interesting proof about this issue is that one of the copies of “Amal-i Salih” kept in the public library in Lahore was copied in 1120/1708-1709 and it states secretary Muhammad Salih to be alive [12]. If the reliability of this information is not in dubiety, then there is a reason to say that Muhammad Salih’s death was either in 1120/1708-1709 or later. His burial place is known: it is in a red stone mausoleum outside the Muchi Gate in Lahore. Inside the gate, there is a mosque built by Muhammad Salih
in 1079/1668-1669, which is still preserved [13].

Regarding the reasons and the year of writing the work, the author says that until then there was a lack of desire to disclose the difficulties of state affairs and the essence of the divine power given to the ruler in the historical works written about Shah Jahan. Because of this reason, he began “such a difficult task, that is, to collect and put in order the events of the days of Shah Jahan’s power” [14]. Although it is written that the work was completed in 1070/1659-1660, cited information about of Sultan Suleiman Shukuh’s deaths in 1072/1662, Shah Jahan’s demise in 1076/1666, and Sheikh Inayat Ullah’s decease in 1082/1671 at the beginning of the work means that the work was continued even after 1070/1659-1660. It was written at least until 1082/1671 [15].

The sources used by Muhammad Salih can be classified into three groups:


3. Materials of the chancellery office where the author worked; these include documents, reports, decrees, letters, correspondence, diaries of military campaigns, etc.

There is no doubt that the author’s own experience and the events he witnessed served as sources for him. There are enough indications about this in the work. As is seen, the sources of “Amal-i Salih” are diverse and authentic. Relying on them and as a living witness of the events, Muhammad Salih managed to create one of the most perfect works on the political, economic, social, cultural life and foreign relations of the Shah Jahan period. This, in turn, led to a great interest in this work at that time. The preservation of many copies of “Amal-i Salih” in the funds of world libraries, museums and collections today is a clear proof of it.

For example, when the manuscript copies kept only in England is counted, it becomes clear that the India Office library stores the copies of “Amal-i Salih” dated 1112-1113/1700-1702, 1157/1744-1745, 1213/1799, 1225/1810 and the 18th century, the British Museum keeps the copies of “Amal-i Salih” dated 1142/1729, 1186/1773, 1232/1817, 1263/1847 and 18th and 19th centuries, the Royal Asiatic Society, John Rylands, Cambridge, Edinburgh libraries own the copies of the work dating 18th and 19th centuries. The preservation of the copies of “Amal-i Salih” in India and Pakistan also shows that Muhammad Salih’s work was highly treasured in his time. For example, the manuscript copied in 1120/1708 – 1709 kept in the public library in Lahore can support the proposed opinion. Manuscripts of “Amal-i Salih” copied in the 18th and 19th centuries are also stored in other cities such as Bankipur, Hyderabad, Copenhagen, and Calcutta (Asiatic Society of Bengal) [17]. There is also an incomplete copy of Muhammad Salih’s works in Tashkent which was copied in the 18th century (in the treasury of manuscripts of the IOSAS in Uzbekistan) [18].

“Amal-i Salih” contains a lot of information related to the history of Central Asia in the 17th century. In general, the Persian-language historical literature of the Baburi period provides a lot of information about our region. On the contrary, the information related to the history of India of the very period is very rare in the sources written in the XVI-XVII centuries in Central Asia.

The information given in “Amal-i Salih” about Central Asia, especially the Ashtarkhanids (Bukhara Khanate), who ruled during the very period, can be conditionally divided into the following groups:
1. Political relations between the Baburids and the Ashtarkhanids. For example, conflict of interests in Kabul, Badakhshan, Balkh regions is one of them. In particular, the details of the military campaign led by Shah Jahan’s son Murad Bakhsh (1033/1624-1070/1660) to Balkh, which lasted from 1056/1646 to 1057/1646, are given an extremely accurate and in comprehensive manner (Vol. II. 369 – 459; III Vol. 1-13 pages);

2. Diplomatic relations between the two states;

3. Information about the genealogy of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty;

4. Information about the representatives of the political, cultural, and spiritual spheres of Central Asia.

As is seen, Muhammad Salih provided a lot of information on the subject of Central Asia. We want to delve on some of them, for example, those related to the Ashtarkhanid genealogy.

Muhammad Salih described the genealogy of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty as follow: during the reign of Shaybani Iskandar Khan (1561-1583), Yar Muhammad, cousin of Khojam Khan, the ruler of Khorezm, came to Turkestan. As the author states, Yar Muhammad acted in a such way because of the dispute with his relative Khan [19]. According to historical works of Central Asia, in particular “History of Muqimkhan”, due to the seriousness of inner conflicts in his country, Yar Muhammad had to move from Astrakh Khanate towards Bukhara khanate [20]. The author of “Amal-i Salih” continues and writes that Iskandar Khan kept Yar Muhammed closer and gave him his daughter. However, Muhammad Yusuf munshi clearly states that his daughter’s name is Zuhra Khanim, and he informs that she is betrothed to Jani Bek, the son of Yar Muhammed. Because Mir Mahammad Salim, originating from Ashtarkhandans, confirms the information given in “History of Muqimkhan” in his work “Silisilat al-Salatin” [21]. So, Zuhra Khanim was married to Jani Muhammed. Muhammad Salih writes that Jani Muhammed had four sons and one daughter: Sultan Din Muhammed, Sultan Baqi Muhammed, Sultan Wali Muhammed, Sultan Poyanda Muhammed. The name of the daughter is not given [22]. There are also contrasts in this issue. For example, Muhammad Yusuf Munshi states that Jani Muhammed had only three sons: Din Muhammed sultan, Baqi Muhammed sultan and Wali Muhammed sultan. Mir Muhammed Salim also states the same information [23]. In our opinion, Muhammed Salih added Poyanda Muhammed Sultan to this list by mistake. Because, according to “Silisilat al-Salatin”, Poyanda Muhammad was the son of Tursun Muhammed Sultan, the third son of Sultan Yar Muhammed, and the great grandfather of the author of the work [24]. Furthermore, it is impossible to ignore the information of Muhammad Salih, in particular, the fact that Sultan Jani Muhammed had four sons. Because there are those who consider that Tursun Muhammed Sultan was the fourth son of Jani Muhammed [25]. However, Muhammad Salih writes that Poyanda Muhammad Sultan, the fourth son of Jani Muhammed, died in India during Baqi Muhammed period [26] while Mir Muhammed Salim states Poyanda Muhammed to be alive in the forties of the 17th century [27].

As Muhammad Yusuf Munshi and Mir Mahammad Salim confirm, Muhammed Salih also does that Din Muhammed Sultan was the father of two [sons] [Imam Kuli and Nazr Muhammed] [28].

“Amal-i Salih” provides valuable information about Nazr Muhammed Khan’s harem and daughters. For example, during the aforementioned Balkh campaign of 1646-1647, the Baburids occupied this region (when Nazr Muhammad Khan fled to Iran) and sent his relatives to Kabul. There were three wives of Nazr Muhammad Khan among them. One was the daughter of Orozbi, the second was the daughter of Baltu parwanachi, and the third was the mother of Khisraw (Sultan), (besides) his three daughters - one was sixteen years old, the second was four years old and the third was one year old... (Nazr Muhammad Khan’s eldest son) Abdulaziz Khan’s mother was [one of concubines] born in the family of Qadi Tulak, and [Nazr Muhammad Khan’s] sister bought [her first]. It had been twenty years since her death. Khisraw Sultan’s mother was one of the poor of Balkh. The mothers of Bahram (sultan) and Abdurrahman (sultan) were also not from the high stratum. And both of them had passed away. Subhan Quli’s (sultan’s) mother was also from such a [low] stratum. When Nazr Muhammad Khan’s affairs got worse, he escaped to...
Balkh and fled to Abdulaziz Khan [Bukhara]. Qutlugh (Sultan) and his other three daughters’s mothers Kalmuk concubines [29]. Abdulaziz Khan married to Khoja Abdurahim Juybori’s daughter. This girl was born of the marriage of the Khoja with the daughter of Jani Bek Sultan. Nazr Muhammad Khan always looked after Abdulaziz Khan’s two daughters, who were born of this marriage, in Balkh and only were sent to [them] Bukhara three days before the arrival of the Baburids’ army. There is also information about Muhammadyar Sultan, the grandfather of Mir Muhammad Salim, whom we mentioned in “Amal-i Salih”. For instance, there were two of his wives among the Ashtarkhanids that were sent to Kabul by the Baburids. One of them was previously married to Imam Quli Khan [29].

It is also interesting what happened to the Ashtarkhanids who were brought to the dargah of Baburids. Muhammad Salih informs about it as follow: in 1649, Shah Jahan escorted them to Balkh with gifts. Though Abdurahim Sultan, one of the Ashtarkhan princes, returned to Balkh, his brothers Sultan Khisraw and Sultan Bahram showed their desire to stay in India. It is known, Shah Jahan, paying them great attention, assigned an annual salary of 100,000 rupees to Khysraw Sultan appointing to the post at the level of 6,000 zat and 5,000 zat cavalry, and Sultan to the rank of 5,000 zat [30].

Conclusion

As is seen, there is abundant valuable information about our region in “Amal-i Salih”, which is considered a rare source of history of India during the 17th century Shah Jahan era. There has been delved only a part of them in the article. A thorough study of this work will further expand the source base necessary for elucidating the history of Central Asia, especially Baburid India.

References


3. See the riwayats about “Kambu”. Ibid: P. 3.


16. Not all works written on Shah Jahan period cover his whole period. Only in “Amal-i Salih” ten-year history is described completely. (Tabotaboi 5 year, Qazwini 10 year, Lahori 20 year,
Mahammad Waris till enthroned period, Dehlawi 10 year, Muhammad Tahir 30 year is described brief details).


