Military System of Early Turkish Rule in Northern India

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Abstract

The study of the British and Indian historian has engaged the attention of scholars throughout 20th century. Besides a number of research papers, some useful works on historians and historiography of the 20th century have appeared. There is hardly any book on the army of the early Delhi Sultanate. This paper pays emphasis on specific aspects of army organization and institutions of early Turkish sultans. This study is first commendable attempt to assess the whole process of development of the military system of British and Indian historiography, which is primarily based on the comparative and analytical study of the contemporary literary sources. The army of the early Turkish Sultans formed one of the strongest pillars of the government. According to a contemporary historian Z. Barani, the strength of the government of the Sultans rested on their armies. Military historiography in India was initiated with the start of studies on medieval Indian history during the 1860's. British administrative objectives and political developments after 1857 shaped the nature of military historical writings. The author lays emphasis on factors influencing military organization and development - army recruitment, types of armies, personnel, decimal system, Mansabdari System, Marathas, Sikhs, discipline and strategic intelligence. This article offers an overall view of the military administration.

***Keywords**: historian, historiography, military, administration.*

The army of the early Turkish Sultans formed one of the strongest pillars of the government. According to a contemporary historian Z. Barani, the strength of the government of the Sultans rested on their armies[1]. There is hardly any book on the army of the early Delhi Sultanate unlike the books on the army of the Mughal times e.g. William Irvine's *'The Army of the Indian Mughals'* and Abdul Aziz's *'The Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army'*, though there is no dearth of material available in political and administrative works on the Delhi Sultanate. There are some monographs, however, which deal with specific aspects of the army organization and institutions of the early Turkish Sultans.

Military historiography in India was initiated with the start of studies on medieval Indian history during the 1860's. It appears that the British administrative objectives and political developments after 1857 shaped the nature of military historical writings. The foundation of Turkish rule was described as Muslim rule and as a linear process of foreign domination in Indian history. But the true nature of Turkish rule eluded discussion, and ideological frays started generating historical debates among scholars. The history of the early Turkish rule in northern India has been written, primarily, in political and military terms projecting dauntless armies fighting heroic battles.

Prior to the period covered by this study, Henry Elliot, who translated parts of the Indo-Islamic corpus of political chronicles, poses one of the earliest examples of the imperialist view. The general tone followed by him had tuned to conquests and battles. This picture of the gruesome killing of rather helpless Hindus by Muslims continued to have a great deal of influence on the military historiography of India in the 20th century; not the least in Wolseley Haig's book which was, to a large extent, based on Elliot's translations. To a large extent, this was the lamentable result of early Indo-British historiography which being mainly concerned with the glorification of Britain's own epic struggle to conquer the sub-continent.

Most of these works were based on Indo-Persian sources. This approach of writing the military history of the Indian subcontinent was countered by Indian historians during the middle of 20th century. The Indian Muslim historians who started writing an explanation of medieval military setup began to feel uneasy with the martial tone of their material. As a reaction to this, some of them tended to highlight the non-military background of medieval Muslim successes. This was most vigorously advocated by Mohammad Habib who, following his Marxist proclivities claimed that the Muslim conquest of India was the result of an '*Urban Revolution'*. Obviously, among Muslim scholars, Habib's perspective, which was influential, did not particularly stimulate further military research of the old variety. Nevertheless, the thorough studies of Abdul Aziz and Athar Ali on the organization and social and ethical composition of the Mughal army are two examples of the indirect ways his attention for the social aspects of the Muslim conquest bore fruit for the military field as well.

If we take a deep insight into the works of the 20th century, no true British-Indian school of military historians emerged. Works of British scholars - Simon Digby, Sidney Toy, Peter Jackson, Peter Hardy and that of Indian scholars-Mohammad Habib, Jadunath Sarkar, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, K.A. Nizami, A.L. Srivastava, K.S. Lal, Irfan Habib, Iqtidar Alam Khan and I.H. Siddiqui, deal with certain aspects of the army. The present chapter aims to study and assess the works written and issues discussed by the British and Indian historians about the army of the early Delhi Sultans.

Military History of India (Calcutta, 1960) by Jadaunath Sarkar published after his death in May 1958 is a study of the development of the art of war in India, as illustrated in some of the notable battles fought on her soil. The work begins with a significant chapter on how geography dictates strategy and consists of twenty other chapters and two appendices. It describes many battles fought in the Sultanate period and the study pertains to strategy, tactics and weaponry in particular. Jadaunath Sarkar writes, "*That in the Asiatic world the phrase, the Turk Sawar (Turkish horseman) became a general name for the richly accoutered, superbly manned, dashing cavalry of any race."* Appendix II- Elephantry, in the end, reflects the use of the elephant in two ways-as a fighting machine and a transport agent. He projects the elephant as an invaluable source of oriental pomp and effeminacy. The induction of this animal in actual fighting and its advantages and disadvantages were also discussed. He speaks of the efficiency of and the impression created by the Sultanate army.

The reason for the defeat of Prithviraj in the second battle of *Tarain* is illustrated in 5th Chapter of his monograph entitled, "*Shihabuddin Ghori* v. *Prithviraj*." He emphasizes that Khurasani horses of the Muslim army were far superior to Rajput ponies, the unpatriotic pride of Raja of Kanauj and rigid caste rules Shihabuddin's tactical and strategic moves and corps of 12,000 steel-clad warriors were some of the factors that helped Muhammad Ghuri to achieve victory. But he did not explain how the rigid caste rules prevented Rajput from being readily refreshed with food and drinks on the battlefront?

Another military historian, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar had produced literature on military administration and art of war during the medieval times. His work, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (Delhi, 1984) is an analysis of the developments and happenings in the military history of India from 8th to 18th century. The second chapter of the work entitled, "*Society, Politics and War*" trace some military events. [2] He argues that the small independent states were unable to maintain large armies. With greater emphasis on elephants than on cavalry and still less on infantry, little-concerted action, divided leadership, the absence of united action and lack of organized units, the Hindu armies might have been numerically larger but were really inefficient. This semi-feudal basis deprived the Hindus of the advantage of undivided command, which the Muslims enjoyed. A standing army was inconsistent with the socio-political and military traditions of the Rajputs. The Rajput confederacies had no permanent organization for resistance. The Rajput rulers of that time did not realize the gravity of the Turkish menace, under the leadership of Ghaznavid Turks or the Ghurid Turks. To add fuel to the fire, Jayachandra of Kanauj did not support Prithviraj. The Turks brought with them an improved military organization, i.e., in the composition and management of the army as well as military tactics or the system of warfare.

Jagdish Narayan Sarkar writes that the Ghurid conquest of India was a war of conquest undertaken to increase the influence and power of the state by conquering some territory to gratify one's desire or mania for conquest. The army, being an instrument of the state, reflects its ideals as well as changes in the constitution and organization of the state. The military system of the Delhi Sultanate was devised to solve its problems, offensive and defensive; to pursue imperialistic policy of expansion; to withstand the hostile tendencies of the Hindus and the Rajput chiefs; to check the turbulence of the nobles, Turks or converted Muslim; and to ward off the foreign or Mongol invasion'. Accordingly, the Sultans appointed the Turks in responsible military posts; kept a standing army under direct supervision; and set up a chain of fortresses in the north-west frontier. The military system was modelled on Turkish and all able-bodied Muslims were enlisted. The army consisted of the (i) armies of *wali, muqti, malik* and *amir* posted at important centres, and recruited by them, and (ii) the personal army of the Sultan. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban sought to control both sections of the army. But it was under Alauddin Khalji that it was further centralized. There was a dichotomy in the recruitment process (i) by the central *Arz-i-mumalik* and (ii) by *walis* and *muqtis*. According to Barani, the royal army was accompanied by contingents supplied by Hindu rais and ranas. During the Sultanate period, the Sultan was, in theory, the commander-in-chief of the army and he often led it in person. In his absence, a malik was appointed to do so and was called *Sar-i-Lashkar,* whose tenure lasted during the span of the expedition.

I.H. Qureshi in *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* discusses military organization under the Chapter VII entitled *"The Army"*. He says that the internal and external armed struggle of the early Turkish Sultans forced the need of organizing the army of the Sultanate. [3] There was a ministry for war called *diwan-i-ard* with its head known as the *ard-i-mumalik*, who was responsible for its efficiency and the entire administration. The *ard-i-mumalik* was responsible for the recruitment of troops, inspection of troops, promotion and degradation of the soldiers, the recommendation of assignments, payments of troops, and preparations of war campaigns, and he would accompany the army in all important wars and saw the commiserate of supply and transport. I.H. Qureshi further illustrates the methods of *Dagh* and *Huliyah* adopted by Alauddin Khalji. The army was distributed and posted according to the need and strategic importance of the area concerned. He divides the troops under two heads: (i) *hashm-i-qalb* which consisted of *Khasah Khail* (household brigade), *jandars* (royal slaves & guards) and *afwaj-i-qalb* (troops directly under the royal command);

(ii*) hashm-i-atraf* (Garrisons in the provinces). He further discusses the cavalry, elephants, infantry, firearm, siege engines, forts, provisions, engineers, battle array, scouts, ambulances and *qurkhanah* (repository of royal standards) and *zarradkhanah* (arms storehouse). The army personnel were so well-balanced along tribal lines that no race or group could be predominant to pose threat to the ruler. The army was organized on the decimal basis from on individual soldier to Khan, between them were *Sar-i-khail, Sipah-salar, Amir,* and *Malik.* In the end, he elaborates the variance in the soldier's salaries, in number and efficiency of the army.

A.B.M. Habibullah's *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India"* has a separate chapter entitled "*The Fighting Forces"* where he states that normally all Muslims were members of the state's fighting forces. Professional soldiers in the state's employment manned the army which seems to consist of four classes: (i) the regular soldiers under the Sultan's direct control and in permanent employment, (ii) the troops permanently maintained by the provincial governors on the same footing as those of the king (iii) special recruits in times of war and expeditions, and (iv) volunteers, ordinarily Muslims, who were expected to bear their own arms and enrolled, for no pay but a share in the booty, for participating in what was called Jihad.
A.B.M. Habibullah discusses the office of *Ariz-i-mamalik, qalb-i-Sultani* (royal standing army), *jandars*, garrisons, *shamsi iqtadars* of cavalry and infantry. In a decentralized state of the Mamluks, authority over provincial troops was limited and the force was the muqti's own; details of its maintenance were his own concern and the *ariz-i-mamalik* could exercise little interference. *Ariz-i-mamalik* had *naib-i-ariz* (muqti's ariz) stationed in the iqtas. The instances from the Mamluk period throw insufficient light on army divisions and their composition. He also writes about the description of the battle array, quoting *Adabul Harb*.

Muhammad Aziz Ahmad's *Political History and the Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi (1206-1290)* focused on the various aspects of the early Turkish rule. He treated the themes of the slave trade, the career of Sultan Shihabuddin, the Turkish government, medieval kingship, a new form of monarchy introduced by Shihabuddin and his military commanders, Turkish officers and the works of Balban in a descriptive manner but failed to solve the real problems of the use of sources. According to him, the Turkish government of the 13th century was composed of several elements, borrowed from various countries.[4] The early Turkish rulers adopted the Mongol's decimal system pattern for the organization of their army.

Ahmad described the ministry of war (*Diwan-i-Arid-i-Mamal*). The minister of war styled himself with such titles as *Imad-ul-Mulk, Kutlugh Khan* and *Rawat-i-Arid*. He quotes another important officer called *Bahm-ul-Hasham* (Marshal of the Retinue) to assist the minister in the management of the department. He also talks of other army officers *Sar-i-Lashkar* (commander of a campaign), *Hakim* (governor), *Bakhshi* (paymaster), *Naib* (regent), and *Walis* (governors). Some of his observations were mere speculation, and researchers after the 1950's updated the knowledge and facts on the early Turkish rule in northern India.

U.N. Day discusses the role of the army in strengthening the military might of the Sultans. He quotes three important challenges before the Sultans which necessitated the existence of a strong army. "*The first and the immediate one was the unfavourable attitude of the Indian peoples in general and the Rajput chiefs in particular; the second, the turbulent tendencies of the nobles, the Turks and the converted Muslims; and the third, the foreign invasions or the Mongol menace.*[5] *The* Sultans addressed these challenges: firstly, they

sought the help of every Turk and appointed them on responsible military posts; secondly, they kept a standing army directly under their supervision, and thirdly, they sought to erect a barrier of fortresses on the North-West frontier to tackle Mongol invasions.

U.N. Day believes that the military organization of the Sultanate was based mainly on the Turkish model. He further writes that military service was compulsory, and there was a military gradation of officials into different titles of *amirs*, *khans* and *maliks*. They were two main branches of the army of empire recruitment and the organization of the army while on move on the basis of *'tumans'*, which was an old Turkish system. He gives details of the army officials, their remuneration, punishments and discipline, and their weapons. The remuneration of the soldiers could not have been constant or fixed. Revenue assignments were given to the soldiers in lieu of their salaries. The soldiers also received a share of the war booty. Forts, according to U.N. Day, were the frontier outposts and guarded the capital against Mongol invasions, which was an acute problem for the Sultanate. Each fort had its commandant who was generally called the Kotwal, and he kept the keys of the fort. The forts had also a number of "Mujrids" (personally he thinks they were engineers) who were well-versed in repair work and handling of siege weapons.

V.A. Smith wrote a general history of the early Turkish rule under the Chapter "*The Ghuris*" in *The Oxford History of India*. He gives details of the main battles fought by Muhammad Ghuri and his general, Qutbudin Aibek and Muhammad B. Khalji (in eastern provinces of Bihar and Bengal). He illustrates Ghuri's treachery to use a *Rani* to secure the victory at Uchh· He further describes both the battles of Tarain, victories of Qutbudin at Delhi, Kanauj, Gwalior, Anilwara and Ajmer· He also gives details of the conquest of Bihar by Muhammad Khalji and seizes of the fort of Bihar in 1193 A.B· He further writes that the Muhammad Khalji boldly undertook the expedition of Bengal and established Muslim rule permanently for around six centuries. He further charts the conquest of Bundelkhand by Qutbudin Aibek in 1203 A.D. He mainly focussed on political events and their military significance on political life.

V.A. Smith attributes the military victories and rapid success of Muslim invaders to their merciless '*frightfulnes*s' which made resistance terribly dangerous and could not always be evaded by humble submission. He adds that *"It was a natural policy for the conquerors, which few in number had frequently to deal with revolts among the great masses of Hindus"*[6]. He mainly extracted his source material from such primary sources as translations of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* M.Q. Firishta's *Tarikh-i-Firishta* and Ibn Batuta's *Rihla* done by H.G. Raverty, Elliot and Dowson, and others. The ideological framework of Edward Thomas's work: *Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi* is reflected in V.A. Smith monograph.

Peter Jackson traces the history of the Sultanate from its foundation in 1210 to its demise in around 1400 in his work *'The Delhi Sultanate – A political and military history'*. While Jackson focuses on military and political affairs, training, expansion of the Sultanate resistance to formidable Mongol invasions from the north-west, and the administrative developments that underpinned these exploits, he also explores the Sultan's relations with their non-Muslim subjects. The first part of the book dealing with the 13th century concerns the present study. Jackson approached the problems of the historiography of the early Turkish rule, objectively and analytically with a clear reflection of lack of original sources. He extracted his source material from *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, *Taj-ul-Maathir*, *Shajara al-Ansab, Adab al Harb wal-Shajaa* and *Jawami al Hikayat.* The author, for the first time, used the *al-kamil fil-Tarikh,* a general history by Ibn al-Athir who wrote in the Irqaqi city of *al-Mawsil*. The

information supplied by Ibn al-Athir about the Ghurid campaigns was a great mystery how a distant historian collected such information. He describes the various types of warriors who fought for early Delhi Sultans: foot warriors, mounted warriors, Khurasani warriors, Ghuzz warriors, Khalaji tribal cavalry, other Turkish nomads and Turkish ghulams (*Muizzi, Qutbi Shamsi* and *Balbani*).[7] He says that it is difficult to give an accurate estimate of Ghurid armies as no satisfactory explanation is forthcoming in sources. Any analysis of the army setup rests on fragmentary evidence and mere speculations because, the four chroniclers, who noticed these events summed up with the final statement that God grants victory to the Sultan and his forces.

Muhammad Aziz Ahmad in his article "*The Central Structure of the Sultanate of Delhi" says*: "The whole army whether stationed at the capital or in province was under the direct control of the central government and was paid in cash, revenues and lands were rarely assigned for military services before the reign of Sultan Firuz Shah." M. Akram Makhdoome in the article "*The Art of War in Medieval India*" dwells upon the art of warfare in medieval India. *Lashkar* (Commander of the army), *magdis-e-maliki* (Council of maliks), horses and elephants, the office of ariz, horsemen, weapons, fighting and war spoils constitute the contents of this paper. A.L. Srivastava in "*Warfare in Medieval India,"* studies organization of the army military tactics and sieges of forts. He says, "With the advent of Turks, the composition and management of the army improved greatly and so also the system of warfare." K.S. Lal's article "*The Striking power of the Army of the Sultanate"*[8] is a very informative piece of writing on the army of the medieval India. The army organization of the Delhi Sultanate forms the focus of this paper. K.S. Lal discusses the men, the mound, the weapons, organization and weakness of the army organization of the Delhi Sultanate.

Jagdish Narayan Sarkar published his research on military thinking, military administration and guerrilla warfare in medieval India in the form of three articles. The one article entitled "*Some aspects of military thinking and practice in medieval India" is* devoted to the conceptualization of war, the role of strategy, tactics and logistics, terrain, battle order, principles of war, the system of operations: offensive and defensive and Guerrilla warfare. The second article entitled, "*Guerrilla Warfare in Medieval India"*[9] *discusses* the role of Guerrilla technique of medieval warfare. The third article entitled "*Some aspects of Military Administration in Medieval India"* focuses on various facets of military administration. The author lays emphasis on factors influencing military organization and development - army recruitment, types of armies, personnel, decimal system, Mansabdari System, Marathas, Sikhs, discipline and strategic intelligence. This article offers an overall view of the military administration.

D.C. Ganguly through his paper entitled "*A New Light on the History of the Cahamanas" discusses* the conflict between Prithviraj Chauhan and Mohammad Ghuri. Ganguly used the histories of Hasan Nizami, Minhaj Siraj, Ferishta, and Nayachandra Suri as sources to reconstruct the history of conflict between the Muslims and the Chauhans. Mohammad Habib's article *'Shahabuddin of Ghor'*[10] is very informative in providing information about his campaigns. The use of strategic factors is best reflected in it. He studies the initial military success and campaigns of Shahabuddin. He says, "No moral scruples restrained him from breaking his most solemn word of honour when such a step was likely to serve his purpose." Most of his initial victories were ascribed to the tactics he adopted against the kingdoms of Uchh and Lahore. But it was not his habit to achieve by force what guile could accomplish, writes Mohammad Habib. He, through his imagination and foresight

nature, perceived the military and social aspects of the Ghurian conquest. But he didn't deny the military strategies and planning's of Shahabuddin in winning battles.

Majid Khadduri in his book: *The Law of War and Peace* (London, 1941) throws light on the theoretical aspects of warfare in the medieval times in general. The author elaborates the war should be conducted, the arrangement of armies in the battlefield and the role of various commanders in battles and sieges. There are some articles on the laws of war in medieval India. M. Hamidullahs in his article presents a study of Muslim public and international law, consisting of the laws of war, peace and neutrality together with precedents from orthodox practice. S. Sahabuddin in the paper "*Conduct of Strategy and Tactics of War during Muslim Rule in India,* illustrates all aspects of war e.g. officers, planning of the war, divisions of army, methods, weapons, tactics etc.
During the early 20th century, the Indian nationalist historians began to react against the antagonistic picture presented by the British administrative historical accounts. They tried to play down the violent nature of Muslim conquests, this time by stressing the Hindu-Muslim unity, Hindu-Muslim brotherhood and feeling of one nation. [11] By contrast, the British were considered the first to have imposed '*foreign*' rule on India. This nationalist mood produced a silent censorship of earlier antagonistic communal relations. Again, this type of public taboo was not conducive to the field of historiography since it tended to play down the military confrontation during the medieval times.

Despite achieving some form of communal harmony, both nationalist and some Marxist historians felt compelled to face the question of recurrent Indian defeat, since the historical debate tended to concentrate on the victories of the Turks in 11th and 12th centuries, and the historians didn't substantially come out with proper perspectives. Both the nationalist and community-oriented historians walked on their own ideological solutions. Historians like S.K. Bhakari and B.K. Majumdar cited moral degradation as a foremost cause of the decline of Indian early medieval society. Bhakari thought that the Hindus suffered from *'effete leadership and excessive addition to the defensive, the virus of passivity, the lack of morale and discipline coupled with fatalism and superstition'*. [12] He explained that the Muslims were full of *'religious zeal, the greed of booty, the instinctive thrill of rapine, massacre and incendiaries'.*

A favourite notion among nationalist Indian historians was that the success of Muslim armies was the result of the lack of sense of national unity amid the population of India which would have led them to unite effectively to drive the invader out. This school of historians comprises of R.C. Majumdar, K.M. Munshi, K.S. Lal, A.L. Srivastava and A.D. Pusalkar. [13] They not only held political disunity primarily responsible but also military leaders' deficiency not to keep themselves in touch with the development of military advances and tactics of outside world. An active version of this viewpoint was put forward by A.B.M. Habibullah, who opines that the foremost causes of the Turkish success were the rotten political structure and devitalized and warring Hindustan. The Rajput thirst for military glory proved his nemesis, for it led to constant wars and to political disintegration. The period preceding the Ghuri conquest was a multi-state system in which ceaseless struggle for lord-paramount was the order of the day. Another proponent of the nationalist view was Muhammad Aziz Ahmad. He narrates that the Ghurian conquest of northern India, when all factors are kept in mind, can be explained by one fact only – the caste system and all that it entails; the degeneration of the oppressor and the degeneration of the oppressed, priest–craft, king-craft, idol-worship, degrading cults, economic and spiritual exploitation of the multitude, division of the people into small water-tight sub-caste groups, resulting in the total

annihilation of any sense of common citizenship or of loyalty to India as a whole. He further adds that the Indian social system, as described by Muslim writers, was based upon three principles, not quite consistent with each other and giving rise to contrary practices – the principles of ahimsa, caste or varna and chhut·

Another important Indian historian, C.V. Vaidya[14] cited some possible reasons for the defeat of Rajputs. He says: India at the time of Ghurian invasion lacked neither in armies nor incapable generals nor in kingly families. There was no superiority of physique or valour; nor any remarkable religious favour on the side of the invaders. Certainly, there was no difference in weapons. The foremost cause was that the Rajputs were divided among themselves and fought against one another. Mutual hatred and jealousies have been the bane of the Rajputs . Another cause was the rigid faction of caste, which took place about this time. "*The social sympathy*", says C.V. Vaidya "*which existed previously among the various sections of the Hindu people, was gone, and it was replaced by a feeling of aloofness and aversion. It also resulted in the 'vast diminution in the fighting strength of kingdoms', and consequently, there could be no national resistance or unity. Superstition, neglect of the study of the science of war and the Buddhistic sentiment of Ahimsa are enumerated as subsidiary causes. To conclude the disunion among the Rajputs, the fighting arm of India, and the rigidity of caste by which nine-tenths of the people were made incapable or unwilling to resist foreign domination were the two main causes which led to the permanent enslavement of northern India"* .

An attractive variant of nationalist viewpoint was put forward by the modern Indian Muslim historian, Mohammad Habib. Following his Marxist proclivities, he claimed that the Muslim conquest of India was the result of an urban revolution which brought together as allies the new Muslim rulers and the previously underprivileged Hindu city workers. In this view, Islam had liberated India from the shackles of the Hindu caste-system. A mild version of Mohammad Habib's research was highlighted by K.A. Nizami. He says that the real cause of the defeat of Indians lays in their social system and the invidious caste distinction which weakened their military organization and honeycombed their social structure. That patriotic fervour in which every citizen instinctively lays his hand on the sword-hilt in moments of national crisis was killed by these caste distinctions· K.A. Nizami further narrates that the bulk of the India population was apathetic towards the fortunes of the ruling dynasties. No appeal from the Rajput governing classes could possibly receive a sympathetic response from the vast mass of Indian population because there was no unifying bond, no idea of *'social owners'*, no spirit of *'common citizenship'* and no *'national consciousness'* . The caste system had played havoc with the military efficiency, fighting remained profession of the selected few, recruitment confined to particular castes, physical contamination overburdened soldiers which marred his efficiency· K.A. Nizami, though lacked Mohammad Habib's imaginative and foresight nature, gave a general view of the early Turkish successes. Such views make more than the briefest notice of military organization superfluous. [15]

Both, Jagadish Narayan Sarkar (*The Art of War in Medieval India)* and B.N.S. Yadava (*Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth century*) stimulated the study of sources other than the usual Sanskrit and Indo-Persian texts. In reaction to Mohammad Habib's theory of '*Urban Revolution',* B.N.S. Yadava used inscriptions, regional kavya and bardic traditions to demonstrate some crucial indigenous causes of Rajput defeat. For Yadava, the period of the 11th and 12th centuries was the climax of Kshatriya chivalry which had degenerated, giving rise to more arrogant and personal forms of clannish jealousies and dissensions. He further adds, although there was a certain rise in individual valour, military

tactics, expediency and diplomacy were neglected. [16] His main contribution was that he balanced the earlier preoccupation with Sanskrit and Indo-Persian material with more politically oriented sources.

Peter Hardy an eminent British historian looked at the way Muslim sources rationalized the use of violence. He, though, remained close to the Indo-Persian material [17] and articulated it's normative and idealist content, but turned a blind eye to its military elements. Unfortunately, the military adjustments which lay at the root of these changes remained underexposed. Andre Wink's efforts in the field of military historiography are laudable in response to Simon Digby's headstrong interests in the military history of India. Wink's work on the early Turkish Sultans gives an indication that the interest in military history of medieval times is growing. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of the present study since Andre Wink is a Dutch Scholar. He has recently very forcefully re-stated the superiority of mounted archers during the early Turkish invasions.

Another important theory, which had been gaining currently since the mid-19th century, viewed the military success in light of the practical military superiority of the Muslim invaders. This view put forward by Edward Thomas, who assumed that the tactics of using mounted warfare from the post-Ghaznavid Muslim army of the north Indian conquest, must have been identical with those of the Turkish tribal host in Anatolia. The idea still lingers that the mounted warfare was part of the ethos and experience of the original Muslim invaders which their opponents lacked. On this we may observe that there are indeed some grounds for supposing that the invaders had easier access to good war-horses than their opponents, but the view that mounted combat was unfamiliar to their Hindu opponent cannot be maintained. Simon Digby tried to seek an explanation in military supplies, in an obvious default of technological explanation for the Muslim conquest and endurance. He states that the endurance of the Delhi Sultanate, based on the superiority of its armies to those of any Hindu power as well as their ability to withstand Mongol onslaughts from central Asia, lay in their access to and efficient control of such supplies [18]. The efforts of the Sultans to procure war-horses and elephants and deprive their opponents of them were a well–thought step/measure to have a tactical edge over their adversaries. Simon Digby observes, the explanation of the military ascendancy of the Delhi Sultanate in terms of control of the supply of elephants and war-horses is not a modern approach but is adumbrated by the principal 14th-century chronicler of the Delhi Sultanate, Z. Barani, when he remarks upon government undoubtedly representing his own views, which he puts into the mouth of Sultan Balban. Later on, it became an object of the policy of the Delhi Sultans to deprive Hindu rulers of access to war-horses both overland and by sea, and in this they were often successful, thereby creating a further advantage over their opponents. Quoting Barani, Simon Digby writes that the historian attributes to Sultan Balban more detailed observations on the strategic importance of the Delhi Sultanate controlling supplies of war-horses and elephants. The Sultan said that he had heard from trustworthy sources that the control of Hindustan was based on the elephant and the horse. Every elephant in the kingdom of Hindustan was worth 500 horses. He had given the realm of Sind to his elder son Nasir ud-din Muhammad, whence many and chosen sea-borne and Tatar horses came to the capital city of Delhi. In the territory of the Siwalik and around Sunam, Samana, Tabarhind, Thanesar, the camps of the Khokhars and in the territories of the Jats and Mundahirs of Kaithal, a great number of fine Hindi horses were raised, by which many and cheap horses were added to his army. He had entrusted the province of Lakhnavati (Bengal) to his younger son, Bughra Khan, who had held control of it for years. From there elephants came to his elephant stable (pil-khana). His capital was thus furnished with many elephants and horses without number.

The geographical and ecological conditions of the Indian subcontinent, its semi-arid extensions always remained closely linked to the arid zone of central Asia and Iran [19]. This implied that, from the early Middle Ages onwards, its military traditions remained influenced by the Turko-Persian cavalry tactics hinging on the massive supply of war-horses as well as of trained horse-archers with a nomadic or semi-nomadic background. As a result, the open plains and plateaus of northern and central India, although not very suitable for horse breeding as such, remained wedded to the nomadic culture of the camp, the horse and the bow. It appears generally that due to its close interaction with central Asia, Ghurid cavalry armies, like their Iranian counterparts, were far more sizeable than those of the Rajputs. Hence, numerous historians have noticed, mostly rather parenthetically, that both the quality and the number of war-horses gave central Asian armies the edge against their Indian adversaries. The Turks and the Mongols re-introduced mounted archery on a massive scale which it had not seen before in the sub-continent. The difference with earlier periods, however, appears to be mainly a matter of numbers which might have proved decisive in the Ghurid victories. In terms of tactics, the early Islamic armies combined the horse archers' wheeling around the flanks (taulqama) of their enemy with the heavy cavalry charge in the centre. The heavy troopers were mostly protected by mail shirts, often reinforced, since the Mongol onslaught, with lamellae of iron or steel which gave some more protection against archers.

Some preliminary inroads and constant vigorous pressure on the frontiers after Mahmud's brilliant campaigns initiated the process of the Turkish Empire building in Hindustan. According to Baihaqui, Ahmad Niyaltigin led an expedition into Hindustan and penetrated as far as Banaras. The same authority also credits Masud with the capture of Hansi. Ibrahim is also said to have conducted expeditions against 'the infidels'. Between 1086 and 1090 his son Mahmud, the governor of Punjab, is also reported to have plundered Kanauj and Kalinjar and attacked Ujjain [20]. Hajib Tughatigin, the governor of Punjab under Masud III, is reported to have penetrated to a place across the Ganges which no one except Mahmud I had reached before. During the reign of Arnoraja, the Turks destroyed Pushkar and reached as far as Anasagar. During the reign of Vigraharaja IV, they advanced on Balbera (modern Rupnagar in Kishangarh). These inroads before the final engagement proved decisive because they put a restraint on the men and materials of the Rajputs rulers.

Another cause of Turkish success which proved decisive was Muhammad Ghuri's ready pool of military adventures. In practice the army of an Ajam state was only limited by the funds at its disposal, for the number of trained soldiers available always exceeded the demand [21]. Due to constant warfare, a huge military labour was created, into which the Mamluks, whether Indians, Turks, Iranians or Africans were drowned for adventure, employment and ready cash. The strength of Ghurid army, writes Peter Jackson, was swollen by the recruitment of volunteers from among the Ghazis (holy warriors), Turks and Tajiks, Sayyids, Shaykhs, scholars and independent adventures of Khalji origin. The defeated armies of Hindustan also found employment with the armies of the Turks. Bosworth has shown in his study of Ghaznavids armies that the Indian slave soldiers of the 11th century had their own units and often fought under their own Indian generals. The troops of Indian origin were employed as a guide, to defend cities, fortresses, army camps, but also for the centre of the countryside with its numberless mawas, ravines and wills, they were indispensable to local chiefs as well as in the service of more powerful rulers and officials. Aibak's army at the siege of Meerut certainly included Hindu soldiers; and when he advanced on Lahore in 1206 A.D., the 'Hindustan forces' (Hashm-i-Hindustan) that accompanied him contained, ranas and thakurs – ahead of their retinues, in the service of Muslim warlord [22].

Another crucial factor, which was earlier highlighted by K.A. Nizami and later by Peter Jackson and I.H.Siddiqi, paved the way for the success of Turkish arms in northern India was the tactics and stratagem adopted by Muhammad Ghuri. In fact, his failure at Tarain, made him think of changing his military strategy and tactics, writes Siddiqui [23], and then he was able to retrieve his honours. He was naturally cautious this time. In order possibly to gain time for completing his preparations and to layout a well-planned strategy, he had sent Qiwamul Mulk Ruknuddin Hamza ahead from Lahore to demand Prithviraj's submission. It was a crucial step. Muhammad feint to throw Prithviraj off his guard which succeeded remarkably well and was taken full advantage of. That same night the Sultan made his preparation for battle, and after the dawn of the morning, when the Rajputs had left their camps for the purpose of obeying the calls of nature, and for the purpose of performing their ablutions, he entered the plain with his ranks marshalled. The Rajputs were caught napping. Thrown into confusion, they could not make a stand, and Prithviraj decided to run away. But he was captured and killed. Nizami was thereby led to assume that these tactics were instrumental in winning for Islam the north Gangetic plain [24].

The superiority of the Turks in strategy and tactics lied primarily in their well-organized cavalry. After their mobility, the second tactical characteristic of the Turks was their archery. They used the bow from the saddle and shot without halting or dismounting. In actual practice, Turkish mounted, from the late 10th and 11th century onwards, does appear to have played a decisive role in the establishment and ultimately the consolidation of Muslim power in India. While the Perso-Arabic annals of the conquest of India are not nearly as numerous and detailed as those of the anti-crusades of Muslim dynasties like the Zangids, Mamluks and others, the superiority of Turkish modes of warfare is documented on numerous occasions throughout the 11th and 13th centuries, and above all, in the fatal Second Battle of Tarain of 1192 A.D., where 10,000 mounted archers under Muhammad Ghuri decided the outcome and ensured the success of Muslim arms in India. Sanskrit sources, for all their deficiencies, do not fail to confirm that the relatively small but well-armed mobile cavalry of the archers of the melcchas, fighting under a single undivided command, could play havoc with and rout the cumbrous Indian hosts which were supplied by innumerable rajas. Yet the fact that the victory was achieved, in part by the techniques in which Turkish nomads excelled, should not blind us to the rest of the evidence [25].

Unfortunately, the study of factors responsible for the military success has often suffered from lack of deep perspective. The historiography on the early Turkish rule had taken long to overcome the early British paradigm of aggressive Islam against passive Hinduism. Indian historians, starting from this point, struggle to find non-military explanations for the defeats of Rajputs in an early 13th century. The pacific image of Indian politicians in the 20th century, e.g. the Satyagraha campaigns of Gandhi and the dovish non-alignment foreign policy of Nehru, had hardly been able to emancipate Indian historiography from the gentle idyll of non-violence in the west. British Orientalists and rise of other social sciences also put limitation their military explanations of Indian defeats, but it led to one advantage of redefining the social-economic and cultural backgrounds of Indian warfare. Taking lead, Mohammad Habib claimed of an urban and rural revolution behind Indian defeats. Simon Digby's contribution to the study of military supplies was not replicated in other aspects of military historiography. Peter Jackson, who studied the early Turkish rule came out with wider conclusions. He suggests that any analysis of the causes of Muslim success rests on fragmentary evidence and mere speculation.

Some of these reasons could possibly be important to draw inferences about the initial military success achieved by the early Turkish Sultans. The sophisticated military system of their native Afghanistan was the principal reason for the success of the Ghurid armies in India. The ease of the Ghurid conquest has puzzled historians in the 20th century, given the far greater agrarian wealth and a population of the conquered Indian kingdoms that should have provided them with ample resources for military defence. Hence, early 20th century historians often pointed to the lack of unity among Indians as the chief explanation for their defeat. Since the concept of India as a nation was a modern one and was still centuries away, Prithviraj Chauhan and Jayachandra Gahadavala - Muhammad Ghuri's opponents - had no incentive to forge a united front and indeed are depicted as mortal enemies in a later ballad that champions Prithviraj. Similarly, there was no sense of a common religious identity among Indian warriors at the time, for the notion of a unified Hinduism is a modern one. In the pre-modern period, a variety of distinct sects, many of them focusing on a single deity rather than multiple ones, comprised what we group together today under the rubric of Hinduism. Recent historical scholarship, instead, attributes the victory of the Ghurid armies to a number of concrete advantages that gave them a distinct military edge.

The Ghurids were in a better position than Indian rulers in this age of cavalry warfare both in terms of the supply of horses and of trained manpower. Coming from Afghanistan, the Ghurids had easy access to the high-quality horses of Central Asia, Persia, and the Arabian Peninsula. The Indian subcontinent was, in contrast, ill-suited for the breeding of horses. Since indigenous horses were inferior, Indian rulers had long imported horses from the regions to its west by various overland and maritime routes. Imported horses soon deteriorated in quality, however, because most of the subcontinent lacked good fodder and pasture lands. The Ghurids (and the later Sultans of Delhi) were highly skilled in deploying horses in warfare. Employing a classic nomadic tactic of the Central Asian steppes, their light cavalry could fan out and flank the enemy from all sides, but still retreat quickly out of range of the enemy's heavy cavalry charge. The damage inflicted by the mounted archers of the Ghurid light cavalry was considerable, whereas Indian armies had few men accomplished enough to wield a bow while riding, according to the recent work of Andre Wink. Indian armies, instead, generally engaged in mass frontal attacks and employed rows of war-elephants to break enemy lines. Slow and cumbersome, the elephant, if panicked, might also inflict serious damage on its own troops.

Other factors also worked to the benefit of the Ghurid forces. Foremost among them was the highly centralized organization of their armies, for the Ghurids had a permanent core of professional soldiers who were accustomed to fighting together. Indian armies, on the other hand, were coalitions composed of separate fighting forces under individual lords who were called for duty when required. As a consequence, they often failed to coordinate on the battlefield. All of these elements in conjunction resulted in a superior or complex military system that enabled the Ghurid armies to extend the political and cultural frontiers of the crossroads zone of Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and Uzbekistan well beyond Punjab, where it had remained stationary for nearly two centuries.

The study of fortification in the Indian subcontinent is a discipline not only of intrinsic merit but also of considerable extrinsic value, for the material it may be expected to yield is of relevance to the archaeologist, antiquarian and historian. During the 20th century, the study of fortification is being done by both Indian and British historians. Sidney Toy in *The Strongholds of India,* (London, 1957) describes, on the basis of his personal observations and an investigation conducted during 1955-56, the forts and discusses the science of

fortification and garrisoning in the medieval period. This monograph was the first attempt to present a picture of Indian fortification as a whole Toy inspected and measured two dozen medieval fortifications in north India, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Deccan and South India – a daunting task for any man, and a truly fantastic piece of work for a scholar in his treatment. The toy is known as an authority on European military architecture, and it was because he was 'struck with the dearth of reliable literature on the forts of India' that he set out to fill the gap himself.

J. Burton Page in his article, "*A Study of fortification in the Indian subcontinent from the Thirteenth to the Eighteenth Century A.D."* Discusses the history of the development of fortification in India. It contains a review of Sidney Toy's monograph. Burton Page discusses the merits of Sidney Toy's work and offers a study of certain cities – Delhi, Agra, Gulbarga, Mandu, Rohtasgarh and Lahore and of fortifications in Bijapur, Daulatabad, Bidar, Golconda, Ahmadabad, Fatehpurskiri, Tughblaqabad and Adilabad.
Of late, a monograph by Konstantin Nossov entitled, *Indian Castles (The Rise and Fall of Delhi Sultanate) (*London, 2006) appeared in which the military art of fortification in the Indian subcontinent has been narrated. Nossov had taken three sites for analysis of military architecture: Tughluqabad, Bidar and Chittorgarh. He focuses on the principles of defence during the medieval times. Forts, castles and fortresses and their methods of construction remained a special theme of his enquiry. He illustrates ditches, walls, towers, gates, merlons, loopholes and machicolations, and offers an explanation of interiors and living quarters inside the castles. Konstantin Nossov discusses the role of castles in war, fate of the castles in war and the present day conditions of these castles. [26] His work augments the knowledge about these three sites, produced previously by historians.

Irfan Habib, perhaps following the example of Saiyid Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Aligarh Muslim University, who was deeply impressed by modern science, stimulated research into medieval technology developments. He suggests that the tenor of life in India was greatly changed during the period of the Delhi Sultanate by the introduction of several important mechanical devices. The evidence is scanty and ill-preserved, but Irfan Habib has been applying to it lines of research suggested by Joseph Needham's massive history of science in China and Lynn White's brief essays on medieval European technology. [27]

Irfan Habib has made out a fairly strong case for the introduction, in India during this period, of the spinning wheel and of the bowstring device for carding cotton, both of which had previously been considered Indian inventions of almost immemorial antiquity. Inevitably the stirrup is brought up later in Habib's inquiry and perhaps more interestingly, the horseshoe. There is clear contemporary evidence that the Muslim conquerors of the Delhi Sultanate possessed the horseshoe at the time of conquest: while the Persians and central Asian Turks, whose cultural heirs they were, had already used stirrups for some centuries. Habib admits that the true stirrup is shown on late 13th century Indian sculptures, but suggests that it may only have been introduced in India in the late 12th century by the Muslim conquerors. Such a late adoption of the stirrup would be surprising from several points of view. The earliest attestation of the use of the surcingle or toe-stirrup had been in northern India, which also bordered upon lands where the true stirrup came early into use, from which a flourishing trade in horses imported into India had existed for centuries.

Lynn White, in fact, amid his thickly packed footnotes, refers to depictions of the stirrup at Pagan in Burma in sculptures assigned to the 10th century and at Konark in Orissa in sculptures which may be firmly dated to the 12th century. This, however, does not quite

decide the matter, as the stirrup could have been diffused from the interior of China (where Marco Polo comments on the Hunnan stirrups) or from Tibet into Burma and eastern India. However, the stirrup is also depicted at Khajuraho in central India, on a frieze of the Lakshmana temple which can firmly be assigned to 935 A.D. The evidence regarding the shoeing of war-horses and the military advantage or disadvantage of this in Indian conditions of the period yet remains to be collected. If the prominent role of the war-horse is dated and established beyond doubt, what may be said about the introduction and impact of gunpowder technology? To what extent did the gunpowder weaponry facilitate the formation of a large empire of the Delhi Sultans?

The contributions of historians like Mohammad Habib, Jadunath Sarkar, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, Simon Digby, Sidney Toy, Burton-Page, Peter Jackson, Andre Wink, Iqtidar Alam Khan, I.H. Siddiqui and Irfan Habib, while charting the progress of Muslim arms during the early Turkish rule opened new avenues. Deficiency of contemporary Hindu narrative sources and vague references in the Hindu inscriptions are few hindrances in a proper understanding of the military history of the early Turkish Empire. Muslim writers on the early Turkish rule provide fragmentary data and use misleading terminology. Although there is an abundance of information on military events, there is hardly any insight into the most relevant details concerning, for example, weaponry, tactics, or logistics. Indeed, most of the Indo-Persian texts present literary and normative models rather than trustworthy descriptions of the events that matter. For example, much of the official's Indo-Persian works teem not only with excessive violence towards the enemy but also with boundless love and praise for the ally. At best, we know which battle took place at that moment and who was involved for what reason but we are kept more or less ignorant about how exactly these numerous battles and sieges took place. We have to move patiently, to read all the well and lesser-known Indo-Islamic *tawarikh* and *fathnamas* and to collect and compare all the relevant military data so far ignored. We would have to start and move with the right questions, interpretations and would have to take a closer look at what has been achieved so far in the field of historiography.

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