

Reflections of Rauza: Connected Histories of Burhanpur and Khuldabad

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Abstract: *The settlements of Burhanpur in Khandesh and Khuldabad in the upper Deccan have deep connections, as Burhanpur was founded with Rauza (as Khuldabad was then called) as a template. The two important Sufis of Rauza became the inspirational figures for the twin settlements of Burhanpur and Zainabad. Even after the Mughal takeover of Burhanpur, its connection with Rauza was kept alive as Aurangzeb chose to be buried at the shrine of Shaikh Zainuddin Shirazi. This essay explores the connected histories of these two towns in the medieval and early modern periods.*

Keywords: *Burhanpur, Khuldabad, Mughal, Khandesh, Deccan, Faruqi, Sufis*

Received : 19 April 2023

Revised : 05 May 2023

Accepted : 16 May 2023

Published : 26 June 2023

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Sohoni, P. 2023. Reflections of Rauza: Connected Histories of Burhanpur and Khuldabad. *South Asian History, Culture and Archaeology*, 3: 1, pp. 123-126.

Introduction

Burhanpur was an important city under the Mughals, having been established earlier as the capital of the sultanate of Khandesh in 1388 CE.¹ It was at its greatest from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, when it commanded one of the most important routes from Hindustan to the Deccan. Burhanpur was administratively, commercially, and militarily important for the Mughals after they took over the region under the emperor Akbar (1542-1605 CE) in 1601 CE. The Subahdar of the province was Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan (1556-1626 CE), a personage very close to the emperor. Later, prince Parviz (1589-1626 CE), the son of emperor Jahangir (1569-1627 CE) made it his provincial capital as he ruled over the province. It was also known for its own industry, particularly that of textiles. It served as the transit point for thousands of caravans. While the Mughal history of the city is well-known on account of the significant periods of time that members of the Mughal royal

family and court spent there, the early history of the settlement deserves attention, particularly in terms of its purported relationship with Rauza (Khuldabad).²

Rauza and It's Spiritual Legacy

Shaikh Burhanuddin Gharib (d. c. 1344 CE), who was a disciple of the Chishti Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi, had settled at Rauza in the Deccan. Nizamuddin asked him to go to the Deccan along with Muhammad bin Tughlaq as the capital of the sultanate was shifted from Delhi to Daulatabad, and Burhanuddin accordingly did so in 1627 CE. He stayed on as the successor of his brother Shah Muntajib Zari Zar Bakhsh, who had already come to Rauza and settled there. Burhanuddin was the spiritual preceptor of the sultan of Delhi and his disciple Shaikh Zainuddin Shirazi (d. c. 1369 CE) succeeded him, eventually also retiring opposite Burhanuddin's tomb at Rauza. The town had become the spiritual capital of the Deccan in the fourteenth century under the Khalji-Tughlaq sultans and later under the Bahamanis, and most dynasties in the Deccan sought to connect themselves with its aura. The nearby fort and city of Daulatabad represented the worldly realm while Rauza was the domain of the spiritual, and together they neatly represented the contested spheres of the sultan and the Sufi shaikh.³ Over the next several centuries, important saints and rulers would continue to visit Rauza and many would also wish to be buried there, close to their spiritual preceptors. Famously, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1616-1707 CE) was buried next to the tomb of Zainuddin Shirazi, whereas his general and later the first of the Nizams, Asaf Jah I, is buried in the complex of Burhanuddin Gharib.

The Parvenu Faruqis

Malik Raja Faruqi (d. 1399 CE) was a rebel from the Bahamani court of Muhammad Shah I; the latter had been granted some lands around Thalner and the surrounding regions by Firuz Shah Tughlaq around 1370 CE. Malik Raja assumed the title Shah sometime around 1382 CE and to complement his social rise, also claimed to be a descendent of the second Caliph, 'Umar Faruq, thus acquiring an eponymous dynastic name for his descendents. Malik Raja is believed to have been a disciple of Zainuddin Shirazi, and he patronised the Chishti saints at Rauza. The creation of a genealogy connecting his family with the caliphate in the days of the Rashidun, and the association with powerful Sufis of the period, were two strategies that lent him legitimacy as a ruler and conferred social standing among the other kings. A third strategy for being accepted as an equal among rulers was by marrying into other families of rank. Malik Raja married his son and daughter respectively to the daughter and son of Dilawar Khan Ghori (d. 1406), the founder of the dynasty of sultans who ruled Malwa. However, a family lineage, piety to important saints, and marital alliances were all only ephemeral; the creation of a capital city that physically embodied a connection with the spiritual world was required.

(Re)creating Rauza

Malik Raja's son Nasir Khan (reg. 1399-1437) succeeded him in 1399 CE and immediately thereafter captured the hill-fort of Asirgarh. Ahmad Shah Wali Bahmani (reg. 1422-1436) had approached Nasir Khan Faruqi, suggesting that the Faruqi princess be married to his son Alauddin Ahmad Shah II (reg. 1436-1458). The marriage took place and Nasir Khan continued as his father had done, but then decided to create a tangible marker of the dynastic association with the two saints at Rauza. Around 1431 CE, close to the fort of Asirgarh, Nasir Khan founded two new settlements on opposite sides of the Tapti river, which he named after the two Chishti saints at Rauza. On the east and west banks, respectively, of the Tapti river, the towns of Burhanpur and Zainabad were laid out, analogous to the tombs of Burhanuddin Gharib and Zainuddin Shirazi on opposite sides of the *cardo maximus* in Rauza

(Figs. 1 and 2). In many ways, the creation of the new capital of the Faruqis seems to have been an enactment of creating a homology of the sacred space of Rauza, with a replication of names and the placement of sites associated with their presence.

While the connection of the Faruqis with Zainuddin is undeniable, and attested through various sources, the Faruqis were not content with being mere devotees and patrons. The narrative of the founding of the two cities in the names of Burhanuddin and Zainuddin was clearly a later invention – a story that tied the fortunes of the dynasty and their capital to powerful spiritual personages in the Deccan. As Carl Ernst suggests, “the Faruqis themselves must have worked out at a later date the association of the two saints with the cities named after them.”⁴ But it is obvious that the Faruqis wished to emphasise their connection with the two saints, and their choice of city-names and their placement was contrived and deliberate towards that objective. This would be the one physical marker in their kingdom that reaffirmed their ties with the holy land and saints of Rauza. Maintaining their royal association with saints from north India who had settled in the Deccan allowed them a connection with both regions, to the north and south of Khandesh. As Nile Green pointed out, “Sufis and sultans shared the same spaces of power, power rendered accessible to their descendants through the commemorative rituals they performed.”⁵ The Faruqis actively displayed their link with Rauza, and their piety to the two saints who were in the territorial domains of neighbouring rulers, in the spiritual capital of the Deccan. After all, Malik Raja, the founder of the dynasty had received from Shaikh Zainuddin the “cloak of faith and confidence” – a physical object which was valued and handed down through successive sultans till the end of the dynasty.⁶

Burhanpur soon became the capital of the Faruqi dynasty of Khandesh, a role that it retained for two hundred years. The Faruqis built a number of monumental buildings at Burhanpur, of which the Jami' mosque is perhaps the most astounding, built of black basalt. Grand in scale, and precise in its engineering, the vaulting in the enclosed part of the courtyard mosque is quite unusual, and they built a similar mosque on top of Asirgarh fort. Both mosques have bilingual inscriptions in Arabic and Sanskrit, where one would expect the *maqsurat*, perhaps suggesting the deeper local connections of the Faruqis, which had to be tempered with physical reflections of their piety and association with other sacred locations in the Deccan.

Conclusion

The Faruqis sought a subtle representation of the sacred geography of Rauza (later called Daulatabad), reproducing it in the form of their capital. This would not have been missed by anyone who had been to Rauza, and seen the tombs of the two saints on the east and west of a main north-south artery in town. The creation of a settlement homologous to Rauza, including the names Burhanpur and Zainabad that resonated with the two saints of Rauza, was a masterful strategy to create a delicate connection with Rauza, which was important for a dynasty like the Faruqis. The ruling dynasty of Khandesh, the Faruqis, were not recognized as equals by the ruling families of Malwa, Gujarat, the Bahmanis, and their successors. The Faruqis were Sunnis who nominally claimed descent from the Caliph 'Umar. Already, in an attempt at raising their social status and commensurability with other ruling houses, Malik Raja Ahmad (d. 1399), the founder of the Faruqis, had married his son and daughter respectively to the daughter and son of Dilawar Khan Ghori (d. 1406), the founder of the dynasty of sultans who ruled Malwa. The kingdom of Khandesh would eventually become a part of the Sindh-Malwa continuum, with the Muzaffarid sultanate of Gujarat as its centre. Burhanpur assumed an important role as the hinge between Hindustan and the Deccan, a value that the Mughals realised in the late sixteenth century. The spiritual connection of imperial Burhanpur with Rauza was kept alive

when the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir chose to be buried at the shrine of Zainuddin Shirazi. Rauba became known as Khuldabad because of Aurangzeb's posthumous sobriquet of Khuld Makan.

Notes

1. For a history of Burhanpur, see Suresh Mishra and Nandkishore Dewda, *Burhanpur: Unexplored History, Monuments and Society* (New Delhi: ABI Prints and Publishing, 2018).
2. For a brief history of Burhanpur in its seventeenth-century period of prosperity, see B.G. Gokhale, 'Burhanpur: Notes on the History of an Indian City in the XVIIth Century' in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. XV (1972), pp.316-323.
3. Simon Digby, 'The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India' in *Iran*, vol. 28 (1990), pp. 71-81.
4. Carl Ernst, *The Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY, 1992), p. 210.
5. Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 25.
6. P.M. Joshi, 'Khandesh' in P.M. Joshi and H.K. Sherwani (eds.), *History of Medieval Deccan(1295-1724)*, vol. 1 (Hyderabad: The Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973), pp. 491-516, esp. p. 494; Carl Ernst, *The Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY, 1992), p. 208.

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