

Dictionary
of
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1368-1644

明代名人傳

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L. Carrington Goodrich, EDITOR
Chaoying Fang, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

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AHMAD (A-*hei*-*ma* 阿黑馬), 1465/66–1503/4, ruler of eastern Moghulistan in the late 15th century, maintained consistently poor relations with China, which occasionally resulted in armed conflict. His unfortunate dealings with the Chinese are not surprising since his father, Hajji 'Ali (*q.v.*), was also hostile. Unlike his father, Ahmad spent his boyhood among the nomads of the steppe, rather than in the sophisticated centers of Persian civilization. As a result, the description of him by his nephew, Babur, as "a true son of the steppe—a man of powerful physique, a stern and brave soldier, who preferred the sword to any other weapon," is undoubtedly apt. Ahmad's "rudeness in his manner—and harshness in his speech" also amazed the future Moghul emperor of India.

On his father's death in 1487, Ahmad and his older brother Mahmud divided the territory bequeathed to them. Mahmud became the nominal ruler of all of Moghulistan, but in actual practice reigned in the west while Ahmad controlled the east. Ahmad was renowned for his military skill, and the Oirat nicknamed him the "killer" because of his exploits. He launched several successful campaigns against both the Oirat and the Kazakh, which made him the strongest ruler on China's northwestern border.

His disputes with China focused on the state of Hami. After Hajji Ali's departure to the west, Han-shen 罕慎, a Uighur chieftain from Hami, defeated the small Turfanese garrison in Hami and regained control of his native land. Emperor Chu Chien-shen (*q.v.*) rewarded him but, perhaps fearing to antagonize Turfan's rulers, repeatedly rejected his entreaties for a royal title. Emperor Chu Yu-t'ang (*q.v.*), however, was less circumspect, and in 1488 enfeoffed Han-shen as the Chung-shun wang 忠順王 of Hami. Ahmad, who had earlier tolerated Han-shen's *de facto* supervision of Hami, now refused to accept his assumption of a ceremonial title, as well as actual jurisdiction over this important town on the route to central Asia. He quickly moved his forces to the out-

skirts of Hami and sent a message to Han-shen proposing a marriage alliance. Han-shen permitted him and his troops to enter. Taking advantage of the Uighur chieftain's gullibility, Ahmad killed him and plundered the city, but reported to the Chinese court that he had died of natural causes and asked to be enfeoffed as the new prince of Hami. Instead the emperor sent a letter rebuking Ahmad for his raid and insisting that he return Hami's seal.

In the ensuing years his relations with China deteriorated even further. The ministry of Rites frequently criticized him for sending too many envoys on his embassies and for offering tribute at improper times. In 1489 the court learned that an envoy from Turfan, while on his way to the capital, bought prohibited goods including tea and colored satin. Again it chided Ahmad for the reprehensible behavior of his ambassadors. Because of these abuses, the court refused to permit several of Ahmad's tribute embassies to enter China. These refusals may have prompted him to return Hami's seal in 1492. The emperor, on the recommendation of Minister of War Ma Wen-sheng (*q.v.*), immediately appointed Shan-pa (*see* Ma Wen-sheng), a descendant of the original Hami royal family, as the new ruler, but he was unable to restrain Shan-pa and a few of his subordinates from raiding the borders of Turfan. In 1493 Ahmad retaliated by unleashing an attack on Hami, killing over a hundred people and capturing Shan-pa.

The court responded cautiously to Ahmad's second invasion of Hami. Though some officials sought a punitive expedition against Turfan, the emperor merely dispatched a vice minister of War, Chang Hai 張海 (T. 文淵, 1436–98, *cs* 1466), and Kou Ch'ien 綏謙 (a regional commander), to investigate and hopefully resolve the dispute. Having reached the northwestern frontier of China, Chang sent a memorial urging that the tribute road from central Asia be closed. He explained that China's other tributary states, which desired and in some cases urgently needed Chinese