

## ***IMPLICATIONS OF THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE GHORID CHAIN OF COMMAND***

The Ghoris have been considered the successors of the Ghaznavi Empire. To a certain extent this is true but only partially. The Ghoris had certainly been subject to the Ghaznavis and had served under them from time to time but this service had been sporadic and occasional. Secure in the highland defiles which were inaccessible even to their neighboring highlanders, the Ghoris imbibed some cultural and linguistic influences and some political ambitions but very few administrative systems<sup>1</sup>. Some authors even erroneously believed that the Ghoris did not even have the traditional office of the vazir. This of course is not true but the kind of vazir that the Ghoris employed was vastly different from that of the Ghaznavis.

In fact the Ghoris employed a socio-political structure that was quite distinct from that of their predecessors. Mahmud of Ghazni is known to have been kind to his brothers and to have employed them as commanders of the Khurasan troops, the highest military power that he could confer on them. Even so, his commitment to his siblings was in no way compatible with that of the Ghoris. In the first instance the clash between a scion of the Shansazbani house and the Sultan of Ghazni resulted<sup>2</sup> in a family revenge. Brother after brother committed himself to the vindication of family pride till Ala-ud-din Jahansoz burnt Ghazni. The mantle of leadership moved from brother to brother rather than from father to son<sup>3</sup>. But this was only the first indication of the altered perspective. After Ala-ud-din and his son, the leadership of the family domain fell to Ghias-ud-din as chief leader. This is a key aspect to focus on. The Ghoris had a system of “chief” and “petty” leaders and simultaneous leaderships rather than exclusive leadership. It is certain that the tradition of Ghori government was not that of a monarchy. An association of chiefs with a primus inter pares is the condition that could describe their status. When Ghias-ud-din came to power as the “primus”, he took a little while before elevating his brother to the group of “peers”. We are told that there were twelve Maliks and three Sultans<sup>4</sup> subordinate to him, including his brother but it was only the brother who appears to have received the mandate of semi-equivalence. In the case of all the sultans, the freedom of independent conquest seems complete but in the case of Shahab-ud-din/Muizz-ud-din he was also free to inherit and dispose of his acquisitions.

The elements which constituted the power base of the Ghoris included the Shishani, the Khalji and the Kharmil, it was later that they included the Turks according to Irfan Habib<sup>5</sup>. At the time of Ghias-ud-din's accession [556H.], Shahab-ud-din was with his uncle, Fakhr-ud-din Masud. With the permission of the latter, Shahab-ud-din made his way to Firoz Koh<sup>6</sup>. When Ghias-ud-din first handed over control of Ghazni to Shahab-ud-din in 569H/1173-4AD, he was a subordinate commander like all the others. During this time he confined himself to conquest of territories in the neighborhood of Ghazni for about a year or so. Soon, however, he was elevated in title to Muizz-ud-din and, having conquered Multan in 571/1175, was given greater independence than others. His foray into Gujrat and, after failing there, his venture against the venerable Muslim government of the Ghaznavis are extraordinary exploits for a subordinate even for the unusual style of the Ghor government heretofore.

The Ghaznavis had forbidden independent conquests by a subordinate as in the case of the eastern governors [at Lahore], if the Ghoris were not as choosy, still they had not given carte blanche for unlimited extension. But Ghias-ud-din avoided looking eastward even though he asked his brothers help towards the north and west. The entire account of Ghias-ud-din's reign contains many incidents when both the brothers worked together [as in the victory over Sultan Shah in 588/1192], however, when we examine Muizz-ud-din's rule in Ghazni, we do not find similar examples of cooperation. Neither in the conquest of Gardez, nor Multan or Lahore, nor even at Tarain in 588 as well, virtually simultaneous with the victory in Khwarizm, did Muizz-ud-din get any assistance from his brother. From 571/1175 to 582/1186 Muizz-ud-din extended his domain westward to include virtually all of Pakistan, the area that the Ghaznavis had controlled for over a century. Apparently during this time his instruments of control were the free men of Ghor. 571 Multan, 574 the defeat in Gujrat, 575 the victory at Peshawar, 577 Lahore, 578 Debul and 581 again Lahore, with the establishment of a garrison at Sialkot, and [finally] Lahore in 582, were conquered. Working back from the definite date of the second battle of Tarain in 588, the conquest of Bhatinda may be dated in 586 or 587. This was Muizz-ud-din's first foray east of the Yamini/Muslim domain since the defeat at Gujrat and he was still inclined to rely on the people of Ghor for the administration of territories. The Qazi from Tolak, in Ghor, and his band were left in charge.

Around 1190 Ghori came up with the ingenious idea of employing his ghulams for this purpose<sup>7</sup>. This was not a unique concept in form but Ghori made extremely innovative use of it as time went on<sup>8</sup>. Turkish ghulams had been used to command troops, man forts, govern territories and rule in the Muslim state for centuries and Turk Sultans had declared themselves independent of central authority times out of mind. Ghori combined these two roles. Until 1190-91, when Ghori probably left the Qazi Tolki at Bhatinda, his subordinates had been Ali Karmakh, at Multan and Lahore, and Hasan Kharmil at Sialkot, Qivam-ul-Mulk Rukn-ud-din Hamza and others of their ilk. Even the Qazi was a free man, but after the second battle of Tarain, Ghori decided to leave Qutb-ud-din Aibuk, a Turk ghulam in charge. It is not clear if Ughulbak [*muqti* of Kol and Awadh], Nasir-ud-din Aitim [*muqti* of Multan and Uch] and Hasan Arnal [*muqti* of Badaun and Mahoba] were ghulams or not, though they were probably Turks, but Tughril and Qubacha were. Bakhtiyar Khalji was not a ghulam but he was also not in the same category of leaders as Aibuk. However, some of the people of Ghor remained part of Muizz-ud-din's administration in the east. Notable among them is the commander at Hansi and the *wali* of Sangwan<sup>9</sup>.

Although the victory at Tarain was followed by the conquest of Mirath, Kol 590, Thankir in 591 and Anhilwara in 593, Ajmer was left under the command of Prithviraj and Delhi under his brother's sons. In fact both Delhi and Ajmer were finally brought under Muslim control by Aibuk not by Ghori. What was unique about this arrangement was the freedom of action permitted to these subordinates. They were not required to seek permission for campaigns, neither in the direction of attack nor in the settlements to be reached thereafter. The conquest of Baran before the conquest of Delhi and Bakhtiyar's conquest of Bengal are merely two of the more prominent examples. Aibuk's conquest of Anhilwara and Gwalior too depict the freedom of action, which was a distinctive feature of the disjointed chain of command of the Ghoris. Each commander confined his control to his immediate subordinate and was allocation a general direction of control. Although Aibuk ignored the right of Tughril to conquer Gwalior<sup>10</sup>, we do not find any mention of infighting until after Ghori's death. Ghias-ud-din did not issue direct orders to Aibuk, Muizz-ud-din did not issue direct orders to Bakhtiyar nor did Aibuk issue orders to the Maliks of Bengal.

The most telling event related to the independence of control is that of the purchase of the real founder of the Sultanate of Delhi, Iltutmish. When he was first brought to Ghazni for sale the Sultan wanted to buy him but could not strike a bargain. Muizz-ud-din, therefore, banned the sale of Iltutmish in Ghazni. When Aibuk went to Ghazni some time later, Iltutmish had been brought there again. Aibuk wished to buy him but was informed of the ban. When he applied to Ghori [we may remember that Aibuk was still a ghulam himself], he was told to take the ghulam out of the limits of control of the ruler at Ghazni and buy him. Consequently, Aibuk had him purchased at Delhi. The interesting feature of this episode does not end here. While still a ghulam, Aibuk had acquired a ghulam and when he performed outstanding feats in a battle against the Khokhars [after the reverse at Andkhud], Muizz-ud-din, Aibuk's immediate superior [who was also his master] advised his subordinate/ghulam to release Iltutmish from the bonds in acknowledgement of his services. Even if we accept the possibility that Ghori was still unhappy about having been unable to buy Iltutmish and therefore wished to deprive Aibuk of that status on the pretext of appreciation, the incident displays the freedom of the latter to exercise virtually unlimited control within his territory.

It is worth remembering that although Muizz-ud-din acknowledged the superiority of his brother in hierarchy, in terms of the territory he controlled, particularly towards the last days of Ghias-ud-din's reign, was much greater than the latter. Keeping in mind the fact that the areas east of the Indus were actually controlled by his Ghulams, we find a remarkable anomaly that each subordinate actually controlled more area than his overlord. Aibuk controlled a larger area [from Lahore to Bengal] than Ghori and Ghori controlled a larger empire [from Ghazni to Lahore] than Ghias-ud-din who barely controlled the western half of Afghanistan and that too with the help of his brother.

These three distinctive features of the Ghorid chain of command, *the family leadership, the freedom of conquest, [bringing with it a greater access to wealth and power] and the disjointed hierarchy* had far reaching implications for the empire founded by them. The first expression of this was the expansion of the Ghori domain towards the east of what is now Pakistan, which we have already referred to above. Aibuk conquered the town of Delhi and chose it as his center of operations in 589H/1193AD<sup>11</sup> neither the conquest nor its status as capital can be laid at Ghori's door.

Nearly half a century had elapsed since the Ghoris moved out of the mountain fastness called Ghor to rule over what is now Afghanistan. Two decades had passed since they had secured Ghazni when Delhi became a Muslim center and Muizz-ud-din had ample experience in administration to know his strengths and limitations when he changed the ethnic configuration of his selected subordinates, which we have referred to above. He had probably also lost hope of a male heir by this time. After the conquest second battle of Tarain in 588/1192, Ghoris only ventured eastward three times [in 590 towards Banaras, against Thankir, probably in 592 and in 602 against the Khokhars], in a little over a decade, before he died but he was called westward by his brother more often. It is also interesting to consider that the previous conquests to the east of Ghazni had been conducted in person, more often than not. In the two decades prior to the second battle of Tarain, Ghoris moved eastward nearly every second year.

Ghoris's commitment to the western conquests is visible even after his brother's death. He had three years or so of rule in the interim between Ghias-ud-din's demise and his own. The events of this period are of vital importance to the understanding of the Ghorid chain of command. When Ghias-ud-din died, Muizz-ud-din took control at Ghazni and raised it to the status of the senior seat of government relegating Firoz Koh, which had been the seat of their government for nearly half a century. Instead of giving Firoz Koh to Ghias-ud-din's son, Mahmud, he gave him Bust and the throne of Ghor at Firoz Koh was conferred on Malik Zia-ud-din who was Ghias-ud-din's son in law and cousin. Hirat was conferred on the son of a sister before Ghoris proceeded against the Khwarizm shah to loose his third great battle [after Gujrat and Tarain]. Although he had claimed the right of over-lordship over the Firoz Koh domain of his brother, he had not integrated his domain controlled from Ghazni with it. In a sense he was joint overlord over the two domains, his own based at Ghazni and the family domain focused at Firoz Koh. Malik Zia-ud-din held the throne of Ghor for four years until Ghias-ud-din's son, Mahmud, conquered it from him, Mahmud in turn was challenged by the son of Ala-ud-din Jahansoz. The implications soon become apparent. When Muizz-ud-din died near Jehlum and was carried away to the west by his troops<sup>12</sup>, Aibuk's first act was to abandon Delhi and make Lahore his center of operations. In fact Aibuk never went back to Delhi however, he did try once to gain control of the coveted center of Ghazni.

As Peter Jackson has aptly pointed out, if Muizz-ud-din did not have a son, he had other male family members who were entitled to claim on his behalf. If Ghias-ud-din could succeed his cousin to his uncle's domain in the 550s, there was no reason that Mahmud could not succeed his uncle in the year 602H. Nor was Mahmud the only male of his kind to have the right to claim. If others did claim his inheritance at Ghazni and Firoz Koh and fought for it, why did they not aspire for the eastern domain. It appears that with the contest for Ghazni between the Bamian family and Yalduz, it was settled that the eastern domain along with Muizz-ud-din's personal demesne should be left to his ghulams whom he had supposedly nominated. It is for this reason that his nephew not only abstained from conquering the area but also sent letters of manumission to the main contestants, Aibuk and Yalduz.

It was the *disjointed aspect of the chain of command* that was responsible for the actions of the nephew and other Ghorid leaders. The family inheritance was Ghor, Firoz Koh, Bamiyan and the associated regions conquered by the family and Muizz-ud-din's personal demesne was Ghazni and the territory which he and his subordinates conquered from there. Not only did no Ghorid leader claim the region, Ghias-ud-din's son deliberately sent an investiture to the senior ghulam who laid claim to Ghazni and later to Aibuk at Lahore, dissociating both from the rulers of Firoz Koh, and this act too is not seen to be challenged in history.

The implications of these aspects of the chain of command profoundly influenced the Sultanate of Delhi, which was yet to be born. Aibuk did not consider it binding on him to acknowledge the control of the ruler of Ghazni believing that he was independent as had been made obvious in the purchase of Iltutmish. The Khaljis similarly believed that they merely owed nominal allegiance to Delhi and Aibuk, no more than they had while Ghori was alive. This laid the foundation of the power and privilege structure of the Muqtis in the Sultanate of Delhi. Not only did the disjointed chain of command dictate the quasi-independent status of the Umera, it also furnished the justification of the dissociation of the Delhi government from its roots in Ghazni and Firoz Koh.

When Aibuk failed to retain control over Ghazni, he fell back on Lahore and maintained that as his seat of government. Thus, if Muizz-ud-din's Sultanate was the Sultanate of Ghazni, Aibuk's sultanate, which in itself is suspect, was the sultanate of Lahore; both

seats of Sultanate had been initiated by the Ghaznavi rulers. Two years after receiving the investiture and being evicted from Ghazni, four years after Ghoris's death, Aibuk died, the ruler of Lahore and the overlord of Bharat and the Muqtis therein.

When Aibuk died, the relationship with Firoz Koh had been broken but that with Ghazni may not have been abandoned. Even if the Muqtis of the east had not aspired for Ghazni, and some of them had, the rulers in Ghazni believed that they had a right to Lahore and the Muslim domain to the east of it. That is why Qubacha, and more particularly Yalduz, continued to covet Lahore and look eastward. Aram Shah was incapable of stemming their charge and the quasi-independent stakeholders chose the Muqti of Badaun to lead some of them from the center that Aibuk had used earlier, Delhi. Thus they seated the first Sultan at Delhi, Iltutmish, thence came to be the Sultanate of Delhi.

Unlike the Ghorid family, these Turk claimants did not disapprove of infighting to determine leadership but they did retain the practice of quasi-independent status of the subordinates of the Sultan. They, therefore, resorted to a contest between claimants and, having settled on one, they followed the Ghorid practice of allowing brother to succeed brother but they were at the mercy of the group that had joint responsibility for the maintenance of the empire.

Whereas common interest started a process of integration within the Delhi government, the dissociation with Ghazni was not complete. Although Delhi had been made the seat of government, its permanent status was not established until the arrival of the investiture from the Khalifa. Apparently the developments in the west, with the fall of Ghazni and the rise of the Mongols, forced Iltutmish to decide that the sanction for Delhi as the center of a new Muslim state was in order.

Thus the disjointed chain of command not only determined the interrelationship between the Sultan and the Muqtis but also determined the dissociation of the centers of Firoz Koh, Ghazni and Delhi.

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<sup>1</sup> This was the time when the Qara Kitai and Ghuzz Turks were ascendant in Central Asia and the Khwarizm Shahs were also expanding their empire. The Ghoris came into conflict with each of them from time to time. See A. B. M. Habibullah, *Foundations of Muslim Rule in India*, Allahabad, 1961, p. 22f.

<sup>2</sup> Bahram Shah of Ghazni killed Malik Qutb-ud-din Hasan, a Ghoris prince who was married to one of the Sultan's daughters. Saif-ud-din Sur, Qutb-ud-din's brother, invaded Ghazni in 543H/1148AD but was killed, as a follow up, another brother, Ala-ud-din Jahansoz, burnt Ghazni c.1151.

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<sup>3</sup> Izz-ud-din Husain was succeeded by three of his sons in succession, Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabqat-i-Nasri*, tr. Raverty, p.337. It was only after the death of Ala-ud-din Jahansoz that his son succeeded him but this was followed by Ghias-ud-din's succession.

<sup>4</sup> *Tabqat, op. cit.*, p. 390.

<sup>5</sup> Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century", in Irfan Habib, ed., *Medieval India I*, Bombay, 1992, pp. 1-21, p. 2ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Tabqat, op. cit.*, p.370f.

<sup>7</sup> Although we do not know when, specifically, Yalduz was given the charge at Kirman, we are certain that Aibuk was given command at Kohram in 588/1192. since it appears that Yalduz was deemed senior to Aibuk, it seems plausible to give him a date coeval with the appointment of Qazi Tolki or at best a year earlier. It is fairly certain that the appointments of the Ghulams were in areas that Ghori believed to be his personal demesne.

<sup>8</sup> Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century", in Irfan Habib, ed., *Medieval India I*, Bombay, 1992, pp. 1-21, passim, is of the opinion that Ghori had intended to eliminate all Ghori nobility from his "Indian conquests". This may not be strictly true, however, for two reasons. In the first instance the fact that a similar appointment of Ghulams is found in the Iranian regions under Ghori's direct control and in the second instance because the Umera from Ghor continued to be employed, though more sparingly, in the eastern domain under Ghori.

<sup>9</sup> Irfan Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century", in Irfan Habib, ed., *Medieval India I*, Bombay, 1992, pp. 1-21, p.5ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Tabqat, op. cit.*, p.545.

<sup>11</sup> Habibullah, *op. cit.*,

<sup>12</sup> *Tabqat, op. cit.*, p492f, Muizz-ud-din was succeeded at Ghazni by Ala-ud-din Muhammad for a brief time. This was the period when the bier was being transported and contested. The Turk Amirs, led by Yalduz first deprived the Ghori Amirs of the bier and treasures of the Sultan. They arrived at Ghazni two days after the Sultans of Bamian who had been invited by some of the nobles of Ghazni. *This is standard practice in the medieval Muslim world that a group of prominent people of the capital or a popular movement within a state could invite another Muslim sovereign to take control.* The Turks, however, united and drove the claimants from Bamian to surrender Ghazni to Yalduz.