

## NEW INTERPRETATION OF ALAN-GHO'A IN AKBAR-NAME

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Kabul: 10.01.2019**Abstract**

Alan-gho'a was the legendary ancestress of the Chinggis Khan's Golden Lineage (*Altan Urug*) that retained the privilege of ruling in Central Asia through centuries. Akbar Shah, third ruler of Baburid (Mughal) Empire in India, claimed Alan-gho'a being as his ancestress. This did not depend upon his blood kinship with the Chinggisids; instead, it was claimed that the main reason for the existence of Alan-gho'a was Akbar's divine entrance into the world; the reigns of Chinggisids and others were transitory until Akbar was born. Akbar Shah constructed his "splendid charisma" on this claim through a re-interpretation of the narrative of Alan-gho'a in a *sufi* mystical way making his subject people who possessed divergent religious and cultural values believe in his power and authority and uniting them around his dynasty. In this way, Akbar Shah also placed his Timurid ancestors and his lineage in a position that was superior to the Chinggisids and all the other dynasties in the World. Alan-gho'a's new interpretation was made according to the new cultural values and social structure of his Empire which consisted of almost the whole Indian subcontinent. In this article, how and why the narrative of Alan-gho'a was re-shaped in the Akbar's court is examined through a comparison with the Chinggisid and Timurid traditions.

Keywords: Alan-gho'a, Akbar Shah, Baburid (Mughal) Empire, Timurids, Mongols, Charismatic leadership.

**Ekber-Name'de Alan-go'a Efsanesinin Yeniden Yorumlanması****Öz**

Alan-go'a, yüzyıllar boyunca Orta Asya'da hükümdar olma ayrıcalığını elinde tutan Cengiz Han'ın Altın Soyunun (Altan Uruğ) efsanevi ata anasıdır. Hindistan'da kurulan Babür İmparatorluğunun üçüncü hükümdarı olan Ekber Şah da Alan-go'a'nın kendi atası olduğunu ileri sürdü. Bu iddiayı, kendisinin Cengizliler ile olan Akrabalık bağına dayanarak ortaya koymadı. Aksine, Alan-go'a'nın var oluş nedeninin kendisinin ilahi bir varlık olarak Dünya'ya gelmesi olduğunu ve Cengizlilerin ve diğerlerinin hükmünün kendisi Dünya'ya gelinceye kadar bittiğini ileri sürdü; bu amaçla Alan-go'a hikâyesini *sufi* mistik bir açıdan İmparatorluğu içinde bulunan farklı dini-kültürel değerlere göre yeniden yorumlattı. Böylece, kendisine gösterişli bir karizma oluşturarak, hakimiyeti altında bulunan farklı dini-kültürel ve etnik özellikler gösteren

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topluluklara gücünün ve otoritesinin meşruluğunu kabul ettirmeyi amaçladı. Ayrıca, Ekber Şah Alan-go'a efsanesi üzerinden, atası olarak gördüğü Timurileri ve kendi soyundan gelenleri, Cengizlilerden ve Dünya'nın bütün hanedanlıklarından üstün olduğu iddiasında bulundu. İşte bu makalede, Alan-go'a efsanesi Cengizli ve Timurlu gelenek ile karşılaştırılarak, bu efsanesinin Ekber Şah sarayında niçin ve nasıl yeniden şekillendirildiği sorularına cevap aranacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Alan-go'a, Ekber Şah, Babür İmparatorluğu, Timuriler, Moğollar, Karizmatik Liderlik.

### 1. Introduction

The Baburid Empire<sup>1</sup> was established in the Indian subcontinent in 1526<sup>2</sup> by Zahiruddin Muhammed Babur (1483-1556), who was the eldest son of Omar Shaikh Mirza and the great grandson of Timur, who was the founder of the Timurid Empire. Babur Shah was succeeded by his eldest son Humayun (1530-1556) who was defeated and expelled by the Afghan Sher-Shah Sur. He had to take refuge in Safavid Persia where after staying 15 years, he returned to India and restored the empire with the support of the Safavids. His son Akbar Shah (1556-1605), who conquered almost the whole of the Indian subcontinent, established a powerful Empire which had a well-organized central bureaucratic system; therefore, he is accepted as the founder of the Empire.<sup>3</sup>

The 16<sup>th</sup> century was the age of regional empires and similar to the Baburids, others like Ottomans, Uzbeks and Safavids were established and consolidated as regional empires from this era onwards. Except for Russia and China, all these realms were centralized and depended on the cultivation of specific dynastic traditions that incorporated a concept of the sovereign being the protector of both religion and state.<sup>4</sup> These empires were also Muslim and

<sup>1</sup> According to Hodgson, 'Mughal' (or 'Mogul'in, an old spelling) is the Indo-Persian form of the word 'Mongol'; it was applied to the Chaghatay Turkic military when they came into India on account of their association with the Mongol traditions in the Oxus basin. The Chaghatay Turks, under the rulers of Timur's line, were not Mongols. The correct name for the dynasty is 'Timurid'. In order to distinguish them the Timuri nobles from earlier period in Iran and Turan, the Timuri should be called the Indo-Timuri or Timuri of India'. Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization; the Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, volume:III, University of Chicago press, Chicago and London 1974, p.62, n.2. In the text it is called 'Baburid Empire' as used in the contemporary Turkish literature.

<sup>2</sup> In 1526, in the war of *Panipat*, Babur defeated the Afgan Lodis and captured Delhi and Agra. For detailed information, see D. H. A. Kolff, "A Warlord's Fresh Attempt at Empire", *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, ed. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Oxford Univ. Press, London 1998, p.75-114.

<sup>3</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.63; J. M. Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, British Museum Press, London 1995, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> Cornell H Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire; The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)*, Princeton University Press, 1986, p.287; Martin Dickson, *Shah Tahmasb and the Ozbeks*,

Turkic, with the legitimation of the rulers founded mainly on an Islamic and Tuco-Mongol basis according to the background and socio-cultural features of their societies which were mostly Muslim, and the subject people were Turkic or recognized the rule of certain Turco-Mongol noble families.<sup>5</sup> However, social and cultural conditions in India were substantially different; the Baburids as a Turco-Mongol Muslim ruling class were a minority in the densely populated Indian subcontinent where the people were mostly Hindu and divided into many castes. Furthermore, officially, the Ottomans and Uzbeks were Sunni, Safavids were Shiite and their religious aspect of legitimation was according to their officially recognized sects. On the other hand, the Baburids embraced people of different sects (mainly Sunni and Shiite) from Iran and Central Asia, mostly taking an active part in the administrative and intellectual life of the Empire together.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Akbar had to combine many more different, even opposite values for his legitimation in order to address different groups at the court and segments of the Empire.

Alan-gho'a, who was the ancestress of Chinggis Khan, became the main instrument in constructing the charismatic persona of Akbar Shah. Great modifications were made on the original narrative of Alan-gho'a to adapt to the new conditions of the Empire and Akbar's own political, social and cultural ideals. One of the chief advisors of Akbar Shah was Abu'l Fazl Allami of Afra (1551-1602), a historian who was inclined toward *sufi* metaphysics. He tried to perceive history and world civilization generally under the categories of unitive mystical thought. He thought independently and could reject or even attack the other members of the 'ulema based on his principles<sup>7</sup>. In his book *Akbar-name*, 'the book of Akbar' which is the most consistent and certainly the grandest expression of the intellectual mood in Akbar's court. Abu'l Fazl formulated Akbar's charisma from his *sufi* metaphysic approach, and the cult of Alan-gho'a was re-interpreted within this framework. This overlapped with Akbar's mystical and philosophical approach to Islam as mentioned below. Thus, the narrative of Alan-gho'a in *Akbar-name* became almost completely different from its original form. An ancient heroine was re-formulated to address Akbar's subjects who were Muslim (Sunni and Shiite) and Hindu in order to prove both

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Phd. Dissertation Thesis, Princeton University, 1958. See also Douglas E. Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires, Ottomans, Safavid and Mughals*, Westview press, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, Enderun Yayınları, İstanbul 1970, p.100-150; Fleischer, 1986, 274-275; Dickson, 1958, p.8-39.

<sup>6</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-examination of the Myths of a Countervision", *Social Scientist*, volume: 30, Number:1-2, Jan-Feb.2001, p. 30. For example, a commission to write *Tarikh-i Elfi* was issued in 1585 by the emperor Akbar and his advisers. There is interesting balance of religious views in this team. Badauni, Sirhindi, and Nizam al-Din were Sunnis, while the Gilani brothers and Fathallah Shirazi were Shiites. Ali Anooshahr, "Dialogism and Territoriality in a Mughal History of the Islamic Millennium", *Journal of Social and Economic History of Orient*, volume:55, Number:2/3, 2012, p.224.

<sup>7</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.73-74.

the superiority of his Timurid descent and that Akbar Shah had been chosen by God to rule over India.

The *Akbar-name* version of Alan-gho'a is generally considered to be based on the axes of Chinggisid, Indian and Christian traditions<sup>8</sup> and its Timurid aspect and Turco-Mongol background have not been investigated in detail. This study aims to closely examine the Turco-Mongol background of the Alan-gho'a legend focusing on why and how these modifications were made to the narrative of Alan-gho'a; a comparison will be made between the Chinggisid, Timurid and Abu'l Fazl versions of the Alan-gho'a narratives. Prior to the examination, the political, social and cultural policies of Akbar Shah will be presented to understand the new conditions which shaped the narrative.

## 2. Akbar Shah's Internal Policies in the Subcontinent

Conquering and establishing durable authority over the vast Indian subcontinent was achieved by the creative genius of Akbar Shah. There were many potential difficulties; the Baburids were in minority and the Indian subcontinent was densely populated and religiously, culturally, socially and politically was very different from the Central Asia from where the Muslim Turco-Mongol Baburids migrated. Furthermore, in India, there were many castes each having its own devotional forms and deities; thus, religious diversity was well rooted<sup>9</sup>. Despite such divergences, according to Beveridge, "(in India) *the dominant class to which all others are subservient, should be full of religious zeal, is nothing more than might have been expected*"<sup>10</sup>. In other words, there was both diversity and unity, shaped by religion in Indian society. This created a deep chasm between Islam and Hinduism on basic matters. For example, "Hindu communalism, unlike Muslim, made no requirement about the religious allegiance of the ruling class, who could believe what they pleased so long as they respected the Brahmans"<sup>11</sup>.

In order to dominate such a society, Akbar Shah used diplomacy almost as much as the military force of the central authority to establish his personal power over the realm<sup>12</sup>. His lenient policies attracted many people inside and outside India. Akbar and his political allies were able to draw into imperial service a very disparate range of ethnic groups comprising Irani, Turani, Afghan, Rajput, Indian Muslim and high caste Hindu scribalist and to generate

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<sup>8</sup> Ruby Lal, "Settled, Sacred and All-Powerful; Making of new Genealogies and Traditions of Empire under Akbar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, volume: 36, Number:11, Mar.17-23 2001, p. 941-943; Rogers, 1995 p. 14-17

<sup>9</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.68. See also, J.T.F. Jordens, "Medieval Hindu Devotionalism", *A Cultural History of India* Edited by A. L. Basham, Oxford University Press, (Third. Ed.) 1999, p.266-280.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India*, volume:I, With a introduction of J.P. Gulo, Associated Publishing House New Delhi-110005 (Reprinted 1986), p.V

<sup>11</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.69.

<sup>12</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.63.

in them a new corporate and inclusivist ideology of service to emperor and state<sup>13</sup>. The hereditary status of new entrant was an important consideration in assigning his first *mansab*, but promotion depended mainly upon talents and loyalty.<sup>14</sup> According to Hodgson, “Probably without the development of a cultural life that could appeal to both Muslims and Hindus at a very high level, even in some sense catering to their moral awareness, a vast bureaucracy based on mixed cadres, Muslim and Hindu, could not have functioned so smoothly”<sup>15</sup>. Tolerance between the religious communities was the basis of Akbar’s empire<sup>16</sup>. In 1575 he proclaimed, the foundation of a central institution, the house of worship (*Dār al- ‘ibāda*), in which at first scholars representing various Muslim viewpoints, later also scholars representing all known religious traditions, gathered to discuss and, alas, dispute their respective faiths and realms; however, after a year, the institution was closed, but in his personal quest, he continued to explore what the various religious traditions had to offer.<sup>17</sup> Muzaffar Alam describes the purpose of these activities as: “all the varied religious, cultural and literary developments and innovations that were a consequence of Islam’s contact with Hinduism echoed the Mughal concern for ensuring ‘justice’ and ‘peace’ for all”<sup>18</sup>.

Akbar Shah adopted a peaceful and tolerant diplomacy toward the Rajputs who were famous for their fighting abilities and ruled numerous Indian princely states in northern and western India. Ziegler wrote that “Mughal rule represents era of religious tolerance and national unification in which Rājputs participated under the banners of their clan leaders to whom they directed primary allegiances as soldiers and administrators”<sup>19</sup>. This alliance was ensured culturally through the establishment of personal bonds and affiliations, sanctioned in local custom, and the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and ideals defined in local myth and symbol<sup>20</sup>. Akbar, with the wise Muslim and Hindus in his assemblies, abolished the *jizya* and promoted vegetarianism on sacred days,

<sup>13</sup> Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Kingdom, Household and Body History, Gender and Imperial Service under Akbar”, *Modern Asian Studies* 41, 5 (2007), p.889, According to Foltz, Moreover, the proverbial riches and Mughal reputation for generosity encouraged many important families, talented and well educated people from Central Asia and other parts of Asia to come India and make contribution to the Empire. Richard Foltz, “Central Asians in the Administration of Mughal India”, *Journal of Asian History*, volume:31, Number: 2, 1997, p.140.

<sup>14</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, “The Muslim Ruling Dynasties”, *A Cultural History of India*, Edited by by A. L. Basham, Oxford University Press, (Third. Ed.) 1999, 239-265. p.261.

<sup>15</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.67

<sup>16</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.61; Richards, 200, p.151.

<sup>17</sup> Richards, 200, p.151; Hodgson, 1974, p.73; Rogers, 1995, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *The Language of Political Islam; India 1200-1800*, Hurst&Company, London 2004, p.140

<sup>19</sup> Norman Ziegler, “Some Notes on Rājput Loyalties During the Mughal Period”, *Kingship and authority in South Asia*, edited by J. F. Richards, University of Wisconsin South Asian Studies, Madison 1978, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup> Ziegler, 1978, p.210

protecting Hindu customs, promoting Indian music, and having Sanskrit books translated into Persian; thus, Akbar's superiority arose from his acceptance of Indian identity<sup>21</sup>.

As in the imperial administrative system, Akbar's imperial *harem* was also composed of many women who belonged to the leading families of Inner Asia and India<sup>22</sup>. The Hindu Rajput princesses whom Akbar had married in political alliance were allowed to maintain their Hindu worship in the palace, and even Akbar himself introduced ritual touches into the daily routine which seem to have been derived from several traditions, notably regarding the sun as an emblem of the divine Light<sup>23</sup>. By 1583, he began to worship the sun publicly four times a day prostrating toward the east before a sacrificial fire and accompanied by rituals of his own invention<sup>24</sup>. As a compliment to his wives, the daughters of the Rajputs of Hind, Akbar even prohibited the consumption of beef. About this Badauni said that "The origin of this embargo was that from his early years the emperor had been much in the company of rascally Hindus, and thus developed a reverence for cows. Moreover, the introduction of a number of daughters of eminent Hindu Rajas into his harem had influenced Akbar not to eat beef and garlic and onion"<sup>25</sup>. Akbar began to restrain himself from hunting animals and restricted himself to a vegetarian diet on a set day according to Brahmanic Hindu prohibitions on taking of life<sup>26</sup>. These actions and regulations of Akbar's resulted in harsh words from the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order, even to the point of implying that he had ceased to be a Muslim<sup>27</sup>. Badauni severely criticized the emperor and his advisers "who successfully turned the emperor from Islam"<sup>28</sup>. This was result of Akbar's reconciliatory policies towards different cultures and religions in order to gain their loyalty.

Akbar preferred to be closer to Muslim *sufi's* of India and tried to show he was not an extension of the former Islamic dynasties<sup>29</sup>. Akbar preferred the Chishtiyye to the Naqshbandiyye Order. The Chistiyya was founded in Northern India whereas the latter recognizing Sunni Islam was founded in

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<sup>21</sup> Anashoor, 2012, p.246.

<sup>22</sup> See the list of Akbar's wives Afzal Husain, "Marriages among Mughal Nobles as an Index of Status and Aristocratic Integration", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Volume: 33, 1971, p.304-312.

<sup>23</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.73.

<sup>24</sup> J. F. Richards, "The formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir", *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, Edited by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.151.

<sup>25</sup> Cited by Lal, 2001, p.955; See also Iqtidar Alam Khan, 2001, p.21-22.

<sup>26</sup> O'Hanlon, 2007, p. 902.

<sup>27</sup> Muzaffar Alam, 2004, p.193

<sup>28</sup> Lal, 2001, p.955, Hodgson, 1974, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> For the Pre-Baburid Muslim dynasties see Romila Tapar, *A history of India*, vol.I, Penguin Books, London, 1990; Richards, 200, p.

Central Asia. According to Muzaffar Alam, Chishtis, , were no-less-respectable than Naqshbandis. Akbar was a true and pious Muslim until his death<sup>30</sup>. According to Richards, Akbar had a greater esoteric knowledge and authority than the recognized interpreters of *sharia* and the most saintly of *sufi* masters (*pir*) or the most renowned of the charismatic saviors (*mahdi*), rather, he engaged in establishing his own Empire that was close to all the subject peoples<sup>31</sup>. Making Sikri his capital city was a first step in showing that he was different from the former Muslim rulers in India. The village of Sikri was residence of Shaikh Salim, leader of the Chishtiyye Order, whom Akbar frequently visited, creating a bond between them. Shaikh Salim had foretold the birth of the long-awaited first prince of the line, the grateful Emperor named his son Salim (the Emperor Jahangir). After Shaikh Salim died in 1571, Akbar selected Sikri for his new capital, renaming it as Fatehpur Sikri, or 'place of victory'<sup>32</sup>. As Akbar Shah's policy was monopolizing all the worldly and spiritual powers, he did not permit Shaikh Salim's sons to succeed him, kept them away from the capital and the newly established Shaikh Salim's shrine in order to prevent them from using its enormous potential for political and spiritual purposes. This shrine was built within the walls of the Fatehpur Sikri Mosque. Instead, in another measure of incorporation, Akbar strongly appointed them *mansabdar*<sup>33</sup>. In this way, he kept Shaikh Salim's sons under control and did not share Shaikh Salim's spiritual heritage with his sons. According to Richards, his association with Chishtiyya, one of the well-regarded *sufi* orders of north India must have added to Akbar's political appeal and his own popular reputation as a mystic<sup>34</sup>. Akbar designed and built Fatehpur Sikri as a completely new capital devoid of any of the political associations of Delhi, Lahore or any of the other long-occupied Muslim cities. His own creation, Fatehpur Sikri, was thus completely identified with Akbar's policies and personal authority. For the Muslim ruler in India, prior to Akbar, possession and political domination of Delhi was of supreme importance. Akbar reversed this fixed concern fusing, instead, all authority within himself and ultimately within the dynasty which succeeded him<sup>35</sup>.

This cultural understanding was formed by compromising through philosophical and mystical approaches and they influenced many Muslim *sufis* and philosophers. In the library of Akbar, there were twenty four thousands volumes including many books from the Perso-Islamic tradition, such as Sa'di's *Gulistan*, Rumi's *Masnawi* (which Akbar was said to have memorized),

<sup>30</sup> Muzaffar Alam, 2004, p.193; Balabanlılar, 2016, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Richards, 2000, p.141.

<sup>32</sup> Richards, 2000, p.133.

<sup>33</sup> Richards, 2000, p. 134. *Mansabdar* through whom the Empire controlled their resources. See importance of mansabdar in the central authority by Iqtidar Alam Khan, "State in the Mughal India: Re-examination of the Myths of a Countervision", *Social Scientist*, volume: 30, Number:1-2, Jan-February 2001, p.24-27.

<sup>34</sup> Richards, 2000, p. 135.

<sup>35</sup> Richards, 2000, p.139.

Firdowsi's *Shahname*. Abu'l Fazl declared Nasreddin Tusi's *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* among the five most important works containing ideas that were widely recognized and he had it read to Akbar nearly every day<sup>36</sup>. According to Tusi's *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, since there was truth and falsity in every religious life, a person should seek to understand all religious beliefs rather than to promote strife between them. Since virtue was a matter of discipline, the real struggle lay within a man, in the effort to wean his soul off bad customs and his daily life of unworthy habits, to study the different faculties composing his moral constitution and strive to bring each of them into proper equilibrium<sup>37</sup>. In addition to Tusi, a "new supra religious theory of sovereignty" was shaped by Abu'l Fazl inspired from Ibn Arabi's doctrines of unity of existence (*vahdat ul-vucud*) and of the Divine Light (*farr-i izidi*) of Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqatl. He established the theory of universal reconciliation (*sulh-i kull*) as the guiding principle of the Mughal state<sup>38</sup>. According to Iqtidar Alam Khan "this theory boils down to giving a new definition of royalty which precludes entirely the identification of state with a particular religion and enjoins upon a just ruler that his benevolence and protection should be equally extended to all his subjects without making any distinction on the basis of religion or race"<sup>39</sup>.

In this sense, in the *Akbar-name*, Akbar Shah is described from a mystical and philosophical perspective. He is the central figure who was first the ideal ruler; indeed, in a precise sense, he was the philosopher-king of the *faylasuf* tradition; then, as a Sufi, a 'perfect man'. Akbar is a true 'philosopher', who understands the meaning of human existence and at the same time knows how effectively to guide the people on right path on the basis of 'philosophic' principles<sup>40</sup>.

### 3. Re-interpretation of Cult of Alan-gho'a for the Charisma of Akbar

During pre-modern times, leaders had to legitimize their rule mostly through their noble descent which could be real or fictitious. However, when a leader founded a new empire, he had to formulate a new charismatic persona which could be transferred to his successors. Weber defines charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personally by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are not accessible to the ordinary person, but regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the

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<sup>36</sup> Balabanlılar, 2016, p.148-149.

<sup>37</sup> O'hanlon, 2007, p.896; For the more detailed information about role of Tusi's ideas on Abu'l Fazl, see Balabanlılar, 2016, p.145-150.

<sup>38</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, 2001, p.31.

<sup>39</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, 2001, p.31.

<sup>40</sup> Hodgson, 1974, p.75.

*individual concerned is treated as a leader*"<sup>41</sup>. Charismatic authority repudiates the past and is, in this sense, a specifically revolutionary and foreign to everyday routine structures. It is opposed to traditional authority is bound to the precedents handed down from the past and to this extent is also oriented to rules<sup>42</sup>. Charisma is also a quality transmitted by heredity; thus, it can be transmitted from the bearer to their kinsmen, particularly by his closest relatives<sup>43</sup>, and in this way charismatic authority becomes either traditionalized or rationalized or a combination of both<sup>44</sup>.

Akbar's grandfather, Babur, and his father, Humayun, who dominated most of the northern parts of Hindustan but had not managed to achieve integration with the native people of the continent, followed the Timurid tradition and legitimated their rule through their Timurid and Chinggisid descent. Babur took extra care to delineate his noble ancestral connections in the *Baburname* inclining toward the Timurid side without, however, completely negating the Chinggisid blood in his veins. Humayun followed suit, keeping his reverence for both ancestral lines<sup>45</sup>. Akbar's father and grandfather took their legitimacy from their charismatic ancestors Timur and Chinggis Khan, who established their own dynasties creating their own political and social systems. Their authorities were traditionalized and transmitted to their successors who followed their paths. However, Akbar determined his own path and formed his own charismatic persona which was inspired from both of his ancestral lineage: Timurid and Chinggisid.

Akbar Shah did not follow the approach of his ancestors; he initiated a system according to the new conditions in India. Therefore, Akbar needed more than the straightforward claims of high connections or inheritance. He needed rather larger declaration of grandeur and uniqueness in the interests of imperial power<sup>46</sup>. Accordingly, Akbar Shah had to create his own charismatic persona which transcended those of Chinggis Khan and Timur. Thus, it was stated that "*Although kings are the shadow of God on earth, He [Akbar] is the emanation of God's light*"<sup>47</sup>. In this respect Akbar Shah reinterpreted his ancestors' values for legitimacy taking the values of his subject people, mostly Hindu, into consideration.

In Akbar-name, wide coverage was given to Alan-gho'a as a transmitter of divine light to Akbar the 'perfect man': *It was after thousands of years had been*

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<sup>41</sup> M. Weber, *Economy and Society - An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Edited by Gunter Roth and Claus Wittich, University of California Press, London, New York, Los Angeles 1978, p. 241.

<sup>42</sup> Weber, 1978, p.244

<sup>43</sup> Weber 1978, p.248.

<sup>44</sup> Weber 1978, p.246

<sup>45</sup> Lal, 2001, p.941.

<sup>46</sup> Lal, 2001, p.941-942.

<sup>47</sup> Richards, 2000, 141.

*spent, womb after womb, in the cradle of preparation, that the broidery of existence was bestowed on her Majesty Ālanquwā, so that she might become worthy of that world-illuminating Light, which is the interpretation of that anthropomorphic Sun which stands at the entrance of gate of ancient tradition and constitutes the basal inscription of the true histories. And he perceives that the same Light which took shape, without human instrumentality or a father's loins, in the pure womb of her Majesty Ālanqūwā, after having in order to arrive at perfection, occupied during several ages the bodily wrappings of other holy witnesses, is manifesting itself at the present day, in the pure entity of this unique God-knower and God-worshipper"<sup>48</sup>.*

The following verses from *Akbar-name* also summarize its logical awaited ending, divine birth of Akbar<sup>49</sup>.

*How many ages have been passed away!  
How many planetary conjunctions occurred?  
That this happy star might come from forth from heaven!*<sup>50</sup>

Here, great modifications were made on the story of Alan-gho'a so as to restrict her role to only transferring the Divine Light. In contrast to the description of Alan-gho'a in the *Secret History* in which she was a well-respected and wise woman trying to cope with the difficulties of life. When she advised her children (two from her deceased husband and three from the divine light) to be in solidarity as they were born of one womb, she did not differentiate between her children, she treated them equally.<sup>51</sup> Here, born of one womb; i.e, matrilineal descent was seen as very important. According to Skrynnikova, those who descended from those heavenly sons are called the *Nirun*. The word means *pure loins*<sup>52</sup> and is reference to the pure lineage that came into existence from light<sup>53</sup>. Furthermore, in the *Secret History*, the divine light from which Alan-gho'a became pregnant was described as "*a resplendent yellow man who entered by the light of the smoke-hole or the entrance to door top of the tent, he rubbed*

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<sup>48</sup> *Akbar-name*, p.37-39.

<sup>49</sup> Lal, 2001, p.943.

<sup>50</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Further, Alan-gho'a addressed these words of admonition to her five sons: 'You, my five sons, were born of one womb. If, like the five arrow-shafts just now, each of you, keeps to himself, then, like those single arrow-shafts, anybody will easily break you. If, like the bound arrow shafts, you remain together and of one mind, how can anyone deal with you so easily". Rachewiltz, §22

<sup>52</sup> Rashid al-Din Fazlullah, *Cami al-Tavarikh, der Tarikh-i Moghul*, Edited by Behmen Kerimi, Ekbal, Tehran1387, p. 167, 172.

<sup>53</sup> Tatiana D. Skrynnikova, "Rivalry between Mongols and Tayi'ut for Authority: Kiyat-Borjigin Genealogy", *Representing power In ancient Inner Asia: Legitimacy, Transmission And The Sacred*, Edited by Isabelle Charleux, Gregory Delaplace, Roberte Hamayon, and Scott Pearce. Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 2010, p. 77777. She also stated that the matrilineal descent principle is archetypal among the Mongols and Turks. P.9. *Representing power In ancient Inner Asia: Legitimacy, Transmission And The Sacred*. Edited by Isabelle Charleux, Gregory Delaplace, Roberte Hamayon, and Scott Pearce. Center for East Asian Studies, Westwrn Washington University. 2010. P. 131-158.

my belly and his radiance penetrated my womb. He crept out on a moon beam or a ray of sun in the guise of a yellow dog"<sup>54</sup>. However, in *Akbar-name*, it was described as "a shining light, like bright moonlight, came down from on high and entered tent"<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, in *Akbar-name* worldly activities of Alan-gho'a are not mentioned, and she was even reported as being childless; furthermore, it was implied that she was almost virgin after her short marriage which was made according to the tradition. "When she arrived at maturity, she was according to the custom of princes and the practice of great ones of Church and State, given in marriage to Zübün Biyân, king of Mughulistân and her own cousin<sup>56</sup> (thus) they joined unique pearl of purity with a temporal ruler. As he was not her match, he hastened to annihilation. She became a childless widow when her royal husband dies prematurely. But Alan-quwa is a woman of the utmost purity from whose forehead shone the 'light of theosophy' (anwar Khundâ Shinâsî) and the 'divine secrets' (asrâr' ilâhî). She became sovereign of her tribe. One night this divine radiant one was reposing on her bed, when suddenly a glorious light cast a ray into the tent and entered the mouth and throat of that fount of spiritual knowledge and glory. The cupola of chastity became pregnant by that light in the same way as did her majesty (Hazrat) Miryam (Mary) the daughter of 'Imrân (Amran) [...]the hidden light passed through generation after generation until the Shâhinshâh of mankind, Akbar, was born in 1542"<sup>57</sup> [...]The day was the beginning of the manifestation of his Majesty, the king of kings, who after passing through divers stages was revealed to the world from the holy womb her Majesty Miryam-makânî for the accomplishment of thing is visible and invisible"<sup>58</sup>. Alan-gho'a's identification with Virgin Mary was most probably made to gain the support of some conservative Muslim scholars who opposed Akbar's flexible religious and cultural policies. Abu'l Fazl's following words "If you listen tale of Mary, Believe the same of Ālanquwā"<sup>59</sup> seems addressing these Muslims. Furthermore, the light that impregnated Alan-gho'a was moonlight or anthropomorphic Sun that was most probably inspired from the Hindu Chandra, god of the Moon<sup>60</sup> and Surya, god of Sun.<sup>61</sup> Abu'l Fazl combined Islamic and Hindu values wisely so as to address mainly both Hindus and Muslims.

In *Akbar-name*, the events and symbols around Alan-gho'a were narrated as purely celestial, there was no mention of any human or worldly aspects, and

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<sup>54</sup> Rachewiltz, §21

<sup>55</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 183.

<sup>56</sup> Alan Qo'a was not Dobun Mergen's cousin. Dobun Mergen saw her for first time when she was migrating with her tribe. When Dobun Mergen reached those people, *he saw that* she was indeed a beautiful and charming girl, and of excellent reputation. Her name was Alan Qo'a and she had not yet been given to *any other man*.§7

<sup>57</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 178-179.

<sup>58</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 180.

<sup>59</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 182.

<sup>60</sup> Chandra is god of fertility; he is often credited as having the power to give life to all creatures and even to spirits.

<sup>61</sup> Surya, as the Sun god, is considered soul of Universe, has life giving energy.

it was implied that everything was designed by God almost at the same time as the world was created. Akbar is presented as the fulfillment of divine destiny; a superior being, existing ontologically closer to God and to true reality. This assertion was confirmed by the hidden light that passed to its final recipient through a chain of ancestress<sup>62</sup>.

As previously described, Akbar Shah aimed at establishing a well-organized bureaucratic system in which everything revolved around him. Notwithstanding his militaristic, administrative and economic successes<sup>63</sup>, he had to establish his charismatic authority which would strengthen and maintain the authority of his dynasty. The Timurids had mostly married Chinggisid women to gain the title of *güregen*; i.e., son-in-law to strengthen their authority. Alan-gho'a was a model for the Chinggisid women whose noble descent and high position had shaped the Chinggisid and post Chinggisid Empires and states<sup>64</sup>. Akbar and his successors did not need any connection with any family or lineage like Chinggisids. He established a direct connection to himself with Alan-gho'a in a mystical and spiritual way. This new purely spiritual Alan-gho'a who carried the divine light—without the descent lines—was the new interpretation of at Akbar's court. It was at the same time a kind of declaration of the new order. In his new order, he and his successors did not make marriages for legitimacy or reinforcing their rule, but for alliance<sup>65</sup>. As Ruby Lal stated, "from now on it was enough to be born in Akbar's line: that was a sign of the divine hand"<sup>66</sup>. This new interpretation of the cult of Alan-gho'a allowed Akbar to eliminate importance of the matriarchal line, as in the Chinggisid and Timurid dynasties, and to establish a strong patrimonial dynasty and even patrimonial society in which Akbar instituted many rules. Because Akbar as a chosen, perfect man could completely re-shape his empire and society. O'Hanlon describes sociological dimension of Akbar's reforms as follows: "*Akbar and his coterie of reforms, want to argue, drew on a careful selection of akhlāqi themes to construct a socially inclusive model of masculine virtue which transcended law and religion, caste and region. The model emphasized both the natural inner purity of male body, and the possibilities for moral and human perfection in all three of the homologous world that men inhabited as governors: the individual body, the household and kingdom*"<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Richards, 2000, 141.

<sup>63</sup> Well-demarcated stone palaces were being built, highly centralized army and bureaucratic systems, methods of payment, collection of revenue, and forms of taxation were being designed, imperial mints were being constructed, and the lives of noblemen and royal women (in the court and in the harem) were being strictly 'instructed' and regulated. Lal, 2001, p.950; See also Rizvi 1999, 259-261; Hodgson, 1974, p.67.

<sup>64</sup> Dalkesen, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> For the list of Akbar's wives, see Lisa Balabanlılar, p.IX.

<sup>66</sup> Lal, 2001, p.948.

<sup>67</sup> O'hanlon, 2007, p.892.

Although Abu'l Fazl's new interpretation of Alan-gho'a is far from the original narrated in the *Secret History*, it was inspired by the Timurid tradition. Akbar Shah venerated Timur and followed the Timurid tradition in composing his charismatic persona. Abu'l Fazl referred to Timur in great detail and emphasized ancestral ties of Akbar with Timurids. It is also reported that Akbar was heralded in Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnāma*<sup>68</sup>. Abu'l Fazl dedicated six chapters to Akbar's horoscope<sup>69</sup> to prove his chosen-ness, following the Timurid tradition of *Sāhib Qirān* 'Lord of conjunctions of the planets'.

According to the *Secret History*, the widowed Alan-gho'a became pregnant from a divine light<sup>70</sup> and gave birth to three sons, one of whom was Budanchar, an ancestress of Chinggis Khan<sup>71</sup>. This made Chinggis Khan and his line sacred and for centuries only the rulers from the Chinggisid Golden Lineage (*Altan Urugh*) could reign in Inner Asia until almost the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Timur (1336-1405), as a non-Chinggisid, was able to establish his empire but could not rule as a khan which was the only right of the Chinggisids. He crowned puppet khans from the Chinggisids, used title of *Amir*; i.e, tribal leader. He married women from the Chinggisid house used the title of *güregen* (son-in-law)<sup>72</sup>. Timur used also the title of *sahip-qiran*, which meant lord of the auspicious conjunction of planets<sup>73</sup>, which gave his rule universal implications.<sup>74</sup> Throughout his life, Timur used the titles of *Amir al-Kabir sahip-qiran* and *güregen* (son-in-law).<sup>75</sup> However, these titles were not sufficiently effective to create an assertive charisma; it seems that in the divided post-Chinggisid world, Timur's genius to achieve political and military successes closed the gap. After Timur died, his empire was divided among his sons and grandsons, but after his reign, it was never as powerful. Timur's descendants continued to marry Chinggisid women and used title of *güregen*, but they connected their lineage to Alan-gho'a through fictitious genealogies. The Timurid historian Khandmir (1475-1535) in his work *Habib al-Siyar*, based Timur's genealogy on Tumana Khan, who was the son of Buqa Khan, son of Budanchar Khan, son of Alan-gho'a. Furthermore, Khandmir

<sup>68</sup> *Akbar-name*, p.47.

<sup>69</sup> *Akbar-name*, p.50-125.

<sup>70</sup> Igor de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, (shorter version), edited by John C. Street, 2015, § 20. Chinggis Khan's first divine ancestors were blue-grey wolf, born with his destiny ordained by Heaven Above. His wife was a fallow doe. § 1

<sup>71</sup> Rachewiltz, § 21.

<sup>72</sup> Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 1-10, 105; Mustafa Kafalı, "Timur," in *İA* (MEB), vol. 12/1.Cilt, 336; Woods, John, "Timur's Genealogy.: In *Intellectual Studies on Islam. Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 113; Manz 2003, 124.

<sup>73</sup> Manz, 2003, 11-122; Maria Eva Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition; Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*, Brill, 2007, s.12-13

<sup>74</sup> Lisa Balabanlılar, *Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia, Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire*, I.b. Tauris, 2016, p.39.

<sup>75</sup> Mustafa Kafalı, "Timur," in *İA* (MEB), vol. 12/1.Cilt, 336.

emphasized that on the same day, on April 1336, Timur was born and Abu Sa'id the last Il-Khanid ruler died<sup>76</sup> implying that Timur was the restorer of the Mongol Empire. Furthermore, Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-name, Mu'izz al-Ansab* (The Glorifier of Genealogies), Timur's grandson Ulug Beg's *Tarikh-i Arba'i Cengizi*<sup>77</sup> all of them based their lineage on Alan-gho'a in a same way<sup>78</sup>. This was probably because the Timurid descendants were not as powerful as Timur and in their rivalry with each other; they tried to reinforce their dignity and legitimacy by following the traditional authority established by Chinggis Khan.

Although Abu'l Fazl followed the Timurid tradition in interpretation of Alan-gho'a, he elevated Timurids over the Chinggisids. He attributed the lineage of the Timurids and Akbar Shahs to Budanchar Khan, the third son of Alan-gho'a, and the descendants of these nobles were called *Nairun*; i.e., produced by the light, and were considered to be the noblest class among the Mughuls. "*Būzanjar Qāān was ninth ancestress of Chingīz Khān and Qarācār Nūyān, the fourteenth of his Majesty, the Lord of Conjunction, and the twenty second of his majesty, the king of kings*"<sup>79</sup>. So far, Abu'l Fazl imitated the Timurid writers, then later he appropriated the story of Alan-gho'a applying it to Akbar Shah with the following contribution according to which *Bayasaghar Khan who was from Budanchar line had two wives by one of whom he had seven sons and by the other twins. One of the twins named Kabul Khan and was the great-grandfather of Chinggis Khan and the other was named Kachuli. Kachuli Bahadur was the eighth ancestress of his majesty the Lord of Conjunction (Timur)*<sup>80</sup>. By making Timurids twins with Chinggisids, Abu'l Fazl equated the Timurids with the Chinggisids. Later, he claimed the right of sovereignty passed from the Chinggisids to the Timurids; i.e, Baburids through Kachuli Bahadur's dream in *Akbar-name*: Kachuli Bahadur had a series of dreams and reported the occurrences to his father, Tumana Khan. He gave the interpretation that "*from Qabal Khan there would come three princes who would sit on the throne of the Khānāte and be lords of lands. But the fourth time, a king would come after these, who would bring most of the earth under his sway and should have children, each of whom would govern a region. From Qācūlī would come seven dominant descendants, bearing on their brows the diadem of primacy and the crown of the rule. The eighth time descendant would arise who would exhibit world-wide sovereignty and exercise sway and*

<sup>76</sup> Khandmir, Giyas el-Din, *Habib al-Siyar fi Akhbar-i Afrad-i Bashar*, Volume:III, Edited by Jalal al-Din Huma'i and Muhammad Dabir-Siyaqi, Intisharat-i Khayyam, Tehran, 1342/1963-64, p. 392-393.

<sup>77</sup> For more detailed information, see Woods, John. "Timur's Geneology", *In Intellectual Studies on Islam. Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City 1990, 88-125; Balabanlılar 2016, 49-52; Subtelny, 2007, 19.

<sup>78</sup> In spite of these official genealogical connections, for themselves they did not use any royal title higher than that of Mirza. They were aware of the weak nature of their claim of direct descent from Chinggis Khan. Iqtidar Alam Khan, 2001, p.19.

<sup>79</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 183.

<sup>80</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 184.

chieftainship over all mankind. From him would come descendants who would each rule a division of the earth"<sup>81</sup>. In this way, Abu'l Fazl tried to show that the right of rule passed to its the real owner and also claimed that superiority of Akbar and Akbar's Timurid ancestors who had ruled under the shadow of the Chinggisids many decades. This might be because in *Akbar-name*, Chingis Khan was briefly mentioned in a chapter XV in a very short paragraph under a title of "Cingiz Khāan". His connection with Alan-gho'a was stated as follows: "*Though in the noble line of his majesty, the king of kings, which in this book of Divine praise is the straight point of utterance, it is unnecessary to mention Temūcīn who is a branch of the holy tree, yet as he was a ray of the divine light of Ālanquwā, a brief account of this indispensable*"<sup>82</sup>. While the account on Chinggis Khan was short, the account Timur covered ten pages<sup>83</sup> under the title of "The lord of great conjunctions, third pole of the Universe, pole of realm and religion, Amīr Timūr Gurgān."

Abu'l Fazl went further and appropriated Alan-gho'a for the Timurids and even Oghuz Khan. "*It was the same light which was shewn forth in the victories of his majesty Giti-Sitānī Firdūs-makānī (Babur) and that gloriously appeared in the dawns of the world-conquering rays of his majesty Şahib Qarānī (Timur). And it was this same light which from the time of the ocean pearl-shell Alanquā, displayed itself from the royal shells and pearls under the veils of women in travail. It was the same light by whose splendor Ughaz Khan (Oghuz Khan) was made glorious, and it was the same light which was preparing and increasing from Adam till Noah....Accordingly the glory of spiritual and temporal greatness was radiating from the arch of his Majesty's shining forehead*"<sup>84</sup>. Emphasis on their Timurid ancestors and Oghuz Khan meant that according to Balabanlılar, they wished to position themselves as important and influential members in the fraternity of powerful Islamic Turkic empires, sharing far more in common with their contemporaries, the Ottomans and Safavids<sup>85</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusion

Alan-gho'a became one of the most important figures in composing Akbar Shah's charismatic persona and to strengthen his legitimacy over culturally and socially divergent societies which would not be united through neither a common religion nor common socio-cultural values. Akbar's flexible religious, socio-cultural policies did not make the people unified but they were able to share common values. The new interpretation of Alan-gho'a from a sufi-mystical way became part of these common values, convincing people of Akbar's divinely chosen-ness, being perfect man'. Furthermore, on the one hand Akbar freed his ancestors, the Timurids, from the shadow of the Chinggisids

<sup>81</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 186-187.

<sup>82</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 191.

<sup>83</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 204-214.

<sup>84</sup> *Akbar-name*, p. 286-287.

<sup>85</sup> Balabanlılar, 2016, 38.

and even he openly claimed that the era of the Chinggisids ended and it was turn of Timurids. On the other hand, people, places, and events had all changed, but the role and importance of the ancient figure of Alan-gho'a kept its importance and continued to sustain the charisma and prestige of the leaders through the centuries.

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