59. See SII 17.530 for a gift by the children (makhal) of a penntari of the Kila-nativakal velam; SII 17.480 for a gift by a man for his elder sister, who is identified as the daughter of a penntari of the Pertiya velam; and ARE 63 and 64 of 1928 for a joint gift by a penntari and her daughter, both residents of the Sivapadasekhara terinta tirumananatatar velam.

60. See SII 26.669 for a kaikkolar whose mother was a penntari in the Ircacakesar velam; and SII 23.356 for a kaikkolar making gifts for various women in the Kotanta velam. The editors have assumed in the latter case that the women were relatives of the donor, though the inscription does not indicate what relation the donor may have had to the women of the velam.

61. We have one tenth-century record of a kaikkolar in the velam of Perunamativakal Mateyvar, SII 4.536; and four twelfth-century records, SII 5.697; SII 5.698; SII 23.279; and SII 23.281.

62. See ARE 69 and 72 of 1926, where the village of Kulottunkacolanalu is designated as virabhoga for kaikkolars from Merka-natu who were of lesser (cirudanam) rank and served in the palace at Gangaskondacholapuram.

63. P. Sundaram has also suggested that velams were training establishments for Chola military personnel. "Chola and Other Armies—Organization," 191.

64. This is in fact the implication of the iracaracolamalula, which speaks of generations of women from different lands living by the order of the king.

Turkish Slaves on Islam's Indian Frontier

PETER JACKSON

In his Ta'rkh-i Firuz Shahi, written in 1357, the Delhi historian Ziya al-Din Barani scathingly contrasts men of illustrious birth with those "bought for money." He was referring to amirs (commanders) who had been purchased as slaves, though for him they were just one category of the low-born among many. Elsewhere in this work—as in the Fatawa-yi Jahandari, a "Mirror for Princes" in the Persian tradition, which he produced a few years later—he leaves the reader in no doubt that he sees high birth as a prerequisite for office. Yet the Turkish military slave (Arabic ghulam, mamluk; Persian banda) had a long and venerable history in the Muslim world: when the Delhi Sultanate came into existence in c. 1210—11, such troops had already been active on Islam's Indian frontier for almost three hundred years. In an article published some years ago, I examined the role of Turkish slave-amirs in the tangled politics of the mid-thirteenth-century Delhi Sultanate; here I shall confine my attention to the early history of Turkish slaves in India down to the first decades of the sultanate's history.

Historical Background

The ninth-century `Abbasid caliphs had first recruited Turks from Central Asia as an elite guard corps in their successive capitals, Baghdad and Samarra. To what extent these were technically slaves has been questioned, and it has been proposed that the men who appear in the sources are often free in status and belong more to the tradition of the comitatus, the war-band. Whatever the individual case, some were certainly ghulams, and the use of slave-soldiers became increasingly widespread. As the `Abbasid empire disintegrated and real power passed into the hands of hereditary
provincial governors, they in turn buttressed their illegitimate rule by recruiting Turkish slave-contingents of their own. A few of these upstarts were themselves ghulams. Both Alptegin, who carved out a quasi-independent principality at Ghazni around 962, and Sebuktegin, the effective founder of the Yaminid or Ghaznavid dynasty (977–1186), which would carry Muslim arms deep into the Panjab, were Turkish slave-officers (see map 1).

The Ghaznavids’ nemesis, the Shansabanid or Ghurid dynasty (early twelfth century to 1215–16), also maintained Turkish slaves by the beginning of the reign of Ghiyas al-Din Muhammad b. Sam (1163–1203). His brother and successor, Mu’izz al-Din Muhammad (d. 1206), is said to have been especially keen to acquire them. As the subjugation of the Jamuna-Ganges doab gathered pace in the mid-1190s, he largely entrusted his new conquests to his slave-officers, rather than to Ghuris, Tajiks, or other Turks of free status. It was one of these, Qub al-Din Aybak (d. 1210), who was to lay the foundations of an independent Muslim state in India, and Aybak’s own ghulam, Shams al-Din Ilutmish (d. 1236), who would be the real architect of the Delhi Sultanate.

Functions

By the eleventh century, then, Turkish slave-regiments formed the nucleus of most armies in the eastern Islamic world. Even Turkish dynasties whose power was initially based on a mass nomadic following, like the Qarakhanids (tenth–early thirteenth centuries) in Transoxiana and Turkestan and the Seljuks (1040–1194) in Iran and the Near East, employed them. Ghulam officers might be favored as an instrument of despotism—as a highly disciplined counterweight to an indigenous aristocracy or to tribal leaders for whom a monarch was simply primus inter pares. In addition to holding high rank in the military, such as that of military chamberlain (hajib, amir-hajib), favored Turkish ghulams filled ceremonial positions at court. Under the Ghaznavids and the early Delhi sultans, we find them serving as cupbearer (taht-dar), holder of the royal parasol (char-dar), intendant of the royal stable (amir-i akhur), and so on. It is true that the Turkish general Ahmad Inaltegin is described as treasurer (khazin) to Mahmud of Ghazni. This office was usually entrusted to members of the Persian bureaucratic class, but from a hint by the Ghaznavid historian Bayhaqi that Mahmud was possibly Ahmad Inaltegin’s father, there is reason to doubt that he was a first-generation ghulam. Ahmad’s mother may have been the child of a Turkish slave, or he himself may have been a free-status Turkish immigrant.

The impulse to purchase Turkish ghulams in significant numbers was sometimes clearly a matter of military exigency. The Ghurids, whose own subjects were a people of the uplands (jibal) accustomed to infantry combat, presumably bought Turks in order to develop a strong cavalry arm, and in particular to amass a corps of mounted archers. There is no solid evidence regarding the training of Ghaznavid ghulams, or indeed of any other slave-troops outside the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, and such meager information as the Delhi historian Juzfani (c. 1260) supplies about the training of the sultanate’s Turkish slave-commanders amounts to no more than vague allusions to archery (nar-andazi) and horsemanship (sawari). Yet we should note, at this juncture, that the ghulams’ value to their employers did not reside in the celebrated skills of the light-cavalry archer. The tradition of fighting as heavy cavalry also existed in certain regions of the steppes, and Turkish slave-troops were trained to fight in this manner, with weapons like the mace (gurz), rather than as lightly armed mounted bowmen. It is generally accepted that under the Abbaysia relatively small numbers of these heavily armed and highly skilled warriors had supplanted the larger infantry armies of an earlier era. Doubtless their value in the Indian subcontinent lay in the ability of such a small but superb force to tilt the fortunes of an engagement.

Reliable numbers are elusive. Juzfani—a late source in this respect—tells us that Mahmud of Ghazni’s court was guarded by four thousand Turkish slave-youths, armed with maces; the figure seems to have been derived from the description by Bayhaqi of a caliphal embassy in 1031–32. The figure of ten thousand actually cited on the authority of a caliphal envoy to Mahmud, and found elsewhere, may well reflect, rather, the total number of Turkish ghulams in the army. We are given no indication of how many Turkish ghulams were in the service of the later Ghurids at any time or what numbers were maintained by the early sultans of Delhi.

Information as to the equipment and attire of these slave-guards is also non-existent after the Ghaznavid era, when Bayhaqi furnishes detailed descriptions of the ceremonial apparel of the Turkish ghulams, with their rich robes, jeweled belts and sashes, and weapons decorated with gold and silver. The remains of mural paintings found in the audience hall of the Ghaznavid palace at Lashkar-i Bazar are strikingly evocative of Bayhaqi’s data. They depict forty-four figures, each clad in a sumptuously decorated kaftan and carrying on the left shoulder the haft of what is probably a mace. The facings, and the fact that various items, including a wallet, are suspended from the belt, are reminiscent of Central Asia; and although the heads are almost totally obscured, the face of a beardless adolescent with evidently Central Asian features has survived in an adjacent room. It is generally assumed, therefore, that the subjects of these paintings are the Ghaznavid sultan’s Turkish guards. It would doubtless be hazardous, however, to
assume that the military slaves of, for example, the early Delhi Sultanate presented much the same appearance.

Provenance

The tribal background of Turkish slave-soldiers varied considerably. One circumstance that helps to cloud the matter of origin is the tendency of Muslim writers to lump together the non-Muslim peoples of the northern and eastern regions under the general designation of “Turks.” Thus several Arabic and Persian geographical works class the Hungarians (Major), Slavs (Saqaliiba), and Greeks (Rum) as Turks. The Arabic narrative sources that furnish us with data about the Seljukid and Ayyubid empires or, later, the Mamluk state distinguish the Slavs, for instance, from the Turks when referring to the background of slaves. But this is not the case with the smaller corpus of Persian authors on whom we are dependent for information about the eastern Islamic world, and for whom the ranks of the Turkish peoples are often swollen also by Tibetans or nomadic peoples of Mongolian (“Tatar”) type from eastern Asia.22 Notable among this last category were the Khitan, a people who had ruled over part of northern China as the Liao dynasty (907–1125), and the Qara-Khitans, refugees from the defunct Khitan regime who had migrated westward: they founded an empire that dominated Central Asia (1128–1218), including Muslim states such as Khwarazm and the fragmented Qarakhanid polity, until it collapsed under pressure from the advancing Mongols and the steppe peoples they had dislodged.

The Ghaznavid slave-contingents had included men from the Qarlulq (from whom, possibly, the Qarakhanids themselves had sprung),23 Yaghma, Turkshi, and Chigil tribes, all of whom nomadized in the region of the Issik Kul and more or less acknowledged the authority of the Qarakhanid sovereigns; from the Qarakhanid towns of Kashghar and Barskan (this last town the birthplace of Sebuktegin); and from Khotan, the center of a Buddhist kingdom which in the early eleventh century had only recently been reduced by the Qarakhanids. It should be noted, of course, that at this date by no means all the Qarakhanids’ subjects, whether nomads or town-dwellers, would have been Muslims. Slaves are also mentioned from among the Kimek, the Qayi, and the Qirghiz, whose lands lay at a greater distance to the east, toward Mongolia, and who at this stage were undoubtedly pagans.24 In addition, control of Khwarazm and the Dihistan region gave the Ghaznavid sultans, and subsequently the Seljuks, access to the nomadic peoples of the Pontic and Caspian steppes, who were largely untouched by Islam until the Mongol era. From the mid-eleventh century, these were the grazing grounds of the confederacy known to the Muslims as the Qipchaq, to the Byzantines as the Cumans, and to the Rus as the Polovtsy.27

The Pontic and Caspian steppes would attain a greater prominence as a source of Turkish ghulans in the first half of the thirteenth century. The Delhi historian Juzjani, compiling his Tabaqat-i Nasiri in c. 1260, devotes the penultimate tabaqat to biographies of twenty-five Shamsis, i.e., slave-amirs of the first: Delhi sultan, Itutmish; the list is by no means exhaustive and the criteria used by Juzjani in his selection are unclear, though his own patron, the future sultan Ghiyas al-Din Balban (1266–86), is naturally accorded the longest biography. In some cases tribal origins are not given. Three, however, are described as Rumis (i.e., Greeks or possibly Slavs or Bulgars who had arrived from the Byzantine territories).28 Two came from the Qara-Khitan;29 so also, in all probability, did two others, described as “Khitais.”30 In any event, rather than being themselves ethnically Khitan, they may simply have belonged to peoples who were subject to the Qara-Khitans empire. Six other slaves are said to have originated from the Qipchaq confederacy,31 and three more, including Balban, belonged to Itutmish’s own tribe, the Oiberli, a subgroup of the Qipchaq (or possibly of the Qangli, a closely related people who were their eastern neighbors and whose pasturelands extended from the Ural River to the Aral Sea).32

Such a high proportion of the Shamsi slaves whose origins are specified came from the Pontic and Caspian steppes because of the upheavals caused by the Mongol campaigns in these regions in 1222–23 and 1236–39.33 In 1253 the Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck, on his way through the Crimea, would hear an eyewitness describe the pitiful condition of the Qipchaq (“Cumans”) who, in terror of the Mongols, had crowded into the peninsula, the living eating the dying in desperation.34 Many of the fugitives surely ended up as slaves in Anatolia, as did Baybars, the future Mamluk sultan of Egypt (1260–77) and himself (like Itutmish and Balban) an Oiberli, who was treacherously seized by a local chieftain and bundled off to the market at Sivas.35 A glut in the supply of Qipchaq slaves by the 1240s, which certainly fed the ambitions of the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt and enabled him to build up a corps of mamluks,36 is just one aspect of the strikingly widespread and prolonged diaspora unleashed by the Mongol conquests. That diaspora, which in part resulted from the Mongols’ deliberate dispersal of subject Turkish peoples across the breadth of their empire,37 also included the migration of numerous Muslim nobles, scholars, and soldiers from Central Asia into India during the 1220s and 1230s; and the westward migration of Qipchaq/Cumans, into Hungary and the Balkans (1239–41), and of Khwarazmians (largely former Qipchaq auxiliaries of the Khwarazm-Shah),
first into Persia and thence (from c. 1231) into Mesopotamia and (in 1244) Syria.  

Many Turkish slaves who reached India in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, prior to the advent of the Mongols, would have been prisoners captured in the frequent conflicts that involved the Qara-Khitans. Just as Mahbud of Ghazni had repeatedly clashed with the Qarakhanids, so the Ghurid sultans Ghiyath al-Din and Mu'izz al-Din engaged in a bitter struggle with the Khwarazm-Shahs around the turn of the twelfth century, and on occasion the Qara-Khitans came to the aid of their client. In 1198 and 1205 the Ghurid ruler of Bamiyan wrested Balkh and Tirmiz respectively from their Qara-Khitan garrisons, and in 1204 Mu'izz al-Din's attempt to invade Khwarazm itself suffered a decisive check at the hands of the Qara-Khitans and their subordinates near Andkhud (now Andkhoi). After the Khwarazm-Shah Muhammad b. Tekish repudiated the suzerainty of the Qara-Khitans in 1208, "Khita'is" would have been taken prisoner in the battles that brought him control over Transoxiana and other regions to the east.  

Turkish slaves also reached the Ghurids and their successors, the Delhi sultans, through a flourishing commercial traffic. In the 1330s the Moroccan visitor Ibn Battuta heard that Ilutmish had sent agents to Transoxiana to buy slaves on his behalf; and slave merchants may have followed the sultan as he moved around northern India on campaign, since he bought one future amir while investing Mandor, in Rajasthan, in 1227. It was not unknown for tribal nomads to sell their own kin into slavery. Juzjani claims that Ilutmish's brothers, from jealousy of his beauty and his noble qualities, had sold him to a slave merchant, which enables the historian to liken him to the Biblical patriarch Joseph (the Qur'anic Yusuf: sura 12:7–20). The same author describes one of Ilutmish's amirs as having been enslaved "through the perversity of kindness." He heard rumors that two others were of Muslim parentage and had therefore been enslaved unlawfully. During the reduction of the western steppelands, the Mongols would themselves take part in the slave trade, selling off those of their captives who were surplus to their requirements, like Balban's younger brother.  

It is worth bearing in mind that Turkish slave-soldiers did not necessarily arrive in India directly from the pagan steppe. Where we are told something of the early career of a slave-amir, we may find that he had spent severa years elsewhere in the Muslim world before being sold again and brought to the subcontinent. Ilutmish passed some years in Bukhara, where his first owner was a kinsman of the Sadr-i Jahan, the effective ruler of the city; and Balban's first owner was based in Baghdad (though Ibn Battuta would later hear that Balban too had been purchased in Bukhara). Clearly, such an interval might furnish the opportunity to learn Arabic, since for a time Aybak was the property of a prominent imam in the Khurasanian city of Nishapur, who appears to have taught him to read the Qur'an. In such cases it is conceivable that a ghulam had imbibed not merely the rudiments of Islam but also something of the politics and statecraft of the Islamic heartlands; but this can only be a matter for conjecture.  

A word needs to be said here about manumission, a subject to which our sources allude very rarely. Balban is one of the few Turkish slave-officers in the early Delhi Sultanate to be described as a freedman. Juzjani tells us that Aybak had manumitted Ilutmish on the express orders of Sultan Mu'izz al-Din. At this time, surprisingly, Aybak himself was still of unfree status, before he was declared an amir and his Turkish slave-officers were said to have been servile. Aybak's slave-officers are said to have asked the late monarch's nephew and eventual successor, Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud, for deeds of enfranchisement (khutum-i itiq). In the 1330s Ibn Battuta picked up a tale that the jurists had required Ilutmish to furnish proof of his manumission before acknowledging him as their ruler.  

We should notice also that the death of the master did not automatically confer freedom, as it evidently did in the Deccan at a later date (see Eaton, this volume). In the Ghaznavid empire the slaves of a dead slave-commander passed to the sultan. If Juzjani's story about Aybak and his colleagues were not enough to demonstrate that this situation still obtained in the early thirteenth century, his description of them as now the slaves (bandagan) of Sultan 'Ali al-Din Muhammad (who in 1206 briefly succeeded Mu'izz al-Din in Ghur before being ousted in favor of Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud) would confirm it. In the same way, Juzjani shows us that Ilutmish acquired the ghulams of masters who had died: the fact that in each case the amir in question is said to have been purchased from his master's heirs makes it clear that he had not been freed. Another of Ilutmish's Turkish officers had formerly belonged to Mu'izz al-Din himself, though regrettably Juzjani fails to tell us whether he passed to Ilutmish through purchase.  

The Perceived Qualities of the Turk  

Slave status, then, for Turks, was no barrier to favor, promotion, or eventual rulership; it was, rather, a major pathway to advancement. The Turkish peoples were highly regarded within the Muslim world for their courage, stamina, and military skill, and Turkish ghulams further acquired a reputation for steadfastness and orthodoxy in Islam. Within a very short time after the Seljuk conquest of Baghdad, we find Ibn Hassul (d. 1058) singing the praises of both Turkish tribesman and Turkish slave-soldier for his new masters. Admittedly, the mainly Persian members of the bureaucratic (dabir) class produced our literary sources sometimes impute to the
Turkish military a lack of sophistication. Bayhaqi describes the two ghulam generals, Asigtigin and Eryurq, for all their military prowess, as inexperienced and naively reliant on advice on a group of worthless individuals they had gathered around them. Almost two centuries later, when one of Iltutmish’s ghulam officers was accused of financial improprieties, the sultan’s wazir advised him to entrust the investigation to a Tajik rather than a Turk, on the grounds not of possible bias but of Turkish “brashness” (tahawwur). But even this lack of finesse might be turned to good account, as when a veteran slave-commander was brought in to dissuade the Ghaznavid sultan Mas’ud (1031–40) from a particularly rash enterprise and succeeded by dint of his plain speaking where others had failed.

One of the principal virtues of the Turkish ghulam (as opposed to the free Turkish immigrant tribesman) was his detachment from family or territorial interest, so that his loyalty was (in theory, at least) to the master who had bought, trained, and—sometimes—manumitted him. This trait, rehearsed by a series of Muslim writers from al-Jahiz (d. 640) onward, assumes the character of a topos. In a famous passage cited by the Seljuk wazir Nizam al-Mulk, the loyalty and goodwill of the slave toward his master are contrasted with the aspirations of the son, who desires his father’s death.

Fakhr-i Mudabbir, in the Shajarat (or Bahir) al-ansab, which he dedicated to Qutb al-Din Aybak at Lahore (c. 1260), was harping on a well-worn theme (if in more highly figurative language than most of his predecessors) when he wrote that

there is no kind of infidel people which is brought over to Islam and does not look with longing at home, mother, father, and kindred. For a time they are bound to adopt Islam, but in most cases they apostatize and relapse into paganism. The exception is the Turkish race who, when they are brought over to Islam, fix their hearts in Islam so firmly that they no longer remember home or region or kinfolk. The Turk is like a pearl that lies in the ocean in the sea. For as long as it is in its habitat, it is devoid of power and worth; but when it emerges from the ocean and from the sea, it acquires value and becomes precious, decorating the crown of kings and adorning the neck and ears of bricke.

This was an idealized picture, of course. It is undeniable that the Turks who entered India, in sharp contrast with their non-Turkish predecessors from the Inner Asian steppes, strongly resisted indigenous cultural influences—whether Hindu or Buddhist—and retained a markedly separate identity which centered on Persian culture and, especially, on the religion of Islam. According to Juzjani, every one of the slaves of the Ghurid dynasty “spread the carpet of justice over the surface of the world and raised palaces of beneficence and liberality,” and it was through their rule that “the light of

the faith of Muhammad . . . had remained on the pages of the furthest limits of the empire of Hindustan.” Thirteenth-century Turkish slave-sultans and amirs are known to have done the Muslim cause signal service by building mosques in territory conquered from the Hindus. What has to be asked, even so, is how far the Turkish military slave—a first-generation Muslim—had really turned his back on the steppe, where the dominant religious traditions were shamanistic or perhaps Manichaean (or sometimes Nestorian Christian).

Two illustrations will suffice. Firstly, Sebuktegin seems to have designated his youngest son as his successor at Ghazni, to the exclusion of Mahmud, the eldest, and it has been proposed that this echoes the tradition, familiar to the Central Asian Turks and Mongols, of ultimogeniture in succession to the “hearthland.” And in the second place, the enthronement at Delhi in 1236 of a female sovereign (Iltutmish’s daughter Raziyya), an episode without precedent in the Islamic world outside the Yemen, might well hark back to the more prominent political role of royal women in steppe society, particularly among the Khitan and the Qara-Khitan peoples to whom some of the leading amirs involved traced their origins. It is possible that a thorough sifting of our sources could identify other pagan “hangovers,” though the research so far devoted to the subject has tended to focus on the nomadic Turco-Mongol societies in Inner Asia that had embraced Islam, as opposed to the détacé Turkish ghulams.

So too there were certainly striking instances of fidelity to a master: at Andkhud in 1294 the Ghurid sultan Mu’izz al-Din Muhammad was carried from the battlefield by one of his Turkish ghulams, after being abandoned by a significant number of his Ghurid and Tajik troops. But there had been occasions in the Ghaznavid period when Turkish slave-contingents deserted their master and went over to the enemy, notably prior to the battle of Dandanqan (1040) against the Turkish Seljuks. And just as in the ninth century a number of Abbasid caliphs had been killed in risings by their Turkish slave-troops, and as Turan Shah, the last Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, was assassinated by a group of mamluks in 1250, so acts of regicide were not unknown in the eastern Islamic territories. The most notorious instance of disloyalty was that of Mahmud of Ghazni’s slave Tughril (immortalized in the sources under epithets such as kafir-i ni’mat, “the ingrate”). Having after his master’s death joined the Seljuks, he subsequently returned to the Ghaznavid’s service, but was finally encouraged by his military successes to murder Sultan ‘Abd al-Rashid b. Mahmud in 1051 and usurp the throne. Service in the subcontinent offered an ever-present temptation to revolt against a distant sovereign, as the Turkish general Ahmad Inaltegin demonstrated when he rose against Sultan Mas’ud in 1033 (having, incidentally, sent
agents to Central Asia to recruit Turkish ghulams on his behalf and forward them to him in India. Following his disastrous defeat by the Qara-Khitans at Andkhud in 1204, Mu'izz al-Din had to suppress the insurrection of a Turkish slave-officer who had reacted to rumors of his discomfiture by seizing control of Multan. In the circumstances, the tribute paid to the faithfulness of Turkish slaves by successive authors begins to smack of literary affectation.

Turks in thirteenth-century India certainly did not enjoy an unalloyed reputation. Whatever their value as military assets, they were also believed, as a race, to exhibit less desirable characteristics and, with the growth of antipathy toward the Turk on the part of Arab and Persian populations, some of these traits, like an inordinate love of plunder, were aired in Muslim writings further west. The final years of the Ghurid dynasty furnish a couple of incidents which highlight the capacity of Turkish slave-troops to riot when their firm hand of their master was removed. Following the death of Sultan Mu'izz al-Din in 1206, the younger Turkish ghulams had wanted to plunder his baggage and had with difficulty been restrained by his waizir and by their own officers. Juzjani himself recalled how, when Mu'izz al-Din's nephew and successor, Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud, died at Firuzkoh in 1210-11, his Turkish slaves raised an “uproar [ghawgha]” and put to the sword a number of Ghurid princes, ostensibly in order to safeguard the throne for his infant son.

Similar turbulence would manifest itself in the Delhi Sultanate, first during the brief reign of Ilutmish's son and successor, Rukn al-Din Firuz Shah (1236), when the Turkish slaves massacred a body of Tajik bureaucrats at Tarain. Barani devotes a long passage of his history to the way in which Ilutmish's Turkish slave-commanders—the Shamsi khans and maliks, as he calls them—profited from the weakness of his progeny to destroy a host of immigrant Tajik nobles. This is undoubtedly simplistic; but there is nevertheless a substratum of truth beneath his analysis. As had been the case in ninth-century Samarra, the impulse underlying such violent outbreaks was usually fear of hostile action by the ruler and the instinct to maintain a position that was perceived as under threat. Thus it is no accident that Turkish slave-amirs deposed Sultan Raziya in 1240 because she relied inordinately (in their view) on a Black African (“Habshi,” or “Abyssinian”) slave-amir, Jamal al-Din Yaqui; or that they brought down her brother and successor, Sultan Mu'izz al-Din Bahram Shah b. Ilutmish, in 1242 because he was rumored to be planning the wholesale removal of the Turkish slave-elite; or that they set upon and killed their former ally, the waizir Muhadhdhab al-Din, in the following year because he sought to concentrate all affairs of state in his own hands at their expense. This is not to deny that other “excluded” elements—free Turkish grandees, Ghuri military leaders, or even Tajik bureaucrats—joined forces with them on each occasion.

Providence and Panegyric

The obscure origins of the Turkish slave-commanders, lying in the Dar al-Harb, often far beyond the horizons of their future Muslim subjects, rendered it possible—and indeed desirable—for those who catalogued their exploits to indulge in a little historical creativity. At a fairly mundane level, the slave trader who purchased Sebuktegin was supposed to have seen in him signs of valor and acumen; and Juzjani, similarly, claims that his patron Balban had displayed the marks of rectitude and ingenuity (rashidu shahamat) for the benefit of his first owner. More impressively, omen of greatness were naturally discernible at an early date in those whom God had destined to fill the highest office. A tale circulated about Ilutmish that when he was a mere child slave in Bukhara a holy man (darwish) had foretold his rise to power and made him promise to show generosity toward ascetics (although Juzjani, who transmits this anecdote, ascribes it ultimately to Ilutmish himself). Decades later, Ibn Battuta heard a cognate story in which a faqir in Bukhara conferred the “kingdom of India” on Balban in return for some trifling service.

Hindsight of this kind was given the fullest latitude, perhaps, when it remolded slave-officers into the heirs of their dead lords. According to Juzjani, the Ghurid sultan Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad, who had no son, had intended that his most senior slave, Taj al-Din Yildiz, should succeed him as ruler of Ghazni; and in fact the material he himself provides, and the information given by the well-informed Mosuli historian Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), alike demonstrate that the Turkish ghulams at Ghazni regarded Mu'izz al-Din's nephew Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud as his rightful heir. It was Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud's failure to move on Ghazni in 1206 that enabled Yildiz to take control there. In what is possibly a later embellishment of the legends purveyed by Juzjani, Yildiz was alleged to be Mu'izz al-Din's adopted son.

Juzjani further makes out that Mu'izz al-Din had bequeathed his Indian dominions to his Turkish slaves. "I have several thousand sons," he supposedly told those who bewailed his lack of male offspring, "whose inheritance will be my kingdom;" and after his death events had duly transpired just as he had prophesied. This legacy, moreover, had now devolved upon the sovereigns of Ilutmish's line, in the person of the reigning sultan, Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah b. Ilutmish (1246-66). What had perhaps made this possible was that Aybak had seen Ilutmish as a future ruler and had adopted
him—or so Juzjani tells us elsewhere.98 Juzjani seeks, in other words, to fashion some kind of continuity between the extinct Ghurid dynasty and the regime at Delhi under which he was writing. All this was to discount the realities of the master-slave relationship in Islam, whereby the master inherits from the slave and not vice versa.99 It also conveniently ignored the vicissitudes of the early thirteenth century in which Aybak and Ilutmish had each in turn seized power in default of Ghurid intervention and held it in the face of Turkish competitors.99

The panegyrist, moreover, were not above devising a more exalted background for Turkish slaves who attained sovereignty. One tradition had placed Sebuktegin’s origins, as we have seen above, in the town of Barakhan, in Qarakhanid territory, close to the shores of the Issik Kul. Yet Juzjani cites a now lost work which traced Sebuktegin’s descent, somewhat less plausibly, from Yazdagird III, the last Sasanian king of Persia, who had died in flight from the victorious Arabs in 651.99 There may have been some reluctance to acknowledge that the Ghaznavids’ ancestry lay among subjects of the rival Qarakhanid dynasty; though it is equally possible that the genealogy quoted by Juzjani had arisen in part as a counterblow to the pretensions of other antagonists, the Buyids in central and western Persia,100 or to the spectacular (and more dangerous) rise of the Seljuks.

Whatever the case, by the mid-thirteenth century, Turkish dynasties—whether founded by nomadic chieftains like the Seljuks or by slave soldiers like the Ghaznavids and the Khwarazm-Shah—had governed Persia for several decades, and steppe antecedents were now sufficiently respectable for Turkish slave-rulers to dispense with bogus Iranian pedigrees and to embrace instead an illustrious nomadic Inner Asian ancestry. Thus Juzjani could describe Balban’s forebears as “khan’s of the Olberli and rulers of the Yemik [i.e., the Kimik],” and claim that Balban’s father had been khan over some ten thousand families.101 He referred also to the father of his first patron, Ilutmish, as a khan of the Olberli, with “numerous dependants, kindred, and horsemen [atba’-u aqriba’-u khayy-i bishar];” but predictably, perhaps, his very vagueness conveys the impression of a less substantial figure than Balban’s progenitor.102 Parallel examples of retrospective promotion are found in connection with the leaders of other Turkish nomadic groups transplanted from their habitat to provide military service for sedentary princes.103

Conclusion

Turkish military slavery differed markedly from other kinds of slavery. It did not, properly speaking, hinge on a particular social status but on a relation-


44. Juzjani, Tabaga-i Nasiri, 2:41, omits the phrase ba-ined-i asraba, which is found in the reliable fourteenth-century British Library ms. Add. 26,189, fol. 211r (and see Raverty’s trans., Tabakat-i Nasiri, 2:790).
54. Bosworth, Ghaznavids, 106.
60. Bayhaqi, Tarihi-i Bayhaqi, 221.
61. Sadat al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad Jawami’ al-hikayat (c. 1232-33), British Library ms. Or. 6376, fols. 263v-264r: this is the anecdotical text as no. 1729 in Muhammad Nizam’d-Din, Introduction to the Jawami’ al-hikayat wa Jawamii’t-tarir-i-Riwayat (Gibb Memorial Series, new series, 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1929), 228.


70. Turkish officers continued to observe a taboo well known among Inner Asian nomadic societies—namely, the practice of beating to death in a courtroom those of princely status in order to avoid shedding their blood on the ground: see Mehmed Fuad Koprulu, "The Prohibition of the Versing of the Blood of an Officer of the Dalman in the Turchi and the Mongols," in Scritti in onore Luigi Benelli, Annales de l'Institut Universitaire de Napoli, nuova serie 1 (Rome: Edizioni universitarie, 1940), 15–23. Unfortunately, the only piece of hard evidence from the Delhi Sultanate relates to the murder of Sultan Kayqubad in 1290, when the perpetrator may have been an immigrant Mongol amir rather than a Turk: Barani, Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi, 173.


72. Juzi, Tabagat-i Nasiri, 1:403 (Rawat, Tabkhakar-i Nasiri, 1:476-76). Bosworth, Ghazanwadi, 106, points out, however, that a considerable proportion of these ghalams had formerly belonged to amirs who had fallen foul of the Ghazanwad Sultan Mustafa. For an earlier example of desertion to the Seljuks, see Juzi, Tabagat-i Nasiri, 1:250 (Rawat, Tabakhakar-i Nasiri, 1:129).

73. Juzi, Tabagh-i Nasiri, 1:236 (Rawat, Tabkhakar-i Nasiri, 1:199-200). On this version of Tughrul's career, however, see the doubts expressed by Bosworth, Later Ghazanwadi, 42–43.

74. Bosworth, Ghazanwadi, 105-106.

75. Ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi l-tarikh, 12:122–23 (Beirut reprint, 12:187-88); he also alleges that a leading ghalam commander, Taj al-Din Yildiz, made an unsuccessful attempt to seize Ghazni, though no other source confirms this.


82. See Jackson, "Manlik Institution," 349; and idem, Delhi Sultanate, 68–69.


87. Juzi, Tabagh-i Nasiri, 1:268–69 (Rawat, Tabakhakar-i Nasiri, 1:169–70), for example, suggests that the great Seljuk sultan Sanjar envisaged his dominions passing into the hands of his slaves because he had no son.

88. Juzi, Tabagh-i Nasiri, 1:412 (Rawat, Tabakhakar-i Nasiri, 1:500); at 1:395 (Rawat, 1:438), he is alleged to have entrusted (iparip) Ghazni to Yildiz.


94. Juzi, Tabagh-i Nasiri, 1:418: qutb al-dinar muzakkar, bar sultan shams al-din bud-u sra psar khawandu bud (Rawat, Tabakhakar-i Nasiri, 1:530); see also 1:443: ura farzand khawand (Rawat, Tabakhakar-i Nasiri, 1:603).


96. On all this, see Jackson, Delhi Sultanate, 26–27, 31–32; and idem, "Fall of the Ghurid Dynasty," 210–11.

Service, Status, and Military Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate: Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

Sunil Kumar

When the hearts [of the Turkish slaves] turn to Islam, they do not really remember their homes, their place of origin or their kinsmen. The further they are taken from their hearth, their kin and their dwellings, the more valued, precious and expensive they become, and they become commanders and generals.

Fakhr-i Mudabbir, a Persian scholar searching for patronage in early thirteenth-century Lahore, included these comments in a text dedicated to Qutb al-Din Aybak, a Turkish slave of the Shansabanid monarch, Sultan Mu'izz al-Din Ghuri (1173–1206). The author tried to explain why Turkish slaves, bandagan (singular bandu), were so important and valuable to Mu'izz al-Din Ghuri. The eulogy was offered to both the master for recognizing the merits of Turks as slaves and to his Turkish slave, Qutb al-Din Aybak, for abiding by the trust reposed in him by his master. According to Fakhr-i Mudabbir, the experience of slavery—what Orlando Patterson described much later as “natal alienation and social death”—never troubled individuals of Turkish origin. Instead, unlike all other slaves, the Turkish bandagan seized the opportunities offered by their master and made good in their new homes, where they prospered to eventually become political grandees and governors. This was why, Fakhr-i Mudabbir suggested, Turks were an exceptional people. Indeed, while slaves were a dime a dozen in the north Indian marches, only the exceptional slaves were carefully segregated and trained for armed service. Slaves who could be trusted with independent commands were even