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## YUSUF MIRAK AND HIS *MAZHAR-I SHAHJAHANI*: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

"The book that he has made," writes Richard de Bury,<sup>1</sup> "renders its author this service in return, that so long as the book survives, its author remains immortal and cannot die." Nothing can perhaps more aptly testify to the truth of this remark than the example of the *Mazhar-i-Shāhjahānī*'s author. Scion of an outstanding family of Imperial *mansabdars* with an enormous contribution to the literary and cultural heritage of Sind to its credit,<sup>2</sup> close associate of several Mughul *jagirdārs*, and, last but not the least, writer of an unparalleled work of historical significance about the country of his adoption. (*watan-i ikhtiyari*), Yūsuf Mirak did not find even a passing mention in his contemporary, or later, annals and biographies, until his own book, the *Mazhar-i Shāhjahānī*, was, by a fluke of chance,<sup>3</sup> retrieved from an oblivion of more than three and a quarter centuries, and procured for him a well deserved place of pride among historians of Sind and the writers of "Mirrors for Princes" in India at large. Quite naturally, our knowledge of him is entirely derived from the incidental remarks that sporadically occur in his book. But unfortunately they do little to elucidate the details of the early years of his life. The earliest information about him in the book goes back to Ramadān 1016/December-January 1607, when his father, Mir Abū al-Qāsim Namakin,<sup>4</sup> was transferred from the *thānadārī*<sup>5</sup> of Bājaur to the *Jāgirdārī* of Sihwan and he dispatched Yusuf Mirak at the head of an advance party to look after the affairs of that place until his arrival.<sup>6</sup> Before his appointment at Bajaur, Mir Namakin had served at various places, including Bhakkar, Sihwan and Jalalabad; in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it would be only fair to assume that our author accompanied his father to all these places. Be that as it may, within a few months of his arrival at Sihwan, Mir Namakin was obliged to leave the administration of his *jagir* in the hands of his elder son, Mir Abu al-Baqā', and himself went to Qandahar in the company of Mirza Ghazi Beg Tarkhan.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, Yusuf Mirak also stayed back at Sihwan. After almost one year when Mir Namakin passed away, Jahangir conferred the *jagir* of Sihwan on Abu al-Baqā' and Shamshir Beg Uzbek<sup>8</sup> collectively. Disenchanted with the latter's participation in the *jagir* which he had managed singlehandedly in the absence of his father, Mir Abu al-Baqā' hastened to Agra with his entire family.<sup>9</sup> Being a man of a rather independent character, Yusuf Mirak would seem to have parted company with his brother at this juncture. He renounced his *mansab*