

Usefulness Oral Tradition; Uncovering Freedom Fighters “Azmeer Khan Mandokhail and Mashu Marrani”.

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Abstract:

This paper uncovers the two Pashtun heroes and freedom fighters that are seldom heard in the contemporary written annals. This is the oral tradition that still preserves the memories of people who have fought for their soil against the mightiest empires of time. Azmeer Khan and Mashu_khan are the two freedom fighters who have fought the British colonial forces for seeking freedom and self determination. The paper presents a blend of the written colonial history and the oral history. The paper leads towards creating the knowledge base that will open new dimensions of alternative history. The paper investigates the unheard and unwritten dimensions of colonial history in the Pashtun areas especially. The significance of the oral tradition and ethnographic approaches for historiography is validated through paper.

The geo-politics and significance of Afghan territory has never let the Afghans to thrive socially, politically and more educationally in its spares. It is paradox of history and worthwhile to divulge here that the invaders either passed through Afghan land or came to it to surmount the world; which structured psychologically a bellicose nation manipulated them to love sword. Bellicose in a sense to drive away the invaders and more their survival had been linked with loving sword since long ago.

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A veteran scholar has rightly uttered in this regard: “The Afghan land has been remained the crossroad or hub for the history of the whole world” (1)

In order to glimpse the repercussions of facts in historical view---the first-ever attack and contravention of the Afghan sovereignty has been violated by the Greek, Alexander, who smashed cities, villages and left nothing behind except the signs of ruins and devastations. By the way, their well equipped force did not soften the valor of the dwellers and they withstood in front of Alexander and defended their mother land through such unparalleled gallantry and inflicted upon him such serious injuries as in one of his campaigns in city of “Masaga” wherein, he would have reported to say that” the people call me Mushtari, but today it came to realize me that I am a common man and can hurt as well”.

” He is now convinced to say that he is common man and can hurt as well”. (2)

The love of soil and their sense of honor never let the inhabitants of Afghan land to kiss the dust, even they comprehended the Alexander to say: he is a common man” but despite these crucial struck to the believers of the mother land repulsed the ever-first exotic invader and jolt them in the sense he had to say that,

The persistent attacks of the raiders never let the dwellers to pay heed towards welfare projects, develop a configured society and preserve their scatter literature, therefore, the constant threats and impending danger of the aggressors mentally and physically made-up a notion of sword loving who thought nothing except to know the skills of fighting and depend their homeland.

Darwish Durrani points out such preaching of a mother’s bravery whereas, she instructs her sons to bring fame not disgrace.

غاصب ز ما وطن ته راغی وو تر ډېره دلې
 خو ککړی ئې کړه د تلو په وخت کېنې هېره دلې
 مورؤ زامنو ته دا وایي چې د جنگ میدان ته
 سرونه یوسئ مگر پرېږدی د سر ویره دلې (3)

“Imperialist remained here for a long time

But many of them lost lives while leaving our soil
Mother advises her sons while leaving for battle field
Carry heads but leave the fear at home”. (Translated by the
Author) Or Participate in the battle field fearlessly

The Advent of European Colonialism and Forward Policy:

It is commonly recorded in the historical annals that the emerging Northern capitalists of 17th century had a great lust to explore and subjugate the wealth of Indian Sub-continent. The trade expedition of East India Company, in 1612 in Surat after obtaining permission from the Mughal emperor to have a diplomatic concede for trade in the mainland of India. As succeeded in gaining approval through ambassadorial way unpacked by the Sir Thomas Roe visit to Mughal Emperor

“In 1612, James I instructed Sir Thomas Roe to visit the Mughal Emperor Nuruddin Salim Jahangir (r. 1605 – 1627) to arrange for a commercial treaty that would give the Company exclusive rights to reside and build factories in Surat and other areas. In return, the Company offered to provide the Emperor with goods and rarities from the European market”. (4)

The East India Company traded mainly in cotton, silk, indigo dye, salt, saltpeter, tea and opium. After taking complete monopoly “the company poked their nose in political affairs gradually but incessantly and the English General Clauo shattered the strength and power of French General Doupley in 1755 and within two years limited span, they smashed the Chief of Bangal, Nawab Sirajuduallh in June 1757 on the ground of Plasay”. (5)

After suppressing the parochial and French supremacy the English became the sole power of the region and redoubled their potentials to quell any hindrance preventing them from their targets. Albeit, the impending peril to challenge their aggrandizing power of expansion was not so far-off, the Afghans, which kept them between the devil and deep sea, letting them not to ripe winkle over the Damocles’ sword. They strengthened their reconnaissance network to fan egotistic hullabaloo with in framework of Afghan society whereas Iran and Punjab did not remain lag behind in this pertain to engage the Afghans to fold not the expansion policy of the invaders.

“Two divisions of Bangal Army under the supervision of English Commander Chief Harry Fane and other under the leadership of General John Keane Bombay divisional to attack Afghanistan for the first time in October 1838”. (6)

The Englishmen followed the old ancient political dictum of keeping the Afghan friends close and his enemies closer and left no stone unturned to bruise the power of a challengeable nation. Moreover, the subjugation with force blurred the policy of the British manifold as the nation they confronting with having their own code of living, Pashtunwali, wherein, the martyrdom has a unique radiance for their native land which mutilated the Forward Policy to consummate.

By the way, the British succeeded after a prolong struggles of disruption in the power of Afghan’s corridor, for concluding a terrible treaty with Yaqoob Khan son of Sher Ali, known as Gandamak Treaty. As Olaf Cario in “The Pathans” uncovers with these words:

“The abdication of Sher Ali, there was concluded with his son Yaqub Khan in 1879 the treaty of Gandamak, ceding not only the Khaiber and Kurram but Pishin, Sibi and Loralai”. (7)

Whenever, the sad-full treaty was signed on May 26th, 1879 neither Sher Ali nor any other patriot agreed upon as their concordance has been fractured pathetically so stood to fight till the last end of the nullification of this shameful accord. Henceforth, the British merely applied its shameful “Divide and Rule” policy upon the unity of Afghans to rupture both socially and strategically.

Whenever, the scuffle for diadem between Abdur Rehman Khan and Sardar Ayoub Khan set fire, in which the former remains triumphant. The Hind sent an Ambassador, Sir Peel Grapen, to Kabul on March 14, 1880, for accepting Abdur Rehmana’s the new Amir (King) of Afghanistan on the condition that to sign the sliced lands of Gandamak Treaty. In one of his letters to new Amir arguing that:

“The province of Qandahar will be separated from Afghan Government and the areas of Pishin, Sibi and others will be under control of English”. (8)

The cede of the Gandamak by the Amir secured the position of invaders to subjugate the carved terrains right now provided golden opportunity bringing them under their yoke. At once they manipulated their clandestine mission to scuffle each tribe within, with neighbors through their reconnaissance parochial Sardars, Moulvies and Nawabs. Which Olasyar writes in his book:

“The English dictators and particularly, the Sandeman assumed the policy to brawl two tribes with each other, terrains and others---- and poisoned their ears secretly and even supported them. Whenever, they exhausted he used to cordon off them easily”. (9)

Bringing the whole Baloch belt under their direct control, Sandeman cognizant the importance of the Pashtun belt for railway lines to pass through for linkage till Gomal pass, inquiring permission for proceeding ahead to preempt the Appozai following Gomal Pass. Bruce in his account “The Forward Policy” writes.

” The government of India had come to recognize the great importance of the Zhob and Bori valleys, and that it would be essential to the maintaining of the safety of the railway lines, as well as to the perfecting of the communication with Quetta, that Zhob should be, like Bori, under our protection and central all sections of the Kakars thus coming under one uniform administration, and that the Gomal Pass should be opened, the two operations forming one scheme, neither of which should be treated simultaneously. At this time the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, contemplated making a tour on the frontier, and it was arranged that the Lieutenant, Governor of the Punjab, Sir James Lyall, and the commander-in-chief Lord Robert Sandeman should meet his Excellency at Dera Ismail Khan and there come to an understanding on the whole question. On arriving at Dera Ismail Khan, on November 10 the viceroy determined to visit Tank and have a look at the Gomal Pass for him”. (10)

The vanguard of Forward Policy, Sandeman hastened his mission for making headway to install railway lines and have passage to Gomal Pass which was supposed to be linked with their success. They first occupied Sevi, currently called Sibi, completely inhabited by Pasthoons, in 1878 for installing road network to Harnai, Sharag and Pishin for smooth military momentum. The movement revitalized tough bitterness among the residents and around 1880 at least 2000 Pashtuns under the command of Shah Jahan, Bahai Khan Sarangzai and Faiz Muhammad Panezai were assembled for redemption of their mother land have conducted serious of assaults to emancipate the terrain. In one of their muggings upon Englishmen in Kach Ahmadon, Place name, on Army cantonment, consequently, killed 20 equipped soldiers., Khair Muhammad Arif describes in his renowned book, “Zmooz Ghaziaan aw Sahheedaan”

“Around 1880, the freedom fighters assailed at military cantonment in Kach Ahmadon under the leaderships of Shah Jahan Jogezi, Bahai Khan Sarangzai and Faiz Muhammad Panezai, in ramification almost 29 armed soldiers were executed”. (11)

The persistent mugs by natives not only crippled the mission of a railway track to Gomal Pass via Zhob but also shivered the bearers with terror to move ahead. Albeit, it has become inevitable to stem the tide for face-saving achievements as well as to trample the escalated annoyances of the freedom fighters causing nuisances sought permission from high ups to proceed ahead for teaching the lesson to these salt of the earth.

“On the 4th of October 1884, a force consisting of 10 guns, 561 Sabers, and 4,220 bayonets assembled about That-Chotiali under the command of Brigadier General Sir O-V-Tanner, K-C-B, and moved into the Bori valley where Sir Robert Sandeman, K,O,S,I, agent to the Governor-General in Balochistan who accompanied the force”. (12)

Sandeman built cantonments in Thal-Choteali district which ignited the resentments of the Kakars of Mina-Bazaar under the venerated leaderships of Umar Khan and Sultan Muhammad Pakhezai and they inflicted such grisly struck to the Englishmen in Thal-Choteali cantonment wherein, gruesome wreckage had been

reported to have occurred which smashed their future plan bitterly. Bruce realized thoroughly this upset.

”In 1886 the Kakars of Mina-Bazaar committed some outrages in the Thal-Choteali district”. (13)

Apart from Mina-Bazaar Kakar’s Sardar Shahjahan withheld the smooth momentum of Forward Policy while imposed upon them such pierce hits which soften their honored touchingly. The Shahjahan guerilla war thwarted the hopes of Bruce as unpacks that:

“Another very formidable obstacle which stood in the way of the accomplishment of our plans was the hostile attitude of Sardar Shahjahan of Zhob; and we knew that until this was overcome the desired results could not be fully secured”. (14)

In this way, the freedom fighters, under the venerated leaderships of Shahjahan, Umar Khan and Sultan Muhammad Pakhezai let not quietly the Englishmen to bear the palm---blurred their future goals with the formidable attacks. As it surely compelled the writer of “The Pathans” Olaf Caroe had to say:

“Elsewhere the Englishmen can claim that in his dealing with the Pathan he has kindled a flame and posed a challenged the spark more often than not has burst into a fire, but what of that? The fire gives lights and heat, and is not dead”. (15)

Mina-Bazaar, the hub of freedom movement became a constant source of annoyance for the bearers of Forward Policy, thoroughly comprehended them that the overthrow of Mina-Bazaar is inevitable to accomplish their mission to have a railway line to Gomal Pass through Mina-Bazaar freedom lovers having made them impelled to revamp their power for a long-hard fight with the nation who will neither wince nor become thrall till the last drop of their blood in body.

As a resemblance in Folklore is:

“If I have to become widow

Its time of country honor, I can’t prevent by beloved”. (16)

A huge force, comprising with gigantic strength of Baloch, Brahvis and Pathans Sardars, under the command of Sandeman directed to teach lesson to the perpetrators of Mina-Bazaar. After

tough brawl, the symbol of freedom turned into thralldom. The houses of the salt of the earth were set ablaze and livestock was confiscated. The brutalities ends not here, they charged the inhabitants of Mina-Bazaar with colossal amount of 3500 at that time in order to leave them in wilderness.

“It is hearsay that Sultan Muhammad, who escaped tortures of the Sandeman, letter on, used to wear woman’s long dress as considering himself not capable of man-dress”.

Another folklore which reflects the tribal life of Pashtun is presenting gruesome persecutions of the invaders in these words:

چې پروهي مرغی
 زړه مې وځي تر پښتۍ
 وایم هغه دی سیکه راغی
 اوس مې ولي په گولی

(17) (Excerpted from the Oral tradition Zhob valley)

Translation: When the bird flows
 My heart’s beats intensifies
 Assuming there is Sikh aiming
 To shoot me

After quelling the movement of liberty, some honor-less elites came to hail Sandeman and invited him to Apozai. Thus, the whole Apozai bowed to the might of invaders unresistingly and preferred to have a humiliating life rather than to dare while fighting for the protection of motherland. Bruce uncovers the invitation of Zhob honor-less elites in these words:

“From Mina-Bazaar he marched to Appozai; now Port Sandeman where he received with the most marked friendliness by Khanan Khan, the head chief of the Mendokhel& Kakar”. (18)

Formation of a new administrative agency:

Suppressing all sort of upheavals, Sandeman reached Appozai unimpeded and warmly hailed by some chiefs wherein, he laid the foundation of “a presidential Agency on 27 December 1889, two kilometers East of the Apozai on a small hill, named Fort Sandeman and destined Mack Evor, its new political agent”. (19)

It was another tremendous achievement for Britain as their destiny came nearer through. The foundation of a new agency was laid just for the administrative affairs.

The Anglo-Afghan-War 1919

The vilifications and malicious persecutions by Englishmen brought the Afghans on one-point agenda “redemption”. It was a sine qua none---for the natives to respond to the call of a new Amir, Amanullah Khan to fight with the gloves off. The call set ablaze the goals of capitalists to stay for long---as the land became so sizzling to live on. The whole Afghan land hailed the new Amir with his call which cut the grounds under the British feet. In this context, not to speak of old and young, women also anticipated shoulder by shoulder with their sons, husbands and more with their brothers to redeem their occupied land. In one of the Folklore which is considered mirror of the Pashtun society represents such resentments for country:

که د وطن په تنگ شهید شوي
په تار د زلفوبه کفن درله گنډمه

“If you got martyrdom fighting for country
I will pitch your coffin with my tress”. (20)

A uniformed move to nullify the appalling treaty of Gandamak gained incessantly widespread momentum. By the way, different generals were sent to assemble the natives for tough below to the raiders. Albeit, the disgraceful Sardars, Moulives and Malaks did not lower the impulsion of lovers of mother land even the grisly

relics of the freedom fighters did nothing to soften the haughtiness of the natives. Above all woeful brutalities they remained like a shadow behind Amanullah Khan. The rise manipulated vantage ground step by step to the fighters which has unpacked by Olf Cario in these words:

“In the aftermath of the Short-Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 Waziristan was visited by an Afghan Brigadier named Shah Daula who in the name of the Amir Amanullah gave the impression that the British Government were about to withdraw behind the Indus, and it behaved all good tribesmen to enlist under the Amir’s banner, occupy, evacuated posts, and generally make them salves as much of a nuisance as possible. (21)

The Unheard Hero: Azmir Khan Mandokhail

The unsung freedom fighter Azmiar Khan Mandokhail was the son of Sardar Akhtar Khan. He lived in his village twelve miles way to South of the Fort Sandeman city, in Viyalla Akram (Village) in 1879. He was the oldest one among nine brothers. Therefore, he was admitted in school for getting education. After completing his preliminary education from Sandeman School, currently named Girls High School Therein, he consummated his education till middle because, for higher education the students had to go to Quetta which was not easy due to various financial and cultural reasons.

He got appointment in Millitia and abruptly promoted to the post of Sobaidar. But in the wake of 3rd Anglo –Afghan war (1919) the call of Amanullah Khan, too disgraced Azmir Khan from his office and he turned down the workplace with shouting fire upon Major Spin, wherein he died on the spot, and Cornel Robert, who was about to mounting on his horse, received serious injuries and rushed to nearly house of a British-loyal for treatment. This has been preserved in the oral tradition and here is a folk genre Kakari Ghara that unfolds the situation.

بیا په جلگه د پرنګیانو گزارونه دي
په وینو سره د ازمیر خان کاږه برېتونه دي

“Once again assaults on the camps of Englishmen
Mustaches of Azmir Khan are colored with blood”. (22)

The wounded Robert was shifted after few days to Sandeman city. At the time of Azmir Khan defiant, 22 other colleagues backed him. At this juncture, the set below raised terror and revenge in the hearts of forces simultaneously.

The flesh and blood were directed to have journey toward Border for safety for reason that the British used the tactics astutely to captivate the families of freedom fighters for obedience. The departure signaled alarming condition for the English---ordered to retrieve them from border. The force, comprising upon the natives and exotics, proceeded by them as to halt the family from border crossing. As he, with whole family, stayed at Chakhwand Hill, near Afghanistan border; Azmir Khan instructed his colleagues to talk with the rest of people for support and then joint them at Chakhwand after in order to formulize future course of action.

The Azmir Khan’s departure followed by a native force to talk on goodwill sentiments and melt the escalating misconception between English and Azmir khan but the native forces were followed by another well armed forces so that if he surrendered without any scuffle is no matter otherwise, will be quelled with armed forces. When he was engaged in talks with native force, he was entirely cordon off there and finding no way except brawl ignited hastened fire so that to have no counter-chance of repulse. After few hours heavy fires these lovers of the earth were gagged forever.

"It is hearsay that the misery and retaliation of the forces ended not here while they latter on cut the head of Azmir Khan so that to have confirmation of his death:

The scene of Azmir Khan’s killing is preserved in folk genre Kakari Gharra,

د ازمير خان کاڙه بربتونه
په کت پروت دی ولونه ولونه

"The ordered mustaches of Azmir Khan
Lay on bed unfolded. (23)

The Unsung Freedom Fighter; Mashu Khan Marrani

It is another unsung hero, but unknown to history, however, his sagas of gallantry are being hearsay even today by the elites to their new generations and feel proud over him.

He was Jamadar in Levies force and very soon disgusted by serving them because of their awful deeds and the martyrdom of Azmir Khan fulminated the retaliation fire among the dwellers called a Jirga on Friday, May 30, 1919 in Kallo Masque Zhob, currently called Suneri Mosque, in which elites of Sherani, Kakars, Mandokhails, Babarrs, Harifals, Lowans and other Khiljies tribes were attended in order to considerate the woeful circumstances and Martyrdom of Azmir Khan along with to set future course of action.

The elites decided to besiege the city for teaching the lesson for their brutalities. Within few days, the decision was executed and cordon off the Sandeman city in result, the Hindus and Sikh vacated their shops, forces left the cantonments and took refuge in Official Garden, currently called Shana Bagh while all high-ups confined themselves in Political Agent Hill. The native cut off water pipe line stretching to Agent Hill. The freedom fighters left narrow way for the invaders to leave the city without any further postponement.

In one of the letters to Assistant Commissioner Zhob by Muqam Khan, Sobedar Major tells in these words the sage of Manikhwa attack: 4, 6 1919

"Previous day Deputy Vice Tehsildar and others came there around 8:00 PM and informed us about the attack of enemy on Manikhwa Police Station and directed us that some forces to stay here and others leave for Zerra Teza(A place named as Yallow Stone), wherein, Haji Batel Khan and Ghulistan will be with you. The ordered executed as directed and 40 to 50 personnel mounted to

hill and entrenched thereby. Then Muhammad Yaqoob and Mulla Jan Gul were sent to know the circumstances in Manikhwa. A little while they came back and told that the gangsters were what in strength are Hussainkhail and at least 44 were reported in strength. Apart from, the fort was closed". (Excerpted from the Misal)

Knocking fierce strikes; Mashu Khan along with his fellows approached to Selyazai, so that to persuade serious of assaults in future with the same enthusiasm. He was collecting his potential to inflict a final struck to the English brought him to the adjacent of city. On other side, the invaders were in hot water for retaliation of the station, got a tidings through their native espionages of Mashu presence in suburban area of Selyazai called a division of force from Loralai via Ghardha Babarr and prepared a well-armed force in city so that to besieged Mashu on both side for final below to the constant annoyance of their mission.

They hastened the covert mission so hurriedly and cordon off as they planned. The beginning of fight in one of the folk genre Kakari Gharra is illustrated

مشو ووئيل چي ٽڪ شو: زرهه مي شك شو
چي مي مخ تر شا راكوڙ ڪي: دغه خائي له انگر بزانو خخه ڊڪ شو

"Mashu said: I became suspicious over simmering a firing

The place filled with English forces, when I look back" (28)

Syed Khair Muhammad Arif in his reckoned account on the struggle of Pashtun Freedom fighters, has argued through the folk poetry and oral tradition. About Mashu Khan he has quoted the folk poetry in the following manner. (29)

د مشو لنډې توپک وو :: د اوو مرد کو ډک وو

پرسيلیڅه يې را خلاص کي :: دا سي اوري لکه تندر د آسمان

غذا وکره مشو خان

مشو خانه سناري :: سرد پرې کی پيرنگي

وتاته انگریزان په ولایت کي دي حیران

غذا وکره مشو خان

مشو وایي سندیه :: مور در جار سه ترکیه

دا د مخ کچهری وله :: کافر ډېر دی بی ایمان

غذا وکه مشو خان

After a tough brawl, Mashu along with other fellows felt down while fighting for the redemption of mother land and thus another native laid his life for the motherland. The incident has been unpacked by Vice Tehsildar of Sherani Malak Muhammad Yaqoob Khan son of Haji Paind Khan in the Following words:

"When Mashu challenged official force near Selyazai that day where 500 personnel were with him and it is acknowledged that some Slemankhail were also with him. But it came to light later on that they all were Hussainkheil Sherani. In addition, there in entrenched with Mashu Khan, others were Malak Sindei, Sangeen, Bajarr, Span and Landak and two Mumadzai, whose names are unknown to me, were also killed with him. Apart those, Kalo Din and Ramazan injured seriously". (30) Date 14, 7, 191

His head was cut from his body and sent to the capital of British India as evidence. In this way another hero laid to rest for the love of his mother land along with his fellowmen as they preferred

martyrdom rather than living a humiliating life. It is un-denying fact that they never die who die in a noble cause

Although the folklore and Oral Tradition still preserve such egalitarian heroes in the hearts and minds of the people, but the history of the state especially written in the text books, and state's historical narrative do not carry such protagonists. These pearls are always lost in the dust of the state sponsored selected written history. The oral tradition and popular narratives can be of vital importance for reclaiming such heroes who have sacrificed their lives for the highest ideals of freedom and self determination. .



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