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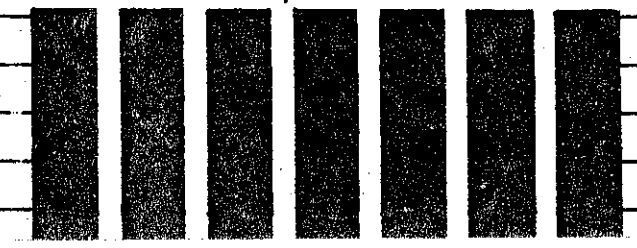
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Survey of Muslim Politics in the
Delhi Sultanate
by
Khurram Qadir

STUDIES IN HISTORY



SURVEY OF MUSLIM POLITICS IN THE DELHI SULTANATE

KHURRAM QADIR*

There is a wealth of material on the history of the Delhi Sultanate¹ published by the British² and South Asian scholars who have reconstructed and reinterpreted the subject from different perspectives. The number of books written on the subject in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries makes an impressive bibliography. Here an attempt has been made to reconstruct the political paradigm of the Muslim rule in India.³

Questions such as: what the people expected their rulers to be like? What they expected their governments to do for them and why? What constituted good government according to the ideals of the ruling class? and how the gap between the expectations of the people and the aspirations of the rulers was bridged? have not explicitly been answered so far.

A Theoretical Postulation

The Sultanate is viewed essentially as the process of transition from the altered conception of *khilāfat* to the *bādshāhat* of the Mughuls. It is not considered in dynastic terms⁴ because this concept was not invoked consistently in practice nor was it propounded explicitly in theory. Although it was one of the paramount implicit objectives of some of the *sultāns* it was seldom employed with success [as most analysts have observed]. We, therefore, contend that it was dissonant with the rest of the system and consequently remained ineffective till the Mughuls changed the rest of the system to partially suit this principle.

In the tenth century of the Christian era the Turks began to inherit the leadership of the Muslim world. The faith born in Arabia

*Assistant Professor, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.

more than three centuries earlier had imbued the Arabs with a missionary zeal and endowed them with an organized body politic. They issued forth from the desert to conquer and, in the process, converted most of their new subjects to their faith. Gradually their political system was modified as a result of the increase in the geographic and demographic scope of their government and because of the socio-political views of the people they conquered. With a change in the system, the political actors in the system also changed. The Iranians began to replace the Arabs in the eastern part of the Muslim world. In due course the leadership passed to the Turks some of whom, even after long contact with Islam, had not been converted till the tenth century. Their conversion coincided with their entry into the *Khilāfat* of the 'Abbāsids which was dominated by the Iranians.

With the passage of time the military defense of the *Khilāfat* became virtually the exclusive preserves of the Turks. The time was then ripe for them to inherit the leadership of the Muslim world.⁵ The sultanates of the Ghaznawids and the Saljūqs opened a new chapter in Muslim history.⁶ A rich period of culture and conquests followed which gave the Muslim world new brilliance. When the Turks finally failed to maintain their hegemony there was none to inherit their legacy. The modern world and much of what is today designated as the Third World in Asia and North Africa (Egypt) was born from the ruins of the erstwhile Turkish hegemony. The political system that the Turks inherited and that which they created may be called Muslim but not necessarily Islamic.⁷ It was a mixture of the terms prevalent among the Persians, the Turks⁸ and the Arabs, on which were superimposed the norms created to suit the existing local conditions of each sultanate.

Specifically the Sultanate of Delhi comes as a third stage in the Muslim expansion into South Asia. First the Arabs came to India, later the Turks based in Ghaznah, and thirdly the Ghurid expansion which left a *ghulam* as heir to the South Asian portion of the Ghurid empire.⁹ The Ghūri government had, in any case, been too short lived to have formulated a tradition of succession¹⁰ and the sudden death of the sonless sovereign in no way facilitated the formulation or evolution of tradition. It was a complex problem that confronted the leading political and administrative persons in the South Asian portion of the Sultanate established by the Ghurids. What was to be done with this vast empire? Who should inherit it and what would be the rationale of such inheritance?¹¹ The newly formulated Sultanate had three alternatives to fall back on: the tribal concept of leadership, the Persian tradition of hereditary rule and the amalgamated concept of a *ghulam* being the substitute of a son (allowing a competent *ghulam*

the right of heredity). Since Aybak (Aibak) integrated in his person two of these criteria, apart from the fact that he was in effective control, he naturally became the leader. Whether we designate him as a *sultān* or not, his status was the same as that of later *sultāns*.¹²

In the brief period of his leadership Aybak had to consolidate his domain and make the initial arrangements for its government. These tasks and the distribution of duties among his followers would have left him and his fellow Turks little time to quibble over decision making and distribution of powers, much less to decide about matters related to the question of succession.¹³

Again Aybak's untimely death (1210) left the question unanswered. This time two criteria competed with each other. The hereditary principle supported by some brought¹⁴ Arām Shāh to the throne only to be overruled by the principle that had ratified Aybak's succession. Iltutmish in fact had an additional qualification: not only was he one of the *Bandagān-i-Qutbī* (slaves of Qutb al-Dīn Aybak) and the most capable from amongst his fellow *umarā'*, he was also related to Aybak by marriage.

Having come to the throne on the basis of fitness to rule, Iltutmish (1210-35) decided to support the hereditary principle in the matter of his successors. Nearly a third of a century had elapsed since the inception of the Sultanate and a quarter century of Iltutmish's rule sufficed to ensure the acceptance of the hereditary principle (temporarily) but did not resolve the issue as to who should inherit. The *umarā'* felt that they still retained the right to choose their leader even if the choice was to be restricted on the basis of heredity.

When at the end of Nāṣir al-Dīn's reign (1246-66) the hereditary principle failed again, the fitness criterion was invoked. These two principles were thereafter used simultaneously during the entire period. While a "fit" heir existed he was made *sultān*. If there was choice between "fit" heirs, the one considered most "fit" amongst the contenders was chosen. If there were no "fit" heirs (the concept of "fitness" or its relevant criteria were determined by theory of which the arbiters were the *ulamā'* and the presence of these criteria in a candidate was determined by and large by the *umarā'* or through conflict), the *umarā'* chose a new leader¹⁵ from their own ranks on the basis of proven capability of leadership. Defacto proof of ability was the determinant of *dejure* status. After all even in the case of a hereditary heir in the Sultanate the incumbent was one of the deceased *sultān's umarā'*. Thus all "dynastic" changes prior to the Mughuls brought one of the existing *umarā'* to the throne. This is a feature of the sultanates in general: each succession is based on defacto acquisition of power in the same way in which the original sultanates

arose as a result of the independence of the *umarā'* of the *khilāfat*. During Balban's period, the hereditary principle was strengthened and the criterion of "fitness" lost some of its importance. In subsequent periods the hereditary principle was carried to an extreme of incompetence in certain cases and, in others, the *umarā'* sometimes abused their prerogative of choice. In still other cases incompetent aspirants, having collected a small following, tried to overthrow the existing *sultān*. The so called "wars of succession" should perhaps be viewed¹⁶ in this perspective.

The Turks are alleged to have been a clannish people but their clannishness did not exclude all others from a share in their government. The rule of the Ilbarīs (sometimes referred to as the "Slave" or Mamluk dynasty — consisting of the three families of: Aybak, Iltutmish, and Balban respectively) included many clans of the Turks apart from the Khaljis and some "locals" or other non-Turks.¹⁷

If the Turks were selective in their appointments it was not only owing to their past tradition but also because of circumstances. As conquerors they were bound to mistrust the people they had conquered. Initially this included not only the Hindus but also those Muslims who had preceded them in South Asia. In the initial phase, therefore, the conquerors had to be a close knit community. Very soon, however, some of them began to associate the locals within their power base.¹⁸

The question of the division of powers and privileges between the *umarā'* and the *sultāns*¹⁹ which had started with the issue of succession led to concepts regarding the behavior of the *sultān*. Iltutmish's children were deposed one after the other as were the grandchildren of Balban on the grounds of improper behavior, by the *umarā'* and the *'ulamā'*. The *umarā'* relied on soldiers for support while the *'ulamā'* relied on the Muslim subjects as a whole for support. Barani's lament is directed towards this practice when he speaks of persons of "low birth"²⁰ and his normally clean narrative is marred with invectives when he writes of these people in the Khalji period.

The conquering Muslims had settled mainly in the major cities, in Delhi and in the provincial capitals,²¹ while the local converts and neo-Muslims populated villages²² and less important towns etc. After the *umarā'*²³ and *'ulamā'*, the people of the cities had a major say in political matters.²⁴ It was a consequence of their influence that Raḍiyah was seated on the throne (1236) and that Jalāl al-Dīn Firūz Khalji did not enter Delhi or reside in the palace of Balban after he became *sultān*. The capitals of the *aqtā'*s similarly contributed to Ghiyāth al-Dīn's accession to the throne (1320). This tradition, initially weak, gradually gained currency and, as will be seen, to have exerted

considerable influence on the course of history during the Sultanate period. The northern *iqlim*, Multan, constantly provided fresh *sultāns* to the Sultanate.²⁵ Firūz Khalji was a veteran of Mongol wars in this region as were Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq and Khidr Khān.

Each *sultān* to be had a following prior to his rise to power.²⁶ When one of the *umarā'* was elevated to the status of *sultān* he generally had a power base inside and outside the center. Normally the *umarā'* who rose in this manner had been created *amīrs* during the time of the preceding *sultān* or his predecessors. They were thus not hereditary *amīrs* but people who had proven their ability in order to rise to the status of *amīr* and beyond, consequently, they invariably had a large and effective following. The *umarā'*, if not bureaucrats, were not feudal nobles either.²⁷ Their status was that of office holders given land in trust.²⁸ Hereditary land holding was tried and rejected several times till Firūz Shāh bin Rajab finally formalized it. This act soon resulted in the rise of independent *sultanates* on the periphery of the Sultanate of Delhi.

The major political issues of the Sultanate were the selection of the *sultān*, the distribution of powers and privileges between the *sultān* and his *umarā'*, the behavior of the *sultān* and the *umarā'* and the appointment of high officials such as the *wazīr* and *nā'ib al-mulk*. Most political moves during the period are concerned with these issues. If, however, a *sultān* made an innovative move such as 'Alā al-Dīn's price control or Muḥammad bin Tughluq's change of capital which affected the lives of ordinary people, an adverse or favourable political response followed from the affected section of the population.

The alleged misconduct of the *Chihalgān*²⁸ was due to the fact that some *umarā'* objected to the choice of *sultān* in some cases, therefore, they made an effort to replace incumbent *sultāns*. When these *umarā'* found that their choice of *sultān* was manifestly unfit for his post they tried to guide him by creating the office of *nā'ib al-mulk*. Since they were non-hereditary³⁰ themselves they could not be strongly committed to the concept of a hereditary *sultān*. The experiment of making a *nā'ib* did not prove successful and *Ikhtiyār al-Dīn* was removed. The *umarā'* then tried making a defacto leader without assigning him a special office (e.g. the power wielded by Sanqar) but this proved equally unsuccessful. Some of the *umarā'* tried to acquire the post or power of the *sultān* (eg. Muḥadhdhab and Balban-i-Kishlī Khān) but they also failed. The pattern set during the first half century was emulated in later periods, thus we see people like the *malik nā'ib*, Khusraw Khān, and Khān Jahān making their respective bids for power. Perhaps as a safety measure against these trends the *sultāns* used to leave caretakers in the capital when they

went out for campaigns.

Three distinct patterns of behavior of the *sultāns* emerged: The God fearing *sultāns*, the pragmatic ones and the pleasure loving *sultāns*.³¹ The most successful *sultāns* were those who combined a militant reputation with a God fearing demeanor. Iltutmish and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq had virtually no rebellions and enjoyed peaceful reigns. The rigorously worldly and the purely religious suffered rebellions but were not deposed as a result. Nāsir al-Dīn, Balban, 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī, Muḥammad bin Tughluq, and Fīrūz Shāh bin Rajab (Tughluq),³² all faced serious rebellions but retained their thrones. On the other hand *sultāns* alleged to be pleasure loving were dethroned, almost without exception. This was perhaps the greatest solecism that a *sultān* could commit.

The *'ulamā'*³³ of the Sultanate were the judges of the behavior and character of the *sultān* and their judgment was the index of public opinion amongst the Muslims. The *sultāns* were sometimes forced to change their policies as a result of the opinion expressed by the *'ulamā'*.³⁴

The *ghilmān* had a direct interest in the selection of the *sultān* because not only were they his adherents but they also stood to gain positions of power and, in case their candidate failed, to lose whatever power, they had. Along with the *ghilmān*,³⁵ the people devoted to the cause of the *sultān* were collectively referred to as *bandagān* (which if translated metaphorically should be taken to mean: the king's men). It was these *bandagān* who received offices at the inception of a *sultān's* reign. The aspirant who had the most effective support among the existing *bandagān*³⁶ was most likely to succeed.

The *bandagān* received *aqtā's* and *sūbahs* and rose to become *amīrs*, *maliks* and *khāns*.³⁷ Unlike the Ottomans the Sultanate of Delhi did not distinguish between the *ghilmān* and *sipāhīs*.³⁸ The *ghilmān* became less prominent during the second century of the Sultanate. Hardly any reference is found of a prominent *ghulām* in the period after Balban except the *malik nā'ibs*, Kāfūr and Khusraw. Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq acquired a very large number of *ghulāms* perhaps partly to replace the *umarā'* from the close circle around the *sultān*. The activities of these *bandagān* and *ghulāms* are very different from those of the Ilbarī period. Muḥammad Shāh bin Fīrūz had to resort to mass elimination, similar to the one allegedly done by Balban, on a far wider scale.³⁹

Initially the titles of the *bandagān* were *amīr* and *malik* while *khān* was used very sparingly. Probably the first instance in which a title greater than *khān* is used, in the Delhi Sultanate, is for Balban who is styled⁴⁰ *Ulugh Khān* (the great chief). Later the titles are used

more frequently. As remarked earlier these titles denote status not the office or the size of *aqtā'* that was held by an officer. The administrative office assigned to the *umarā'* is denoted by names like *'ayn al-mulk*, *khwājah-i-jahān*, etc. During the second century of the Sultanate, the usual terms are *khān* and *malik* while the term *amīr* is relegated to the use of the *Amīrān-i-Sadah* (the centurions). The *iqlimdār* in the east is even referred to as *sultān*, and the term *ulugh khān* is replaced by the title *khān-i-khānān*.

During Balban's period we also find a decline in the practice of making *umarā'* from amongst the *ghilmān*. Thereafter though the *umarā'* continued to play their role in politics, the *ghilmān* as a class do not come into prominence again till Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq's time.

The Sultanate remained virtually constant in its ideals for rulers⁴¹ but other practices changed. Initially it appears that the *muqti's* remained in their *aqtā's* and had more freedom of activity, gradually their freedom of activity was curtailed and they also tended to gravitate to the center and become courtiers. Whereas earlier a *muqti'* would be called to the center to keep an eye on him, later he was sent back to his *aqtā'* if he posed a political threat. This practice led to a loss in the military power of the *umarā'* who began to leave a *nā'ib* as *amīr* in their stead. The *Amīrān-i-Sadah* filled this vacuum and were active from the times of 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī and especially at the time of Muḥammad bin Tughluq.

Along with the change in the attitude of the *umarā'* came a change in the nature of their control. Aybak and his fellow *umarā'* had been free in the time of Ghūrī to enhance the territory under their control but later only an *iqlimdār*, and more specifically the *iqlimdār* of Bengal, could do so. 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī, a favorite *muqti'*, could not do so with impunity. Thus a basic difference was created between an *iqlim* and an *aqtā'*. The terms *sūbah* and *wilāyat* are used for the larger administrative units also, sometimes called *aqtā'* but comprising of smaller *aqtā's* within them.⁴² The holders of smaller *aqtā's* were called *aqtā'dārs* while those having larger areas (alternatively referred to as *wilāyat* or *sūbah*) were called *muqti'*. The *iqlim* was quasi-independent. As the conventions inherited by the Sultanate became formalized, the functions of the office holders became more well defined. The institution of *wizārat* is a typical example of this change.⁴³

Political evolution of the Sultanate is apparent in the expansion of its administrative functions and the formalization of its political procedures. The "rule making" function of the Sultanate was performed by the *'ulamā'* while "rule application" was the function of the *sultān*. In matters of "rule adjudication"⁴⁴ the *'ulamā'*, *umarā'* and *sultān*

participated almost equally and the *ri'āyā* put in their share as and when required. The political actors and the roles assumed by them changed as communication within the system resulted in consensus or conflict. In the Sultanate, in fact, it is difficult to distinguish between political actors and administrative personnel.

Understanding of the political norms of the Turks was sometimes difficult even for contemporaries who had had dealings with them for a long time. The nomenclature used remained constant as in the case of the "double kingship" which made it difficult to distinguish between personalities and functions.⁴⁵ The titles of the *umarā'* denoted their various roles. Perhaps the title of *khān*, *malik* and *amīr* denotes the political standing along with the designation of the territory under their control (*wilāyat*, *ṣūbah*, *aqṭā'*) while their administrative status was determined according to their other titles.

At times excessive use of privileges by politician-administrators led to chaos⁴⁶ such as that caused by the rebellions of Balban-i-Kishli Khān and Arsalān Khān, we know no cause of their rebellion.⁴⁷ It is possible that in due course the division between *ahl-i-qalām* and *ahl-i-ṣayf*⁴⁸ might have increased to form a new part of the system if the Tajiks had not been killed en masse at the time of Rādiyāh's accession.⁴⁹ As it is this distinction remained vague almost throughout the period of the Sultanate.

Excessive use of privileges, however, was not a norm. The control exercised by 'Alā al-Dīn may have caused resentment but obtained submissive acceptance. Perhaps the picture that Baranī paints for us is too grim but 'Alā al-Dīn's control over the body politic seems undeniable. We see the emergence of a non-militant and non-political group of government functionaries.⁵⁰ This category grew in Tughluq times but, apart from the *bandagān-i-Firūzshāhī*, never wielded power.

The greatest and most effective rebellions took place against *sultāns* who were designated as pleasure loving. The following of these *sultāns* is also said to be mainly among the Hindus and neo-Muslims (which may be the cause for Baranī's antipathy towards these classes — conversely this antipathy may be the cause for his attributing the pleasure loving attitude of the *sultāns* to the influence of these classes). The *sultāns* who rose to their office from amongst the *umarā'* and had no vestige of hereditary claim faced the fewest rebellions. The rebellions are not only an index of the level of control but also of the nature of political protest. During the reign of Muḥammad bin Tughluq not only did *muqṭi's* rebelled but other categories of people of different areas rose against him. Other examples of popular protest are found in the period of Firūz Shāh Tughluq's reign over the issue of taxes.

At times there was a discrepancy between the views of the people at the capital and those outside it regarding who should be *sultān*. At such times neither *sultān* had full control over the Sultanate. Abū Bakr Shāh could not pursue his rivals outside Delhi and Muḥammad Shāh bin Firūz could not enter Delhi despite the support of the "people, *'ulamā'* and *mulūk*" of other areas.⁵¹ The people of Delhi seem to have chosen their candidate on the basis of his personal character while those outside seem to have supported their candidate on the basis of his political acumen and military calibre. This also depicts the growing involvement of people in political matters which must not be confused with any concept of "democracy",⁵² however, the scope and ambit of political and administrative activity and actors was increasing in the process of evolution. The *sultāns* did not make it an object of their governments to interfere with the people but were not totally unconcerned with them either.⁵³ The people in their turn reacted according to the treatment they received.

The Muslims brought a Central Asian institution known as the *sultanate*: a government of the Muslims through a group of *umarā'* and an attendant army, kept in check by the *'ulamā'* at least nominally under the *khalīfah* and led by a person designated as the *sultān* who was required to possess military ability, moral character, physical courage and the quality of leadership. The executive functions were performed by the *umarā'* who were mostly military leaders but sometimes merely civil administrators. The legislative function did not extend to basic issues (which were predetermined by religion — this is probably why sometimes it has been considered a theocracy). Two legislative functions were however, necessary: 1) the *sultān* had to be checked/guided if he failed to abide by prescribed norms and 2) matters requiring some interpretation or elucidation had to be resolved. The *'ulamā'* and *mashā'ikh* were responsible for these functions. Normal judicial functions were performed by the *qādīs*. *'Ulamā'* and the *umarā'* could both advise the *sultān* as and when required. The *sultān* differed from the *khalīfah* in that the *sultān* did not represent the unity of the Muslim world like the *khalīfah* nor were *sultāns* totally sovereign because they recognized the *khalīfah* as their overlord. Proof of the *sultān's* control lay in his name being read in the *khutbah*, in his striking coins and acquiring the *takht* at the capital. A *chatr* and *dūrbāsh* denoted his prominence and, in case of need, the investiture from the *khalīfah* ratified his legitimacy.

Expectations and Intentions

Initially the *maliks* and *khāns* had a firm grip on the army but

gradually they allowed the control to pass into the hands of their subordinates, the *Amīrān-i-Sadah* had become content to become courtiers. The Turk/Tajik groups no longer formed the bulk of the *umarā'*, and Afghans, Khaljis and Mongols were also included. As the concerted resistance of the Rajputs had ceased, stray militant Hindu groups had roamed the hinterland and some locals who had converted also found their way into the ranks of the *umarā'*. The distinction between the '*ulamā'* who were willing to associate with the state and those who were not in due course of time, became sharper and the population of "provincial capitals" joined the people of Delhi as political actors.

The majority of the locals, whether Muslim or Hindu were initially unconcerned with the change of *sultāns* or *umarā'*. Gradually, however, as the administrative functions penetrated the village system the *khūts* and *muqaddams* also became political actors at the *aqṭā'* level. They even began to be noticed at the central level by the *sultān* under 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī. Although they could not force or coerce the *sultān* into taking decisions, they could influence the effectiveness of decisions and policies. The political power exercised by them and other political actors at this level is clearly visible in Muḥammad bin Tughluq's time especially with reference to the Doab rebellion. It is possible that various occupational groups had some common interests which transcended racial and religious barriers.⁵⁴ In matters of common interest they were probably able to achieve unity in interest aggregation and articulation.

The prime objective of the ruling class which came as conquerors was essentially to extend their government but when the link with Ghaznah was severed, other objectives also began to influence them. This is not to say that Ghūrī's *nā'ibs* were not concerned with local problems, even at this time any one receiving a fresh appointment received instructions regarding the treatment of the *ri'āyā*. These included the provision of security to travellers, improving trade and giving loans apart from upholding the laws of Islam and giving offices to the learned (who were not to be allowed to practise oppression).⁵⁵ In due course of time other objectives such as the improvement of agriculture, the building of cities and the provision of comfort and welfare of the people were also added.⁵⁶ In any event the one single consistent purpose of the rulers was the hegemony of the Muslims, not necessarily the 'settlers' but of any group: Turk, Tajik, Afghan, Mongol, or local convert, whoever would or could support the *sultān* in upholding his authority. The laws of Islam were upheld to the extent that was necessary to retain the support of the '*ulamā'*. The welfare of the subjects carried different meanings for different *sultāns*

and they implemented their policies accordingly.

Since the object of the Sultanate was the hegemony of the Muslims, they were the arbiters of the character of their rulers. Adjudication of the character of the *sultān* as of most other issues was the function of the '*ulamā'* and/or the *umarā'*. It appears that in this more than anything else the Central Asian norms determined the theory and practice of the Delhi Sultanate. Three traits were unforgivable in the *sultān*: frivolity leading to negligence of affairs of state, a disregard for the dogmas of religion to the point where '*ulamā'* were offended and the indiscriminate killing of *umarā'*. A sober *sultān* who did not transgress the limits dictated by the '*ulamā'* was acceptable, if, in addition, he brought prosperity to the land and controlled his *umarā'* without being ruthless, he was the ideal ruler.

The expectations of the bulk of the rural population was that the *sultān* and his *umarā'* would and should leave them alone so long as they paid their taxes. Any activity against brigands in rural areas would of course be welcome and desirable so long as the *ri'āyā* remained unmolested. If affected by taxes, they were able and willing to rebel. The soldiers expected the Sultanate to provide service, livelihood and an opportunity for proving military worth which could lead to inclusion in the ranks of the *umarā'*. The new emigrants from Central Asia were either escaping from the Mongols or hoped to make their fortunes in the land of opportunity. This may have been an important factor in changing the attitude of the *umarā'* who were shareholders in the Sultanate. They gradually began to expect that the *sultān* would determine the objects and instruments of policy alone. It was expected that the Sultanate should provide prosperity, security, and justice. The 'settlers' believed their hegemony synonymous with the hegemony of Islam and as such a basic principle of the Sultanate. As the *sultāns* gradually negated this principle the Sultanate gradually moved towards the form of a *bādshāhī* (monarchy). The oligarchical form changed into the monarchical one. The 'settlers' too were divided into two groups from the time of Iltutmish if we are to believe Baranī: one which advocated aloofness and the dignity of the ruling class and the other which advocated that all those willing to form part of the governing mechanism should be absorbed into the system according to their capability without discrimination. This later group continued to gain ground till Baranī's time. The *sultāns* probably pandered to both groups as and when expedient.

Naturally there were differences between the aims of the rulers and the expectations of the people. These differences or conflicts were resolved by two means: protest and mediation. Most of the "revolts" (other than those motivated by personal ambition) fall into the first

category while the advice given by the *umarā'* or *'ulamā'* and other influential people exemplifies the second mode of conflict resolution. The *sultāns* sometimes also tried to ascertain the expectations of the people before putting their views into practice: Jalāl al-Dīn tried to prepare public opinion in favour of styling himself *al-Mujāhid fī Sabīl-Allah* and 'Alā al-Dīn requested some of his friends to comment on his schemes according to Baranī.⁵⁷

Starting with a simple system of revenue and defence as its basic input and output, the Sultanate was able to increase regulative, extractive, distributive, symbolic and responsive capabilities gradually. Problems of communication arose which stopped the conversion process, therefore, system maintenance or adaptation could not take place. Before this stage was reached, however, economic measures such as land tenure, price control, fiscal and monetary regulation were added to inputs and outputs.

NOTES and REFERENCES

1. Geographically we are dealing with the area starting with the *iqīm* of Multan on the west and ending with the *iqīm* of Bengal in the east. Chronologically it lasted till 1555 A.D. See I.H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, Lahore, 1942. J.N. Sarkar, "History and Historians of Medieval India", *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, vol. III, Nos. 1 & 2, 1963-4, p. 54, for a list of the major historiographers of medieval South from 1921 to 1953. Also J.N. Sarkar, "Ideas of History in Medieval India", *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, vol. IV, Nos. 1 & 2, 1964-5, pp. 20-68, divides the original sources into general histories (eg. *Tabaqāt*), regional histories (eg. *Tārīkh-i-Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh*), *Faḍā'il* (eg. *Tārīkh-i-Firūzshāhī* of 'Alā'ī), didactic (eg. *Tārīkh-i-Firūzshāhī* of Baranī), and artistic (eg. *Futūh al-Salāṭīn*).
2. K.A. Nizāmī, *State and Culture in Medieval India*, Delhi, 1985, p. 3, is very critical of the British historiography of this period and terms it "an instrument for the implementation of the imperialistic formula".
3. For the importance of determining paradigms in historical analysis see David Boucher, *Texts in Context*, Dordrecht, 1985, p. 155 ff. Page 159 refers to a pre-paradigm stage in which a number of theories compete for ascendancy. This paper views the first half century of the period under study to constitute this stage. The century following this phase is viewed as the period when the paradigm is dominant with intermittent periods of crisis and anomaly. The next century is the period when the paradigm breaks down.
4. Most analysts have divided the period into Five dynasties. If the strict criterion of descent is applied (i.e. if we only consider those *sultāns* to form a dynasty who are related as father and son or grandfather and grandson) then we must count at least nine dynasties: Aybak and son, Ilutmish and his progeny, Balban and his grandson, Firūz Khaljī, 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī and his family, Tughluq Shāh and Muḥammad bin Tughluq, Firūz Shāh bin Rajab and his children etc., Khidr Khān's dynasty and the Lodhis even if we ignore such pretenders as Khusraw Shāh and others who are not acknowledged as *sultāns* by the historians. Add to this the fact that nine long ruling *sultāns* account for 245 out of 320 years

from 1206 to 1526, nine other *sultāns* who ruled for four years or more shared 65 years and 10 years were shared between 20 *sultāns* (and this does not include a five month period between Firūz Khaljī's murder and 'Alā al-Dīn's accession). Thus a dynasty would (and does) on the average consists of a founder and a successor, who shared a little over 30 years of rule, and some successors who shared a fraction of a year between them, which is absurd.

5. Richard N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia*, New York, 1975, p. 215, believes that "As with the crusaders sincere religious motives were mixed with a desire for plunder and adventure, and stories and legends abound about the holy war and its followers on the frontiers of Islam".
6. Till the time of Maḥmūd of Ghaznah the semi-independent rulers under the *khilāfat* and the independent rulers who acknowledged the *khilāfat* used the title of *amīr*. Yousaf Husain, *Indo-Muslim Polity (The Turko-Afghan Period)* Simla, 1971, pp. 25-29, is of the view that the title of *sultān* was first conferred on Maḥmūd by the *Khalīfah* Qādir. Before this the *amīr* of Baghdad had wished to have *sultān al-mua'zzam* as his title but he was informed that this title was reserved for the *Khalīfah* himself. Later we know that the Ghūrīs used this title as well as that of *sultān al-a'zam*.
7. See Muḥammad Azīz Aḥmad, *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi*, Lahore, 1949. The Muslims, however, made the Sultanate into one of their institutions by giving it recognition by the *Khalīfah* and assigning Islamic functions to it. I.H. Qureshi (*The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, Lahore, 1942, pp. 24-38) believes that the recognition of a *sultān* by the *Khalīfah* was an essential requirement.
8. Minhāj al-Sirāj, (*Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, tr. Maj. Raverty, English, Lahore, 1977, p. 788, n.2), tells us that *amīr-i-dād* and *dād-bāk* are synonymous being the Persian and Turkish forms of reference to the same office. We may further identify the term *bak* with *beg* / *bey* of the Ottomans. This is but one example of the interchangeable use of Persian and Turkish language and culture in the Sultanate of Delhi.
9. The question of Aybak's manumission is not relevant for us here.
10. It is probable that like other conquerors the Ghūrīs had not clearly worked out how their conquests would be controlled. If so, it is remarkable that the Ghūrīd state did not recede as swiftly as it appeared. This is probably because the *nā'ibs* of the Ghūrīs displayed tenacity and evolved a viable system in due course. Consequently they struck roots in the soil which accounts for the continuity of Muslim rule.
11. In fact given the circumstances, it is amazing that only three of Ghūrī's *nā'ibs* (Yaldīz, Aybak, and Qubāchah) vied for control and many smaller *sultāns* did not emerge. It was perhaps the nature of control that the Ghūrīd state bequeathed to its *nā'ibs* (along with local conditions and the qualities of leadership of these individuals) that gave the Delhi Sultanate its form.
12. The offices in times of ambiguity (as at the death of a *sultān* who leaves behind neither heir nor policy of inheritance) do not really express the status of the person who is defacto in charge. The Sultanate based its practices on some of these situations which arose within it. The power and influence wielded by a person was not really confined (either in theory or in practice) to the office he held. Thus M.A. Makhdomēe ("Organization of Central Government Under the Turkish Sultans of Delhi", *JIH.*, vol. XIV, 1935, pp. 96-114, p. 96) reminds us that "very often a person held more than one office at the same time, Qiḥām al-Dīn, Kayqubād's *dabīr* was also his *nā'ib-i-wakil-i-dar*."

13. Frye, *op. cit.*, p. 218, points out that the Ghaznavid tradition prior to Sabuktigin was not clear about succession. Alptigin's son Abū Ishāq was succeeded by numerous other generals before the Turk army replaced the last of them by Sabuktigin. Also Sabuktigin was first succeeded by Ismā'īl, a son of his from the daughter of Alptigin, whom Mahmūd deposed. We may, therefore, deduce that this was more or less a general practice among the Turks and not an aberration.
14. The question whether Ārām Shāh was in fact Aybak's son is not relevant here because we are only concerned with the fact that his claim was based on the hereditary principle.
15. R.P. Khosla (*Mughal Kingship and Nobility*, Allahabad, 1934, p. 4) contends (with regard to *sultāns*), not quite accurately, "Their chief supporters were the Pathan soldiers ... The new king was virtually elected by the army, against whose favorite none had any chance ..."
16. There is a similarity between al-Mawardi's views and the practice during the Sultanate. The criterion for selection of an *imām* in particular is very similar. Modern analysts, however, have varying opinions. S.R. Sharma ("The nature of State in Medieval India", *Islamic Culture*, No. 27 (April 1953), pp. 86-97) tries to prove that there was no recognizable concept of state because out of 32 rulers of Delhi only 15 died naturally and only two "dynastic" changes took place without bloodshed. The views expressed by A.C. Bannerjee ("Procedure of Succession in the Sultanate of Delhi", *JIH.*, No. 15, 1936, pp. 196-200) are more or less identical with those of Sharma. K.S. Lal ("Procedure for Succession in the Sultanate of Delhi", *JIH.*, vol. XXX, parts 1-3, Nos. 88-90, (part 2), pp. 146-54) believes that there was a definite procedure: The first claimant was a son, failing one son another, till all possibilities were exhausted. At this stage a "dynastic" change would occur. He believes that a second procedure was nomination by the ruling *sultān*. This seems a reasonable construction, however, we contend that this was not a fixed pattern for the entire period.
17. Minhāj, *op. cit.*, pp. 790-6. The Kipchāk were fairly prominent in the governments of Aybak and Iltutmish as were the Khwājah Tāsh and Qarā Khitā'i. Apart from the Turks, Tajiks and Ghūrīs were among Iltutmish's *amīrs* and are mentioned in the political struggle during the deposition of Rukn al-Dīn Firūz and the accession of Rāḍiyah (p. 750). Apart from Rayhān, who gained importance later, Malik Hindū Khān was probably a local convert who was referred to as *mihtar-i-mubārīk al-khazā'in*. The post held by this officer was one for which generally locals were employed during this era. It is believed that his earlier occupation was as the keeper of the royal leopards (p. 744ff).
18. It does not seem possible to agree whole heartedly with A.B.M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim rule in India*, Lahore, 1945, p. 340, that the Turk was so familiar as to be seen as a distant kinsman to the Rajput. No doubt the Turk was familiar and may even have been a distant kinsman to the Rājput but initially it is unlikely that either of them appreciated the kinship very much.
19. S.B.P. Nigam (*Nobility Under the Sultans of Delhi, AD, 1200-1398*, Delhi, 1968, p. 2) is rightly of the opinion that the *umarā'* were even more important as an institution than the *sultān*. First because the *sultān* was not hereditary and secondly because he had no claim to royalty beyond that of any of the *umarā'*, as such each of the *umarā'* was himself a potential *sultān*. To Nigam's observation we may add that to term the *umarā'* as a "nobility" does not seem appropriate since they were not hereditary either and had attained the status on the basis of their individual initiative or merit. Second that those *sultāns* who rose from amongst the *umarā'*, by and large, did not elevate themselves much above their

- erstwhile equals (except Balban) because they had already been approved as leaders by their equals. The distinction between the *sultān* and his *umarā'* was probably enhanced more by the efforts of those *sultāns* who had attained the status on the basis of hereditary claim.
20. Baranī is critical of both the locals and the neo-Muslims or Mongols. While Baranī's criticism may be questioned, the role of the Mongols in causing the Turks to make India their home and defending it with tenacity seems undeniable as pointed out by Habibullah, *op. cit.*, p. 341.
21. It must be borne in mind that in this way the "Turkish dominion thus embraced a very small part of northern India", Habibullah (*op. cit.*, p. 341) and that "Within this restricted area, the conquests took nearly a whole century to consolidate". These remarks greatly reduce the effect of his earlier statement (p. 336) that the Turks overran all of northern India in 15 years.
22. A.B. Pandey (*The First Afghan Empire in India, 1451-1526*, Calcutta, 1956, p. 12) believes that because the people were tired of the internecine Rajput struggle, the invaders met with little popular opposition.
23. A.C. Bannerjee ("Some Important Officers of the Sultanate of Delhi", *Indian Culture*, No. 5, pp. 73-84) gives a list of about sixty different designations for the *umarā'*.
24. The opinion of the people was often voiced by the *kotwāl*. Qureshi (*The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, Lahore, 1942, p. 140) believes that the term *kotwāl* is from the Hindi words: *kot* = fort and *pal* = guard or look after. Thus the designation would be "guardian of the fort". However, we know that he voiced public opinion (at the time of Rāḍiyah's accession and for the *aqīdārs* of the Doab, in Balban's court).
25. Ibn Hasan (*Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, London, 1936, p. 44) says that the Sultanate was threatened by invaders from the north, the ruling class itself and local powers. The guardians of the north were best equipped to deal with all the three dangers having faced them all as *amīrs*.
26. Almost invariably each *sultān* confirmed previous appointments or made fresh ones. This may be seen as an index of changes in the power base.
27. Ibn Hasan (*op. cit.*, p. 44f.) believes them to be feudal. Frye (*op. cit.*, p. 218) uses the term fief for their holdings but acknowledges that this is an inexact term since the granting of rights to collect taxes cannot be equated with the European feudal system from which the terminology has been derived.
28. The nature of control was not homogeneous. A.C. Bannerjee, "Kingship and Nobility in the 13th century", *IHQ.*, No. 11, 1935, pp. 223-40, p. 239.
29. For details see Khurram Qadūr, "Amīran-i-Chihalgān of Northern India", *Journal of Central Asia*, vol. IV, No. 2, Dec. 1981, pp. 59-146.
30. Francois Bernier (*Travels in the Mogul Empire*, Oxford, 1914, p. 5) noted (as late as) three centuries after the culmination of the period under study that "titles are not associated with domains because *umarā'* do not own territories as such". Ibn Hasan (*op. cit.*, pp. 44-9) believes that the period may be divided in three phases or experiments: the first in which parts of the Sultanate were divided among the *amīrs*, the second in which "military fiefs" were created which were responsible to the central government, and the third in which organization was tried on tribal lines.
31. Nasir al-Dīn Mahmūd was the archetype of the first category, 'Alā al-Dīn Khaljī of the second and Kayqubād of the third. Aybak fell into the third category for a time and suffered the consequences at Ghaznah. Iltutmish and Ghiyāth al-Dīn successfully integrated traits of the first two categories while Muḥammad

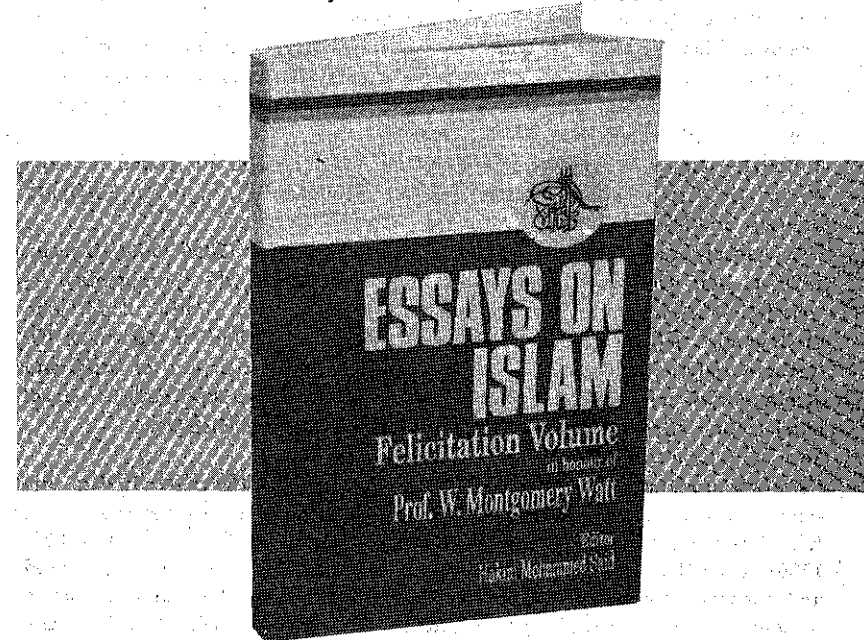
- bin Tughluq failed in his attempt to do so. Firuz Shāh Tughluq managed to juggle all the three patterns of behavior for some time while Qutb al-Dīn Mubārak Khalji failed to do so. Rāḍiyah perhaps carried pragmatism too far. Most of the other *sultāns* probably belonged to the third category.
32. For a character analysis of Firuz see Khurram Qadur, "Firoz Shāh (Tughluq), A Personality Study", *Journal of Central Asia*, Dec. 1986.
 33. This power of the 'ulamā' was a unique feature of the Sultanate. Frye (*op. cit.*, p. 215) points out that till the 9th century the 'ulamā' were not an organized force and individuals wielded power and position on the basis of personal piety. By the 11th century, however, they had become an organised power. The evolution of the position of the 'ulamā' within the Delhi Sultanate followed a more or less similar pattern as the evolution within the *Khilāfat* in this respect.
 34. Shāms Sirāj 'Afīf (*Tārīkh-i-Firūzshāhī*, tr. M. Fida Ali Talib, Urdu, Karachi, 1965, p. 260) states that the pressure from the 'ulamā' caused Firuz Shāh Tughluq to abolish non-Islamic taxes.
 35. The concept of having *ghulāms* was not new to South Asia. Lillanji Gopal (*The Economic life of Northern India, c. AD., 700-1200*, Delhi, 1965, p. 71ff) believes that it was a growing practice, that there was a "slave" trade in which *ghulāms* were exported, on p. 80 he adds that the Muslim influence caused an improvement in the conditions of these "slaves" in India. K.S. Lal (*Early Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 62 says,) "Mongols too used to sell their captives as slaves". Dharam Pal ("The Influence of the Slaves in the Muslim Administration of India", *Islamic Culture*, 1944, No. 18, pp. 407-17) aptly remarks that "Paradoxical as it may appear, the slave system enshrined the principle of equality".
 36. *Bandah* and *ghulam* are both terms which have been used metaphorically at times. Thus Firuz Shāh bin Rajab calls himself the *ghulam* of Muhammad bin Tughluq in the *Futūhāt-i-Firūzshāhī*, tr. and ed. S. A. Rashid, *Muslim University Journal*, (1954), p. 1.
 37. These titles denote status not office.
 38. A.C. Bannerjee ("A note on the Provincial Government under the Sultans of Delhi" *India Culture*, No. 5, (1938-9), pp. 255-60) believes that there was no well defined system but it was in the process of evolution.
 39. For a detailed description of the conflict between Muhammad Shāh and the *Bandagān-i-Firūzshāhī* see Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
 40. *Ulugh Khān* may also be the equivalent of *khān al-a'zām*. For an analysis of these titles see Dr. A.H. Dani, "Bibliography of Muslim inscription of Bengal (down to AD 1538)", *Appendix to the Journal of Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, vol. II, 1957, pp. 1-147, p. 96, and chart facing p. 108.
 41. Perhaps this is what is referred to by A. C. Bannerjee ("The Influence of Islamic Traditions on the Sultanate of Delhi", *JIH*, vol. XVI, 1937, pt. 2, pp. 151-68, p. 153) when he says that "No Sultan of Delhi was prepared to initiate a politico-religious revolution or divorce religion from secular affairs".
 42. For one definition of the distinction between *aqtā'*, *sūbah* and *wilāyat* see W.H. Moreland, "Feudalism (?) in the Moslem Kingdom of Delhi", *JIH*, No. 7, 1928.
 43. Ibn Hasan (*op. cit.*, p. 117f) divides the *wizārat* into three stages: the first till the rise of Balban in which it "enjoyed full civil and military powers and wielded considerable influence". In this phase we feel that conventions permitted considerable freedom of activity to all members of the ruling class. The second in which the *wazirs* were thrown into the background by Balban and 'Alā al-Dīn. This is considered to be a period of centralizing tendencies. The third

- period is one in which the status of the *wazir* was raised but his lost powers were not restored. More or less the same is true for the *umarā'*. We may recall that the *Athār-al-Wuzarā'*, (fol. 159b and 160a) does not believe that the Ghūrīs left a tradition of *wizārat*.
44. For the definition and explanation of these terms refer to the discipline of Comparative Politics.
 45. For a detailed analysis see Frye, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
 46. The post of *nā'ib al-mulk* seems to have been created as a means of overcoming the chaos thereby creating what may seem a "constitutional" innovation which was not entirely successful though it was employed intermittently. Perhaps it was over this issue that the *sultān's* control was weakest. The 'umarā' preferred, in the ultimate analysis, to replace the *sultān* by the person most competent than to restrict the competent person to the position of *nā'ib* while keeping the ineffective figurehead as *sultān*.
 47. Minhāj (*op. cit.*, p. 689ff) gives no reason for the rebellions in this period although he has given reasons for the rebellions in the reigns of Rukn al-Dīn, Rāḍiyah, Bahram and 'Alā al-Dīn Mas'ūd.
 48. K.M. Ashraf (*Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan (1200-1500)*, Karachi, 1978, p. 87f) uses five terms of this kind: *ahl-i-qalam* (the intelligentsia — writers), *ahl-i-taygh* (warriors), *ahl-i-dawlat* (the rich), *ahl-i-sa'adat* (the intelligentsia — theologians) and *ahl-i-murād* (the people of pleasure). He further analyses titles and contends that (p. 83ff) that *qiwām al-mulk* and *niẓām al-mulk* denote administrative functions. He feels (p. 103) that the *umarā'* divided their time between *razm* and *bazm* i.e., war and pleasure.
 49. Minhāj, *op. cit.*, p. 635.
 50. K.S. Lal, *Early Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 150. According to this source the revenue records were kept in Indian languages except at the center. A.L. Sirvastava ("Hindu-Muslim Relations during the Sultanate Period (1206-1526)", *JIH*, No. 41, 1963, pp. 579-93) believes that the Hindus were suppressed and consequently could not achieve intellectual fame. This does not seem reasonable since al-Biruni tells us that in his time Hindu science had already retired to Banaras and Kashmir. The Hindu dread of foreign influence extended to the repatriation of prisoners of war who had to undergo several purifications before they were accepted. See K.S. Lal "Changing Pattern of Society", *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, vol. 4, p. 71. Despite these factors the Hindus were neither too suppressed nor too shy to demonstrate their unity and strength in protests against the *jizyah* imposed by Firuz Shāh Tughluq, see 'Afīf, *op. cit.*, p. 260f.
 51. Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, pp. 229, 239f and 242.
 52. S. Abid Hussain (*The National Culture of India*, London, 1961, p. 86) believes that the Sultanate could not wield the process of Indianization into a form of national unity. This appears to be a rather anachronistic accusation since even in the home of the concept of nationalism (where the conditions obtained for its emergence) the age of nationalism was to arrive some centuries later.
 53. Ibn Hasan (*op. cit.*, p. 44) believes that the *sultāns* did not interfere in the affairs of their subjects.
 54. S. Nurul Hassan, "The Problem 'Nationalities in Medieval India", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, No. 7, 1944, p. 73.
 55. Hasan Nizami, *Tāj al-Ma'athir*, tr. S. Hasan Askari, English, *PUJ.*, 1963, pp. 78f.
 56. 'Ayn ul-Mulk Multānī, *Inshā'i-Mahrū*, ed. Sh. Abdur Rashid, Lahore, 1965, *passim*, see especially the appointment letter of Mahrū.
 57. Baranī, *op. cit.*, p. 303f.

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