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# The Emergence of Muslim Rule in India: Some Historical Disconnects and Missing Links

TANVIR ANJUM

## Abstract

*The emergence of Muslim rule in India is an important development in south Asia. This phenomenon, however, has not been treated in a holistic manner both in temporal and spatial terms. In temporal terms, there seems to be a disconnect in its historical reconstruction. The textbooks, for instance, show a number of disconnects among the various episodes in history, delinking them from each other. Besides, there are also several historiographical silences which mar the historiography of the emergence of Muslim rule in India. In spatial terms, the narrative remains focused on northern and north-western India, whereas the developments resulting in eastward expansion as well as in the coastal regions of India are generally ignored. These developments are the major missing links in the narrative of the emergence of Muslim rule in India. This paper attempts to point out the above-stated historical disconnects and missing links, but does not undertake to fill these gaps. The paper argues that the establishment of Muslim rule in India was not the result of any abrupt development; rather it was a complex and protracted process stretching over centuries. The Arab conquest of 93/712 was a part of the military expeditions in the north-western peripheral regions of India under the Pious Caliphs and the Umayyads. The later military expansion under the Ghaznavids and Ghaurids should be seen in the context of the weakening of the central authority of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate in face of the rise of the regional military leaders which gave fresh impetus to expansion towards India. The establishment of Muslim rule in India, eventually culminating in the foundation of Delhi Sultanate, was its direct outcome.*



## Introduction

The emergence of Muslim rule in India is an important development in the history of the region. It started in the late first century/beginning of the eighth century but it took centuries to be firmly established in its northern and later in its southern parts. The process of the establishment of Muslim rule in India not only engulfed that country but some of its neighbouring regions as well.

However, in Indian historiography, the phenomenon of the emergence of Muslim rule in India has not been treated in a holistic manner both in spatial and temporal terms.

First, in temporal terms, there seems to be a disconnect in the historical reconstruction of the events leading to the establishment of Muslim rule in India. For instance, the textbooks reconstruct its history by focusing on disjointed events or episodes of history. These accounts begin with the Arab conquest of Sindh [Sindh] in 93/712, then make a jump of a little less than three centuries and come directly to Sultan [Sultān] Maḥmūd of Ghaznah's (r. 381–421/999–1030) Indian invasions between 391/1001 and 417/1026, then make another jump and come straight to Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghaurī's (r. 556–602/1161–1206) battles with Prithvīrāj Chauhān in Tarā'in in 1191/587 and 1192/588, and finally the establishment of Muslim rule in India by Quṭb al-Dīn Aybeg (d. 607/1210) in a formal sense in 602/1206. Thus, a student of history finds a number of disconnects and historiographical silences at various places while going through the history of the emergence of Muslim rule in India.

This problem is partly due to the notion of dividing historical events into important and less important events, and focusing on important ones while ignoring the less important, and partly due to the practical need of dividing the books of history into chapters or sections, each focusing on one particular historical event. Thus, lines are drawn between two historical events demarcating them neatly. Though chapterization is done for convenience, in doing so historical events envisaged in different chapters/sections become self-contained entities and their relevance to each other is belittled. This creates historical disconnect between various episodes in history, delinking them from each other as well as minimizing their significance.

Secondly, in spatial terms, the focus of the events leading to the establishment of Muslim rule in India remains confined to that country, and more specifically to northern and north-western India, as developments taking place elsewhere do not figure prominently. For instance, the developments taking place in the 'Abbāsīd Empire (132–656/750–1258) associated with 'Turkish militarism' resulting in eastward expansionism are ignored. Similarly, developments taking place in the coastal regions of India such as Makran [Makrān], Malabar [Mālābār], Concan and Coromandel Coasts have also not received adequate scholarly attention. These developments are, in fact, the major missing links in the narrative of the emergence of Muslim rule in India.

The present paper argues that the establishment of Muslim rule in India was not the result of any abrupt development; rather, it was a complex and protracted process stretching over centuries. The Arab conquest of Sindh

needs to be viewed in a proper historical context provided by a series of military expeditions taking place in the north-western peripheral regions of India under the Pious Caliphs (11–40/632–661) and the Umayyads (41–132/661–750), eventually culminating in the Arab conquest of Sindh by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim (d. 96/715). Thus, it was not an isolated event; rather, it was part of a larger process that had engulfed the neighbouring regions of India as well. In addition to military expansionism, a simultaneous development took place in the coastal regions of India where the Arabs settled and built their colonies. However, the later military expansionism under the Ghaznavids and Ghaurids can be understood within the context of certain political developments relating to the weakening of the central authority of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate in face of the rise of the regional military leaders. These developments in the ‘Abbāsid Empire led to the rise of ‘Turkish militarism.’ Besides other consequences, it had far-reaching repercussions for India, as it gave fresh impetus to expansionism towards it. The establishment of Muslim rule in India which culminated in the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate was the direct outcome of the ‘Turkish militarism.’ Nevertheless, this paper points out the historical disconnects and missing links in the narrative of the emergence of Muslim rule in India, and is not an attempt to fill these gaps. It thus provides grounds for undertaking further research on the emergence of Muslim rule in India.

This paper, which is divided into three sections, attempts to deal with military expeditions in the western peripheral regions of India under the Pious Caliphs and the Umayyads, the Arab settlements in the coastal regions of India, and the rise of ‘Turkish Militarism’ under the ‘Abbāsids resulting in expansion towards India which eventually culminated in the foundation of Delhi Sultanate.

## I

### MILITARY EXPEDITIONS UNDER THE PIOUS CALIPHS AND THE UMAYYYADS

The rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century CE and the subsequent political and military developments that took place in the early Islamic era drastically altered the political frontiers in the entire Near East, and even beyond. Within less than a century, some of the western peripheral regions of India came under the political sway of the Muslims. Nonetheless, in the course of time the process of expansion, which was once quite swift, was greatly decelerated, and it took another five centuries for the Muslim rule to establish firmly in the Indian heartland.

In the wake of the dawn of Islam in Arabia, the disparate Arab tribes were integrated under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) (d. 11/632), which led to the emergence of a new political order in the region. After his migration to Madinah in 622 CE, he founded a state and assumed its leadership as well.<sup>1</sup> It was followed by conversion of the people of Madinah to Islam as well as the political submission of many tribes to the new state. There also began successive military clashes with the Makkans, who were the arch-enemies of the Prophet (peace be on him). Before his demise, hostilities with the Byzantine and the Sasanian Empires had broken out as well, since the tribes in the peripheral regions of Arabia were instigated by these empires to create trouble for the embryonic Muslim state. After the Prophet's demise, during the reign of the Pious Caliphs and the Umayyads, the Muslim state underwent major territorial expansion.

The first Pious Caliph, Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–634), concentrated upon the suppression of insurgent and refractory tribes. However, the reign of the second Caliph, 'Umar (r. 13–23/634–644), witnessed the first wave of expansion of the Muslim state in the wake of conflict with the Byzantine Empire in the north-west, and the Sasanian Empire in the north-east. The territorial stretch of the Muslim state was significantly enhanced by annexation of large areas in Syria, Iraq and Persia.<sup>2</sup> Towards the close of the reign of Caliph 'Umar in 23/644, al-Ḥakam ibn 'Amr al-Tha'labī conquered Makran,<sup>3</sup> which included vast areas of what is nowadays a part of Balochistan [Balōchistān].<sup>4</sup> Thus, it was during the Pious Caliphate that Makran, which lay on the western fringes of India, came under the political sway of the Muslims. In addition, historical evidence suggests that 'Uthmān ibn Abī 'l-'Āṣ al-Thaqafi (d. 55/675), the Governor of Baḥrayn and 'Umān, sent a fleet to the coastal regions of Thānāh (near Bombay) and Broach (in the Gulf of Cambay) via 'Umān under the command of his brother Ḥakam ibn Abī al-'Āṣ al-Thaqafi (d. ca. 45/665). But this naval expedition was sent without the permission of the reigning Caliph 'Umar, who, upon coming to know of it, forbade

<sup>1</sup> For a bit detailed description and analysis of this development, see, Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Emergence of Islam*, ed. and trans. Afzal Iqbal (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, and Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University, 1999 rpt., first published 1993), 151–59.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study see, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*, Eng. trans. Philip K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State* (New York: Columbia University, 1916), see part II on Syria, part III on Mesopotamia, and part IV on al-Irak and Persia, 1: 165–300, 385–466. See also, Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), chaps. III and IV, 91–220.

<sup>3</sup> See, Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamayiz al-Ṣaḥābah*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: Dār Nahḍah, n.d.), 2: 108.

<sup>4</sup> In those days, the name Balochistan was not being used to refer to any geographical area. The adjoining regions of Sindh in its west included Makran and Sistān.

undertaking naval expeditions for the time being. The Governor of Baḥrayn also sent one expedition to Dēbul, a port in Sindh, under his brother Muḡhīrah ibn Abī 'l-'Āṣ al-Thaqafī (d. ca. 15/636).<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, according to Mubārakpūrī, the purpose of these two expeditions was not territorial subjugation and annexation; rather, they were meant to prevent their rulers from helping the Persians against the Muslim armies.<sup>6</sup>

During the reign of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān (r. 24–35/644–656), an important cantonment in the region bordering Sindh and Balochistan, named Qandābīl (presently known as Gandāvā, and situated in District Kachī) was consolidated, but no new military expeditions were undertaken. It was, however, during the reign of Caliph 'Alī (r. 36–40/656–661) that Thāghar ibn Zu'ar was appointed on the Indian frontier, and a military expedition was sent to Kikān or Qiqān (modern Qalat in Balochistan) under him, leading to the defeat of the local ruler of the region.<sup>7</sup> Owing to internal dissension and political instability, further expansion was halted.

The Muslim state continued to expand further under the Umayyads. During the reign of its founder, Amīr Mu'āwiyah (r. 40–60/661–680), a number of expeditions to Makran and Sindh were led by various military commanders and/or local governors: 'Abd Allāh ibn Sawār al-'Abdī (d. 47/667) was sent to Kikān, and Sinān ibn Salamah al-Hazlī (d. ca. 95/713) was sent to Bōdhiyah (near Lake Mancher, presently situated in District Dadu), while Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufrah (d. 83/802) reached Multan from another route via Kabul, Khyber pass, Peshawar and Lahore in 44/665.<sup>8</sup> Another expedition was led by Abū 'l-Ash'ath Mundhir ibn Jārūd (d. ca. 61/681).<sup>9</sup> Many of these expeditions were meant to reconquer the areas which

<sup>5</sup> Muḡammad Aslam, *Muḡammad ibn Qāsim aur uskē Jānashīn* (Lahore: Riyāz Brothers, 1996), 21. See also, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar, *Tārīkh-i Sindh* (Lacnow: Dilgudhār Press, 1907), 1: 84.

<sup>6</sup> Qāḍī Aṭṭhar Mubārakpūrī, *Khilāfat-i Rāshidah aur Hindustān* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Muṣannifin, 1972), 103.

<sup>7</sup> 'Alī ibn Ḥāmid ibn Abī Bakr al-Kūfī, *Faṭḥnāmah-i Sindh* (*Chachnāmah*), Persian trans., ed. with Introduction, Notes and Commentary Nabī Bakhsh Khān Balōch (Islamabad: Institute of Islamic History, Culture and Civilization, 1983), 54–55. This expedition has not been mentioned in any other contemporary or near contemporary source. For further discussion on military campaigns to India under the Pious Caliphate, see, Muḡammad Ishaq, "A Peep into the First Arab Expeditions to India Under the Companions of the Prophet," *Islamic Culture*, 19 (1945), 190–214.

<sup>8</sup> See for details, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 1: 102–104.

<sup>9</sup> For details of the military expeditions in Sindh and Makran, see Sayyid Abū Ṣafar Nadwī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh* (A'zamgarh: Ma'ārif Press, 1947), 33–38. See a brief summary in Aslam, *Muḡammad ibn Qāsim aur uskē Jānashīn*, 24–26. See also, 'Alī b. Ḥāmid al-Kūfī, *Faṭḥnāmah-i Sindh*, 60.



had been conquered during the reigns of Caliphs ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān but had become independent when there was political chaos in the post-‘Uthmān period, or to put down local insurgencies and rebellions. However, as a result, some parts of Makran and Sindh were conquered and made part of the Umayyad Empire.

Nonetheless, it was during the reign of Umayyad Caliph al-Walid (r. 86-96/705-15) that the second wave of conquest began, and the process of territorial expansion gained considerable impetus. His interest lay chiefly in westward and northward expansion, which led to the conquest and annexation of large territories in Central Asia, North Africa and Spain. Expansion in the east received little attention as compared to the westward and northward expansion. Nonetheless, two separate military expeditions under ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Nabhān (d. ca. 92/711) and Budayl ibn Ṭahfah al-Bajalī (d. ca. 92/711) were defeated by the forces of Rājā Dāhir (d. 93/712), the ruler of Sindh.<sup>10</sup>

In the narrative of Indian expeditions by the Umayyads, a central figure is that of al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 95/714), the Governor of Iraq, who was also in-charge of the Eastern Territories including Sīstān. He selected a young general of his own tribe, Banū Thaqīf, named Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Thaqafī, for the purpose of undertaking a military expedition in Sindh in 92/711. The causes of Arab invasion include, *inter alia*, help of the Persians by the rulers of Sindh and Makran against the Muslims, shelter given to rebel groups such as some members of the ‘Ilāfī tribe by Rājā Dāhir, and growing activities of pirates in the Indian Ocean hampering sea trade. However, the immediate cause was the plunder of eight merchant vessels by pirates near Dēbul (a coastal town in Sindh), which were carrying the families of the Arab settlers who had died in Sarandīp (Sri Lanka), and gifts from the King of Sarandīp for the Umayyad Caliph.<sup>11</sup>

In 92/711, Muḥammad ibn Qāsim entered Sindh via Makran, which was, as indicated above, under the Umayyad rule. The Muslim forces captured and annexed areas including the cities of Dēbul, Nīrūn (modern Hyderabad), Alōr (the capital of Dāhir’s kingdom situated near modern Rohri), Brahmanabād (later named Maṣūrah), Askalandah (modern Uch), Multan and Bātiah (situated near modern Bahawalpur). The forces also proceeded towards Gujrat and Kathīāwār, and captured and annexed important cities like Kīraj and

<sup>10</sup> Zafar Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 42-43, and Aslam, *Muḥammad ibn Qāsim aur uskē Jānashīn*, 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> For details see Mohammad Habib, “The Arab Conquest of Sind”, *Islamic Culture*, 3 (Hyderabad, 1929), 77-95, 592-611; Francesco Gabrieli, “Muḥammad Ibn Qāsim ath-Thaqafī and the Arab Conquest of Sind,” *East and West*, n.s., 15 (1965), 281-95.

Bhēlmān.<sup>12</sup> The Arab armies went as far as the neighbouring regions of modern Okara, known as Panj-Māhāt in those days.<sup>13</sup> After the death of al-Ḥajjāj in 95/714, Muḥammad ibn Qāsim wanted to proceed further, but Caliph Sulaymān (r. 96–99/715–17) called him back in 96/715.<sup>14</sup> Ibn Qāsim was replaced by Yazīd ibn Abī Kabshah (d. 96/715) to manage the affairs of the conquered regions.

The Muslim rulers in Sindh, Multan and Gujrat did not exercise absolute authority, since, in the words of modern historians, the “sovereignty was shared by different layers of kingly authority.”<sup>15</sup> The Arabs abstained from centralizing power in their hands, and allowed the natives considerable share in power.<sup>16</sup> The conquest of these areas has been perceived by some historians as an isolated and insignificant development in history, “only an episode in the history of India and of Islam, a triumph without results.”<sup>17</sup> However, historical evidence suggests that it had far-reaching social, religious, economic and political consequences for the region. Socially, it created opportunities for interaction and dialogue between the Muslims and the Hindus, which led to exchange of knowledge and ideas between them. On the religious plane, it gave impetus to the spread of Islam, a process which had been initiated in the region long before the arrival of the Arab armies and the establishment of Muslim rule. Commercially, trade between India and Arabia expanded considerably after the Arab conquest of Sindh, as the sea routes had now become safe from the pillaging of the pirates. Politically, these north-western peripheral regions of India came under the sway of the Umayyads, and later of the ‘Abbāsids, which needs some elaboration here.

In Sindh and its neighbouring regions, the Umayyad governors were regularly appointed by the Umayyad caliphs. Nearly 46 governors were

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed survey of the conquest of Sindh, Makran and Gujrat, see, Zafar Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 45–120.

<sup>13</sup> Aslam, *Muḥammad ibn Qāsim aur uskē Jānashīn*, 34–48.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, the relationship between al-Ḥajjāj and Sulaymān had been antagonistic for long. However, al-Ḥajjāj had died before Sulaymān’s accession. After becoming Caliph, Sulaymān not only recalled Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, but also ordered his execution. Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and al-Ḥajjāj belonged to the same clan of Banū Thaqīf. See for a good discussion on al-Ḥajjāj’s confrontation with Sulaymān and its impact, Zakariyau I. Oseni, “A Study of the Relationship between al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafi and the Marwānid Royal Family in the Umayyad Era,” *Hamdard Islamicus*, Karachi, vol. X, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987), 15–27, esp. 20–24.

<sup>15</sup> Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1998), 27.

<sup>16</sup> For details see, S. M. Jaffar, “The Arab Administration of Sind,” *Islamic Culture*, 17 (Hyderabad, 1943), 119–29.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole, *Mediaeval India under Muhammedan Rule (A.D. 712–1764)* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997 rpt., first published 1903), 12.



appointed in Sindh one after another by successive Umayyid caliphs. After the inception of the 'Abbāsīd rule, these areas remained under the direct control of the 'Abbāsīd governors for some time, but gradually the hold of the 'Abbāsīd Empire on its peripheral areas started weakening. Sindh, Multan and Gujrat already lay on the fringes of the 'Abbāsīd Empire. In the wake of the weakening of the central authority of the 'Abbāsīds in the end of second and beginning of the third/first quarter ninth century, these regions gradually threw off the yoke of the 'Abbāsīd allegiance one after another and became semi-independent. The following is a brief discussion regarding these semi-independent kingdoms:<sup>18</sup>

**Gujrat:** During the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Māmūn (r. 198–218/813–833), a slave named Faḍl ibn Māhān (d. probably before 202/817) established his semi-autonomous Māhāniyyah Kingdom in Gujrat with its capital at Ṣandān (modern Sanjān, a town situated in the north of Bombay). The rulers of the Kingdom owed allegiance to the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs, and for this reason the *khuṭbah* (sermon) of Friday Prayers was read in their name. However, after some years, the Muslim rule came to a close, and the Hindus took over the control of the government.

**Sindh:** The last 'Abbāsīd governor of Sindh was Hārūn (d. 240/854), a contemporary of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861). After Hārūn's death in 240/854, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. before 270/882), a member of an influential family, founded a semi-autonomous kingdom known as the Habbāriyyah Kingdom of Sindh (240–417/854–1026). Its capital was Maṣṣūrah, which was formerly known as Brahmanābād. Its rulers had managed to get their recognition from al-Mutawakkil, whose name was read in the *khuṭbah* as well. However, the rule of the Habbāriyyah Dynasty ended after Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghaznah invaded and conquered the region.<sup>19</sup>

**Multan:** Banū Sāmāh Kingdom was founded in Multan by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim ibn Munabbih Sāmī (d. between the years 279–286/892–899). It was

<sup>18</sup> Qāḍī Aṭhar Mubārakpurī, *Hindustān mēn 'Arabōn kī Hukūmatain* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Muṣannifin, 1967), see the survey of the Māhāniyyah Kingdom, its origin and its rulers, administrative system, relationship with the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, its downfall, 24–76; a brief history of the Habbāriyyah Kingdom and its administration, 77–123; a brief political history of the Banū Sāmāh Kingdom, 169–238; a discussion on the Ma'dāniyyah Kingdom, 255–70; and the Arab rule in Ṭurān, 279–88.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed study of its history and administrative system, see, Mumtaz Husain Pathan, *Arab Kingdom of al-Mansurah in Sindh* (Jamshoro: Institute of Sindhology, University of Sind, 1974).

also a semi-autonomous kingdom, where the *khutbah* was read in the name of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs. The Sāmīs ruled Multan and its neighbouring territories for nearly one century, but later they were subdued by the Ismā'īlīs in 375/985. The Ismā'īlī rulers of Multan owed their allegiance to the Fāṭimid Caliph of Egypt. The last Ismā'īlī ruler named Abū 'l-Futūḥ Dā'ūd ibn Naṣr was defeated by Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghaznah in 401/1010–11, after which the rule of the Ismā'īlīs came to an end in the region.<sup>20</sup>

**Makran:** Ma'dāniyyah Kingdom in the coastal areas of Makran was founded by an influential Khārījī leader named 'Isā ibn Ma'dān around 340/951. In fact, the Khārījīs were expelled from Iraq, from where they went to Masqaṭ and 'Umān and settled there. After their expulsion from these areas as well, they migrated to Makran. Being politically independent, the rulers of Ma'dāniyyah Kingdom, all of whom were Khārījīs by faith, did not owe allegiance to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph of Baghdad. They had adopted the Hindu title of *Mahārāj*. The Ma'dāniyyah Kingdom ended when its last ruler was defeated by the Ghaurids in 471/1078.<sup>21</sup>

**Ṭūrān:** Ṭūrān in Balochistan presented a different picture than the rest of the above-mentioned regions. An influential Arab family had established its control in Qandābil, but it was suppressed by the 'Abbāsīds. Again Qandābil went out of the 'Abbāsīd control, but its control was regained. Then around 340/951, Mughīrah ibn Aḥmad founded a semi-independent kingdom, having nominal adherence to the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, it was not a dynastic rule of one family, and one after another, it was ruled by rulers from different families.<sup>23</sup> Khuzdār came under the influence of Khārījīs for a while as well. Later, Sultan Maḥmūd Ghaznavī crushed the power of a ruler of Khuzdār, and finally, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ghaurī (r. 558–599/1163–1203) invaded the region and put an end to the kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

In a nutshell, while studying the history of the Arab invasion of Sindh by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim it needs to be borne in mind that it was not merely an event of historical importance; rather, it was part of a larger process of expansion which began in Arabia in the first/seventh century. Initially, the neighbouring regions of Arabia such as Syria, Iraq and Persia were annexed to

<sup>20</sup> Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 180.

<sup>21</sup> See, Qāḍī Aṭhar Mubārakpurī, *Hindustān mēn 'Arabōn kī Hukūmatain*, 255–270.

<sup>22</sup> See, *ibid.*, 279–288.

<sup>23</sup> See, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> See, *ibid.*

the Muslim state. It was in the first quarter of the eighth century CE (towards the end of first century *hijrī*) that north-western peripheral regions of India such as Makran, Sindh including Multan, and Gujrat also came under the sway of the Muslims during the rule of the Umayyads. Therefore, the Arab invasion of Sindh by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim cannot be reduced to an isolated and disjointed event and must be understood in the broader context of Arab expansion in the east. Moreover, the story of the Arab rule in India does not come to a close with the demise of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim in 96/715. This, however, seems to be the underlying assumption in several textbooks of history which do not mention the semi-independent states in Sindh, Multan and Gujrat, and jump directly to the story of the Ghaznavids. The conquered regions later on split into five states and came to be ruled by varied dynasties which were subdued by the Ghaznavid and the Ghaurid rulers in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries. The intermediate historical developments between the Arab invasion of Sindh by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and the Ghaznavid invasions in India and the Ghaurid occupation of northern India which hardly find mention in the textbooks of history are significant enough to be given due attention by historians. Moreover, there seems to be a historiographical silence regarding the settlement of the Arabs in the coastal regions of India, which needs to be viewed independently of their military expansion and hence, merits a brief discussion.

## II

### ARAB SETTLEMENTS IN THE COASTAL REGIONS OF INDIA

Hundreds of years before the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him), Arab traders had active commercial relations with the Indians, particularly those inhabiting its coastal areas.<sup>25</sup> These traders used to carry Indian goods, such as spices, to Europe via Syria and Egypt, and carried goods from European markets to India, East Indies (present Indonesia), China and Japan.<sup>26</sup> According to Tara Chand, in that era, Arab traders had not only established their settlements in many costal towns and cities of India, but under their influence the Indians of Malabar Coast had also adopted the Arab religion (probably Sabaeen).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For details see, George Faldo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Medieval Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951). See also, Qāḍī Aṭhar Mubārakpurī, *‘Arab wa Hind ‘Ahd-i Risālat Mēn* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Muṣannifin, 1965).

<sup>26</sup> Sayyid Sulaymān Nadvi, *‘Arab wa Hind kē Ta’lūqāt* (Karachi: Karīm Sons Publishers, 1976), 6.

<sup>27</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Lahore: Book Traders, 1979), 30.

One witnesses the continuance of this Arab tradition of commercial activities in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal after the advent of Islam.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, new colonies of these traders and sailors kept on mushrooming on the eastern and western coastal regions of India. Historical evidence suggests the presence of such settlements and colonies on the Konkan and Malabar Coasts long before the Arab conquest of Sindh and Gujrat in late first/early eighth century and the Turkish conquests of fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries. Tara Chand writes on the authority of Rowlandson, that Muslim Arabs first settled on the Malabar Coast about the end of the seventh century CE (later of half the first century *hijrī*).<sup>29</sup> The Muslim population of these coastal regions included Arabs as well as local people who had converted to Islam. The spread of Islam among the natives must have received considerable impetus [later] from the conversion of Hindu Pērūmal Rājā in 212/827.<sup>30</sup> Important ports where Muslim settlements were established included coastal towns in Gujrat region named *Khambāyat* or *Kambāyāh* (now known as Cambay) and Hunawar in the Gulf of Cambay, and Seymore (modern Chaul) near Bombay.<sup>31</sup> The presence of Arab Muslims in Sarandīp (Ceylon or Sri Lanka) as early as the beginning of the second/eighth century is evident from the incident of the plunder of eight merchant vessels carrying the families of the Arab settlers by pirates.

In addition to these settlements of traders, some of these colonies were inhabited by political refugees, which included, among others, members of Banū Hāshim who had been persecuted by al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the Governor of Iraq and an arch-enemy of this clan. In order to escape persecution, the Hāshimīs migrated to and settled in colonies on Concan Coast (the south-western coast of India). The descendants of these settlers came to be known as Navā'it/Navāyat (derived from *Nau-wārid* or newcomer). The descendants of those who settled to the east of Cape Comorin in Tinnevely District of Madras came to be known as Labbes.<sup>32</sup> In addition to these refugees, other groups had also sought refuge in these colonies. Owing to the fear of

<sup>28</sup> For details of Arab navigation in the days of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), see, Sayyid Sulaymān Nadwī, *The Arab Navigation*, trans. Sayyid Ṣabāḥ al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1966), 30–39.

<sup>29</sup> Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> See annotation in Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *ʿAjā'ib al-Asfār: Safarnāmah-i Ibn Baṭṭūṭah*, Urdu trans. and Notes Khān Bahādūr Mawlavī Muḥammad Ḥusayn (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1983), 292.

<sup>31</sup> S. M. Ikram, *History of Muslim Civilization in India and Pakistan*, 3d edn. (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1982), 24. For a detailed description of Arab settlements on the coastal areas of India, see, S. M. Ikram, *Āb-i Kawthar* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1952), 45–59.

<sup>32</sup> Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 32–33.

persecution from the followers of the Shī'ite sub-sect, Ismā'īlīs, who ruled Multan during the fourth/tenth century,<sup>33</sup> many had also migrated to these coastal colonies of India. Moreover, there were early Muslim settlements along the Coromandal Coast as well, which was known to the Arabs as Ma'bar. Later, some of the Sufis also migrated and settled in these colonies, where they constructed their *khānqāhs* or Sufi dwellings.<sup>34</sup>

The Arabs had extended their trade to the Bay of Bengal, and their commercial activities along the entire coast of Bengal and Burma, from where they carried their trade goods to the islands of Malaysia and Indonesia. A famous port, Samandar, situated on the coast of Bengal, finds mention in the accounts of Arab geographers of the fourth/tenth and sixth/twelfth centuries. Long before the penetration of the Turkish conquerors in the region, Arab traders had settled near the coastal region of Chittagong in East Bengal.<sup>35</sup> In addition to these coastal areas, we find sizeable Muslim populations in nearby islands, including Sarandīp (Ceylon or Sri Lanka) and Maldives as well. According to an epigraphical evidence, the ruler of the Islands of Maldives, along with his subjects, had converted to Islam at the hands of Shaykh Abū 'l-Barakāt Yūsuf Barbarī of Morocco in the third/ninth century.<sup>36</sup>

These Arab settlements became the hub of missionary activities, which facilitated the spread of Islam in these peripheral regions of the Indian sub-continent in a peaceful manner.<sup>37</sup> Not only that, these colonies of early settlers also served as bases for the Muslim missionaries, who later spread Islam in

<sup>33</sup> Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrine*, 180.

<sup>34</sup> Spencer J. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 20–21.

<sup>35</sup> Muhammad Mohar Ali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal: A Muslim Rule in Bengal (600–1170/1203–1757)* (Riyadh: Department of Culture and Publications, Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University, 1985), 1: 30, 37.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, '*Ajā'ib al-Asfār*', 320–21. Shaykh Abū 'l-Barakāt Yūsuf Barbarī arrived in Maldives in 548/1153 and converted the local ruler to Islam.

<sup>37</sup> For a survey of this development see, Thomas W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London: Constable, 1913 rpt., first published 1896), chap. IX, 254–93; S. M. Imamuddin, "Early Preaching of Islam in the Subcontinent with Special Reference to Sind," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Karachi, vol. XXXIII, part IV (October 1985), 273–87; and Moinul Haq, "The Spread of Islam in South Asia" in Waheed-uz-Zaman and M. Saleem Akhtar, eds. *Islam in South Asia* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1993), 52–83. For a contradictory viewpoint, see Bruce B. Lawrence, "Early Indo-Muslim Saints and Conversion" in Yohanan Friedmann, ed. *Islam in Asia: South Asia* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1984), 1: 109–45. For a critical review of various theories of conversion to Islam in India, see, Richard M. Eaton, "Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam in India" in Richard C. Martin, ed. *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 106–23.



Malaya and Indonesia.<sup>38</sup> Here it is important to clarify that since the terms 'mission' and 'missionary' have Christian connotations, it should not create an impression that like Christianity, in Islam the propagation of faith is the sole responsibility of some purpose-specific groups. In Islam, theoretically, every Muslim shoulders this responsibility, and is expected to contribute in spreading Islam by his or her words as well as character. The early Arab traders, who were Muslims by faith, were inspired by a missionary zeal, and took up the responsibility of propagating their faith wherever they went. It was due to the efforts of these traders, Sufis and preachers that initially Islam spread in India.<sup>39</sup> Muslim presence in various regions of India, which was initially minimal, would serve as a social base, though narrow, for Muslim rule. Conversion to Islam in the subsequent centuries was indirectly facilitated by the establishment of Muslim rule.

In short, the Arab rule in Sindh, Multan, Gujrat, Makran and Ṭurān in the wake of the Arab invasion of Sindh by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, and the settlement of Arab traders in various colonies in the coastal regions of India such as Makran, Malabar, Concan and Coromandel Coasts were developments independent of each other and were taking place almost simultaneously. These developments had many political, social, cultural and religious implications for these regions as well as for the rest of the Indian Subcontinent, but they have not received adequate scholarly attention. These developments are, in fact, the missing links in the entire episode of the emergence of Muslim rule in India.

### III

#### RISE OF THE 'TURKISH MILITARISM' UNDER THE 'ABBĀSIDS AND EXPANSION TOWARDS INDIA

The Arab expansion during the eighth century CE (last quarter of first and first half of second century *hijrī*) was halted owing to certain developments within the Umayyad Empire. In the subsequent centuries, however, the Arabs were replaced by the Turks, who then took the lead in the expansion of the 'Abbāsid Empire, which had replaced the Umayyads. An important question that rises here is: how and why did this transition come about? While studying the emergence of Muslim rule in India one has to transcend the geographical confines of India and go beyond them in order to search for the causes of the rise of the Turks as a potent force in the body politic of the 'Abbāsid Empire. The Turks played a crucial role in the expansion towards India owing to their

<sup>38</sup> For a brief discussion, see, M. B. Hooker, "Introduction: The Translation of Islam in South-East Asia," in M. B. Hooker, ed. *Islam in South-East Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), 1–22.

<sup>39</sup> Moinul Haq, "The Spread of Islam in South Asia," 52–83.



military prowess, a phenomenon which has been dubbed as 'Turkish militarism'.<sup>40</sup> State formation in the northern India by the Turks was a natural outcome of the Turkish expansionism.

What follows is a brief account of the political developments in the 'Abbāsīd Empire that led to the rise of the 'Turkish militarism' and the subsequent expansion towards India. The Umayyad Dynasty was uprooted by the 'Abbāsīd Revolution of 132/749, and replaced by the House of 'Abbās (Banū 'Abbās), which ruled for about five centuries. For nearly a century, the 'Abbāsīds ruled over their Empire with extraordinary ability, but the eighth 'Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Mu'taṣim Bi'llāh (r. 218–227/833–842), is considered the last effective ruler of the dynasty. The post-Mu'taṣim period showed signs of decline and disintegration, which stretched over a period of four centuries. This era was also marked by the ascendancy of the Turkish military commanders. In fact, during Caliph al-Māmūn's reign (198–218/813–833), al-Mu'taṣim, the Governor of Syria and Egypt, initiated the practice of getting recruits for the army from the Eastern provinces of the Empire, who came to be known as the 'Turks'. Though all of them were not ethnically Turks, but being predominantly so, they came to be referred to as such. The word Turk was generally used more in political and/or linguistic than in an ethnic sense. Many non-Turkish groups and clans had adopted the Turkish language, and hence, they too were regarded as Turks. These troops came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and were non-Arabic speaking.<sup>41</sup> Hailing from nomadic backgrounds, they were known for their military prowess, hardihood, valour, rowdiness and loyalty.

The Central and West Asian region was the home of the Turks, having both their sedentary as well as nomad population. The Umayyads conquered their lands quite early, but the conversion to Sunnī Islam among the Turks generally took place in the fourth/tenth century under the 'Abbāsīds. It is said that in addition to the simplicity of the basic tenets of Islam that appealed to the Turks, it also opened opportunities of career for them, particularly service in the state army, which befitted their natural aptitude.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, in the Central Asian regions, Islam was symbolized by *jihād* or holy war. These detribalized Turks were imported to the Muslim territories as military slaves,

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed study, see, Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>41</sup> For further details, see Appendix I, "Juzjānī's Use of the Word 'Turk'" in Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 326.

<sup>42</sup> 'Osmān Sayyid Ahmad Ismā'il al-Bilī, *Prelude to the Generals: A Study of Some Aspects of the Reign of the Eighth 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Al-Mu'taṣim Bi-Allah (218–227 AH/833–842 AD)* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2001), 51–52.

and came to be known as *mamlūk*, literally meaning slaves. In the opinion of Patricia Crone:

The creation of the *mamlūk* institution consisted in a simple fusion of the two components which had hitherto remained discrete, servile status and alien origin. Freedman reared in an Islamic environment and free mercenaries recruited abroad, for all that they became extremely common in the Muslim armies, were so to speak approximations to the ideal type: the classical *mamlūk* is characterized by *both* personal dependence and cultural dissociation.<sup>43</sup>

These new recruits, according to al-Bīlī, served three important purposes of the al-Māmūn regime: First, with the expansion of the territorial boundaries of the Empire, prosperity and affluence crept in among the Arabs, which cultivated luxurious and comfortable lifestyles. Increasing urbanization, which encouraged trade and commerce, and the flourishing of crafts and commercial activities, further gave way to dwindling human resource for the civil bureaucracy and army, as less people were now inclined to join state services. This vacuum created in the administrative circles of the Empire was adequately filled by these Turkish recruits. Secondly, the stability and security of al-Māmūn's regime was also threatened by internal uprisings and external threats, most notably from Byzantium. The practice of having new recruits instilled fresh blood in the military, which considerably strengthened the institution. Lastly, another pragmatic consideration before al-Māmūn was the elimination of old commanders, and their replacement by loyal generals in whom he could repose trust. These factors combined necessitated the introduction of new elements in the army and administration.<sup>44</sup>

These military slaves owed their training as well as their privileged place in the society to the care of their patrons, who usually acted as the foster parents of these slaves from adolescence.<sup>45</sup> Al-Mu'taṣim commanded the personal loyalty of these troops, as a majority of them were his slaves as well. After assuming the Caliphate, he expanded this 'Caliphal Corps.' His favourite commanders received governorships and other administrative responsibilities.<sup>46</sup> On the social plane, owing to the discriminatory policies of al-Mu'taṣim, the cultural exclusiveness and regional, tribal and ethnic identities of various groups received encouragement, whereas on the political plane, it contributed to political instability.

<sup>43</sup> Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 74.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Bīlī, *Prelude to the Generals*, 45–58.

<sup>45</sup> Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 84.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Bīlī, *Prelude to the Generals*, 52–53.

Al-Mu'tasim was succeeded by his son al-Wāthiq Bi'llāh (r. 227–232/842–847), who followed the policies of his father. His successor, Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861), was put on the throne by the generals. Soon the Turkish generals started conspiring with the members of the ruling family in proposing and deposing Caliphs. They also started concentrating powers of civil administration in their hands. Under Caliph al-Musta'in (r. 248–252/862–866), a Turkish general Utāmish became *wazīr* of the Empire and in charge of the treasury.<sup>47</sup> The military hegemony eventually culminated in the creation of the designation of *Amīr al-Umarā'* for a military general in 324/936, who exercised all military and civil authority in the name of the reigning Caliph al-Rāḍī Bi'llāh (r. 322–329/934–940). His name was inserted in the Friday sermons as well.<sup>48</sup> Henceforth, the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs were reduced to mere puppets in the hands of their generals-turned-*wazīrs*, who came to dominate the affairs of the state.

Owing to political fragmentation and instability at the centre, semi-independent regional dynasties sprang up in the peripheral provinces of the 'Abbāsīd Empire,<sup>49</sup> not to mention the emergence of rival Caliphates such as the Fātimīd Caliphate of Egypt (297–567/910–1171) and the Umayyad Caliphate of Spain (138–442/756–1031), and absolutely independent kingdoms like those of Khārijīs, Qarāmatīs and Ismā'īlīs in Makran (340–471/951–1078), Baḥrayn (around 286–470/899–1077–78) and Multan (347–401/958–1010–11) respectively, which naturally threatened the 'Abbāsīd political authority. The

<sup>47</sup> The non-Turkish troops started an anti-Turkish protest movement leading to riots and fighting in some parts of Iraq, and eventually Utāmish was killed by these troops. Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 138.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Bīlī, *Prelude to the Generals*, 105.

<sup>49</sup> For instance, the Ṭāhirids emerged from Khurāsān (eastern Persia) in the third/ninth century, whereas the Ṣaffārids, who established themselves in Sistān, and later conquered Khurāsān from the Ṭāhirids, ruled during the last quarter of the third/ninth century. The fourth/tenth century witnessed the rise of the Sāmānids from Transoxiana, who soon annexed Khurāsān from the Ṣaffārids. The Aghlabids ruled parts of North Africa, while Egypt went under the Ṭulūnids in the third/ninth century and later under the Ikhshīdīd rulers in the fourth/tenth century, with a brief interlude in between the two dynasties, when the Abbasid rule was temporarily restored there. Ḥamdānids ruled over Mosul and Aleppo (Syria) in the fourth/tenth century, while in the fifth/eleventh century, Mesopotamia went under the control of the 'Uqaylids. Towards the close of the fourth/tenth century, the Qarākhānids had established their dynasty in Transoxiana, including Bukhārā and Samarqand, as well as in Farghānah and Kāshgaria. The Ghaznavids established themselves in Afghanistan and Khurāsān during the fourth/tenth-fifth/eleventh centuries, but in the sixth/twelfth century the political power in Afghanistan shifted to the Ghaurids. For a brief survey, see, Bertold Spuler, *The Muslim World: A Historical Survey, The Age of the Caliphs*, Eng. trans. F. R. C. Bagley (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 1: 59–61, 68–70, 75–81.

two regional dynasties of the Ghaznavids (351–582/962–1186) and Ghaurids (543–602/1148–1206) in the ‘Abbāsīd Empire, which will be briefly dealt with later, played an important role in the conquest and annexation of Indian territories.

Many of the regional dynasties that emerged during the later ‘Abbāsīd times were founded by the Turks. Ethnically, the Tūlūnids (254–293/868–905), Ikhshīdids (323–358/935–969), Qarākhānids (4th–10th/early 7th–13th centuries), Seljūqids (447–699/1055–1300) and Ghaznavids were all of Turkish origin. Another related phenomenon that requires some description is the institution of Turkish military slavery, as indicated earlier. It was the military slaves of Turkish ethnicity, who had founded these semi-autonomous states. Lapidus terms the military slavery and ‘slave states’ as ‘peculiar’ institutions. Commenting on this phraseology and their functions, he adds that

...the translation of the word *ghulam* or *mamālūk* into English as “slaves” carries inappropriate connotations. The concept of *ghulam* or *mamālūk* designated a binding personal obedience but not necessarily a humble situation in society. In its Arabic and Muslim sense the slave soldier was the personal property of the master and could be bought and sold. He was a servile retainer, depending upon the master for security and support. The social position of the slave, however, did not reflect his personal servitude, but rather the status of his master. The slave of the Sultan could be a general or minister of state, and the slave of a general, an officer in the army or administration. Furthermore, military slaves were eventually manumitted and became freedmen, clients of their former masters, which gave them limited legal rights to property, marriage and personal security. In this institution the exclusive personal loyalty of the slave or client-soldier to his master was crucial.<sup>50</sup>

As mentioned above, the Ghaznavid Kingdom, which ruled Afghanistan and Khurasan in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, was also founded by Turkish slaves Alptigīn (d. 366/977) and Subuktagīn (d. 387/997).<sup>51</sup> In the wake of the disintegration of the Sāmānīd Kingdom in the fourth/tenth century, the Ghaznavids established themselves in Afghanistan in 350/961, and later in Khurasan in 389/999. Actually Alptigīn, a Turkish slave military commander, was appointed a provincial governor by the Sāmānīd King. He founded his own semi-independent Kingdom of Ghaznah in Afghanistan after

<sup>50</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 122.

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed study of the role of Alptigīn and Subuktagīn, see, C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern India 994–1040* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992), 37–44.

the death of the King. Alptigīn's slave and son-in-law, Subuktagīn, became the ruler of Ghaznah in 366/977. The Ghaznavids were the first Turkish Muslim rulers to penetrate in India. Subuktagīn added Lamghān (near modern Jalālabād) and Peshawar to the Ghaznavid Kingdom. His conflict with the Hindūshāhi Dynasty of Raja Jaipāl, ruling over some parts of Afghanistan and north-western India, also started in 375–6/986–7. Subuktagīn, however, died in 387/997 and after a war of succession between his sons, Maḥmūd (r. 389–421/998–1030) finally ascended the throne of Ghaznah a year later. He got the confirmation of his rule from the Sāmānid King. The 'Abbāsīd Caliph of Baghdad, al-Qādir Bi'llāh (381–422/991–1031), also gave Maḥmūd a robe of honour, a flag and the titles of *Yamīn al-Dawlah* (the right hand of the Empire) and *Amīn al-Millāh* (the custodian of the faith) as a symbol of recognition of his political authority.<sup>52</sup> Maḥmūd declared himself as an independent ruler of Ghaznah and assumed the title of *Sultān*.<sup>53</sup> His kingdom included Balkh, Herāt, Tirmidh, Khurasan, Lamghān and Ghaznah.

During 391–417/1001–1026, he led about seventeen expeditions to India, and conquered a number of areas including Peshawar, Kashmīr, Bhērā (in Salt Range), Nagarkot, Thaneswar, Qanauj, Kālinjar, Gwālīār, Sōmnāth (Gujrat) and Multan. Lahore was captured in 421/1030.<sup>54</sup> Sultan Maḥmūd, however, did not annex all the conquered areas to the Kingdom of Ghaznah. He only annexed some parts of Sindh, Multan and the Punjab to it. Thus, some of the north-western Indian territories became part of the Ghaznavid Kingdom. In fact, he was chiefly interested in expansion towards Central Asia. Moreover, the Indian territories formed the second line of defence in the East. In other words, strategically, these areas served as a buffer zone between the heartland of the Ghaznavid Kingdom and the north Indian Rajput States. Maḥmūd repeatedly invaded the Indian territories in order to keep the eastern frontiers of his kingdom safe.

<sup>52</sup> Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Maḥmūd Gardāizī, *Kitāb Zayn al-Akḥbār* (comp. about 440 AH), ed. Muḥammad Nāzīm (Berlin: Iranschāhr, 1347/1928), 62.

<sup>53</sup> There are different opinions regarding Maḥmūd's assumption of the title of Sultān. See Muhammad Nazim, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* (Lahore: Khalil and Co., 1973), 69, n.

<sup>54</sup> For a detailed account of the Ghaznavid conquests, see, Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Jabbār al-'Utbi, *Tārikh-i Yamīnī*, Eng. tr. H. M. Elliot, ed. J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its Own Historians (The Muhammadan Period)* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1976 rpt., first published 1869), 2: 24–51; and Gardāizī, *Kitāb Zayn al-Akḥbār*, 63, 65–80, 86–88. 'Utbi's *Tārikh-i Yamīnī* covers the history of Maḥmūd's reign down to the year 410/1020. See also the details of Maḥmūd's expeditions in India in S. M. Jaffar, *Medieval India under Muslim Kings: The Rise and Fall of the Ghaznavids* (Peshawar: S. Muhammad Sadiq Khan, 1940), 2: 3, 49–83; and Nazim, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, 86–122.



The Ghaznavid conquests paved the way for the future conquest of north India by the Afghans and the Turks, as these conquests exposed the weakness of the military system of the Rajputs. In the opinion of Wink, the economic impact of the Turkish conquest of India was "the revitalization of economy of settled agriculture through the dynamic impetus of forced monetization and the expansion of political dominion."<sup>55</sup> This monetization was the result of the de-hoarding of Indian temple treasure, which went hand in hand with the Turkish conquest.

These initial conquests of Indian territories also opened a migration corridor to India. The ethnic diversity of India was further enhanced by these migrants who hailed from different backgrounds. Between the end of first/beginning of eighth and sixth/twelfth centuries, the Arabs, Central and Western Asians including Turks and Tājiks, Persians, Afghans and Mongols settled in north India. In addition to these migrants, these conquests provided an opportunity to scholars and travellers to visit India, which led to mutual exchange of ideas between the Hindus and the Muslims. Most renowned among them was Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. after 442/1050 according to the Encyclopedia of Islam), the author of *Kitāb al-Hind* (The Book on India). He met Hindu scholars and *pandits* (priests), and collected information for his work, which deals with the geography of India, Hinduism, and the traditions and customs of the fifth/eleventh century Indian society. It is considered to be the first book on the cultural history of the Hindus written by a Muslim.<sup>56</sup>

Though Muslim conquests and the establishment of Muslim political rule paved the way for propagation of Islam, it has been observed that the missionary efforts of the preachers and Sufis in many regions began prior to these conquests and annexations. The first Muslim preacher who is said to have migrated to Lahore for propagation of Islam before Maḥmūd's invasions was Shaykh Ismā'il al-Bukhārī al-Lāhaurī (d. 448/1056). He also propagated the study of *Ḥadīth* among the Muslims of the city.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Sayyid 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. 469/1077), popularly known as Dātā Ganj Bakhsh, migrated from Ghaznah and settled in Lahore in the fifth/eleventh century. He authored the first treatise on Sufism, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (The

<sup>55</sup> André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World: The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquests 11th–13th Centuries* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2: 4.

<sup>56</sup> In the opinion of A. H. Dani, his "scholarship was suffused with sympathy and his attitude was understandability rather than disparaging the unfamiliar habits and customs.... Alberuni's purpose was not to justify or condemn. He was aiming at introducing the Hindu society and the Hindu science to the Muslim world." Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Alberuni's Indica*, Eng. trans. abridged and annotated (Islamabad: University of Islamabad Press, 1973), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden-Köln: E. J. Brill, 1980), 8.



Revelation of the Hidden) written in Persian language.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to them, many other Sufis also migrated and settled in various parts of India for the propagation of faith. In the wake of the Ghaznavid conquests, more ‘*ulamā*’, preachers and Sufis started pouring into Punjab, Multan and its neighbouring regions, which had come under the sway of the Ghaznavids. In this way, the Turkish conquests indirectly facilitated the spread of Islam in the Indian sub-continent.

The Ghaznavids could retain political control over Khurāsān till 431/1040, and over Afghanistan till 582/1186, when the political power shifted to the local mountain chieftains of Ghaur in Afghanistan, referred to as Ghaurids after their local identity. Ghaur, situated in to the north of Kabul, was once a tributary province of the Ghaznavid Kingdom. After the death of the Ghaznavid King Sultan Maḥmūd, the chiefs of Ghaur became independent and established their own Kingdom. The ruling house came to be known as Shansabāniyyah. After some time, there started a struggle for power between the rulers of Ghaznah and Ghaur, in which the latter emerged victorious. Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn (d. 599/1203), the Shansabānī King of Ghaur, captured Ghaznah in 569/1173 and entrusted it to his brother Prince Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghaurī, who was also his deputy.

The Ghaurids are credited with undertaking the systematic conquest of India in the sixth/twelfth century through their Turkish slave generals and laying the foundation of Muslim rule in northern India. In those days, Lahore, Peshawar and their neighbouring territories were under the rule of the Ghaznavids, and Multan and Uch were under the control of Ismā‘īlī rulers. A local dynasty had established itself in Sindh, whereas the coastal areas of Makran were being ruled by the Khārijīs. As for north India, it was under the authority of different Rajput states. Between the years 571/1175 and 588/1192, the territories of Uch, Multan, Gujrat, Peshawar, Sindh and Lahore were occupied by Shihāb al-Dīn Ghaurī. He defeated the Rajput confederacy led by the Rajput ruler of Delhi and Ajmer, Prithvīrāj Chauhān (Rā‘ē Pithūrā), in a decisive battle in the field of Tarā’in in 588/1192. This victory laid the foundation of the Muslim rule in the Indian sub-continent. His Turkish slave

<sup>58</sup> For a brief biographical sketch, see, Dārā Shikōh, *Safinat al-Awliyā*, Urdu trans. Muḥammad ‘Alī Lutfī (Karachi: Nafis Academy, 1959), 209–10. For his biography, teachings and works, see, Shaikh Abdur Rashid, *The Life and Teachings of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh* (Lahore: Central Urdu Development Board, 1967); Misbah-ul-Haque Siddiqui, ed. *The Life and Teachings of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh* (Lahore: Shahzad Publishers, 1977); and K. A. Nizami, “Shaikh ‘Alī Hujwīrī Data Ganj Bakhsh—Morning Star of a Spiritual Revolution in South Asia” in Yusuf Abbas Hashmi, ed. *Historical Role of Three Auliya’ of South Asia* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1987), 1–34; and Ḥakīm Sayyid Amin al-Dīn Aḥmad Dehlavī, *Tadhkirah-i ‘Alī Hujwīrī* (Lahore: ‘Ilm-ō ‘Irfān Publishers, n.d.).

general Quṭb al-Dīn Aybeg, who originally belonged to Turkistan, conquered Delhi in 588–89/1193–94 and Qanauj in 590/1194, and was made in-charge of the Indian territories. Another general Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī (r. 592–601/1196–1205) conquered Bengal and Bihar in 591–592/1195–96, and was made in-charge of these regions.<sup>59</sup> Thus, these slave generals of Shihāb al-Dīn Ghaurī are credited with the expansion of Muslim rule in the Indian Subcontinent, since they were given free hand in running the affairs of their respective territories, and extending them by further conquest and annexation.

Upon the death of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn in 599/1203, his younger brother Shihāb al-Dīn Ghaurī (who assumed the title of Mu'izz al-Dīn) became the King of Ghaznah, Gaur and Delhi. Three years later in 602/1206, Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn Ghaurī was murdered, and was succeeded by his nephew Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd (r. 602–607/1206–1210). It was he who played an instrumental role in the foundation of the Muslim rule in India, practically independent of any higher political authority. In 602/1206, Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd, the successor of Shihāb al-Dīn Ghaurī, manumitted the Turkish slave general Quṭb al-Dīn Aybeg, and also bestowed the title of 'Sultan' on him. Aybeg was also appointed as the ruler of the Indian territories with Lahore as his capital in the same year.<sup>60</sup> His authority as the independent ruler of the Indian territories was acknowledged by the provincial governors in India such as Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī, the Governor of Bengal and Bihar, and Nāṣir al-Dīn Qabāchah (r. 1206–1228), the Governor of Sindh and Multan, who was also a Turkish slave of Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn Ghaurī, but hostilities were initiated with the ruler of Ghaznah named Tāj al-Dīn Yaldūz (r. 1207–1216).<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the life of Sultan Quṭb al-Dīn Aybeg (r. 602–607/1206–1210), the founder of the Delhi Sultanate, was cut short by his accidental death in its capital Lahore in 607/1210. His successor, Sultan Ārām Shāh (r. 607–608/1210–1211) proved weak and incapable. So by the end of the first decade of the seventh/thirteenth century, the process of state formation by the Turkish conquerors in northern India was not yet

<sup>59</sup> For a detailed account of Ghaurid campaigns, see, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Nizāmī, *Tāj al-Ma'āthir*, tr. and ed., Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as told by its Own Historians*, 2: 212–35. *Tāj al-Ma'āthir* covers the history of the Ghaurids from 602/1205 to 626/1228. See also, Mohammad Habib, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib*, ed. K. A. Nizami (New Delhi: People's Publishing House for Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, 1981), 2: 110–22.

<sup>60</sup> Minhāj al-Sirāj Juzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* (comp. in 1260), ed. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh Chughtā'ī (Lahore: Kitābkhānah-i Naurus, 1952, rpt.), 54.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 526.

completed, and the Sultanate of Delhi was still in its nascent phase. The political authority was yet to be firmly established and the state structure and administrative set up of the Sultanate were still to be set up.

Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (r. 608–634/1211–1236), who replaced Ārām Shāh in 608/1211, is considered to be the co-founder of the Sultanate with Aybeg, as he is credited with its consolidation. He belonged to the Ilbarī tribe of Turkistan. When he ascended the throne of Delhi, the writ of the state was yet to be uniformly established, since the political authority was contested by many regional leaders, most notably in Ghaznah, Multan and Bengal. He moved the capital from Lahore to Delhi and courageously faced the external and internal threats to the political authority of the Sultanate. Not only did he avert an imminent Mongol<sup>62</sup> invasion of India in 618/1221,<sup>63</sup> he also suppressed the rival claimants to political power who had refused to accept his authority, such as Nāṣir al-Dīn Qabāchah in Sindh and Multan, Tāj al-Dīn Yaldūz in Ghaznah, and ‘Alī Mardān Khaljī (r. 607–610/1211–1213) in Bengal.<sup>64</sup> Sultan Iltutmish gave his trusted and most loyal slaves (*bandagān-i khāṣṣ*) governorships in these newly conquered territories which were far from the capital.<sup>65</sup> In this way, by deploying the resources of personal trust and loyalty, he consolidated his political authority in these regions. He also recovered vast territories lost under his predecessor, and also extended the authority of the Sultanate to regions including Ranthambhōr, Mandōr, Jālōr, Nagda, Mālwah, Ujjain, Gwālīār, Katēhar, Bahraich, Awadh and Doāb.<sup>66</sup>

In addition, a great deal of attention was paid to institution-building in order to ensure the sustainability of Muslim rule in India. Sultan Iltutmish consolidated the administrative structures in the Sultanate. He particularly

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed study of the Mongol Empire, their leaders and military campaigns, dynasties, customs and characteristics, see, Bertold Spuler, *History of the Mongols based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, Eng. trans. from the German, Helga and Stuart Drummond, A volume in The Islamic World Series, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

<sup>63</sup> Agha Hussain Hamadani, *The Frontier Policy of the Delhi Sultans* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1986), 47–48.

<sup>64</sup> For details see, A. B. M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India (A History of the Establishment and Progress of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi: 1206–1290 A.D.)*, 2nd rev. edn. (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1961), 92–100.

<sup>65</sup> Uch was given to a Shamsī slave, Malik Tāj al-Dīn Sanjar, Multan to Malik Kabīr Khān, and Lakhnauti to Malik Sayf al-Dīn Aybeg after the dismissal of Malik ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Jānī. Sunil Kumar, “When Slaves were Nobles: The Shamsī *Bandagān* in the Early Delhi Sultanate,” *Studies in History*, vol. 10. no. 1 (New Delhi: 1994), 45–46.

<sup>66</sup> Muhammad Aziz Ahmad, *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi*, (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1972, rpt., first published Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1949), 166–77.

paid attention to the administration of justice. He initiated works of public welfare as well, such as the construction of a huge water storage tank in Delhi to overcome the problem of water shortage in the capital. He issued a new silver coinage, which signified assertion of his political authority. In 626/1229, Sultan Iltutmish received envoys from the 'Abbāsid Caliph of Baghdad al-Mustanşir Bi'llāh (623–639/1226–1241), who had sent a robe of honour, title and investiture for the former.<sup>67</sup> The recognition of his rule from the Caliph symbolized the legitimacy of Iltutmish's regime. In fact, recognition from the 'Abbāsid Caliphate was a source of legitimacy for any government in Delhi. Though Aybeg had laid the foundation of Delhi Sultanate in 602/1206 in a practical sense, the recognition of Iltutmish's rule by the Caliph laid the foundation of the Muslim rule and authority in a theoretical sense.<sup>68</sup>

To sum up, by the close of the second/eighth century, the Arabs had exhausted their energies and gave way to luxurious lifestyles and opulence. Consequently, the vacuum created by dwindling human resource in the state services was adequately filled in by the Turks, who had gradually risen to positions of power, especially in the military bureaucracy under the 'Abbāsids. The Turks eventually succeeded in establishing semi-independent kingdoms in the peripheral regions of the 'Abbāsid Empire. Among these regional powers of Turkish ethnic origin, the Ghaznavids in the fifth/eleventh century brought some areas in the north-western frontier regions of India under their sway. It was, however, their successors, the Ghaurids, who followed a systematic expansionist policy towards India in the sixth/twelfth century through their Turkish slave generals. The Ghaurid military expansionism eventually culminated in the foundation of Muslim rule in India on stable footings.

### Concluding Remarks

The establishment of Muslim rule in India was not the result of any single political development; rather it was the outcome of a complex and protracted process stretching over centuries. The Arab conquest of Sindh by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim in 92/711 was not a disjointed event in history but part of the

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Peter Hardy suggests that it was by the end of the reign of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban (r. 664–685/1266–1286) that the Delhi Sultanate was generally obeyed, but Hardy also infers from various events that it was not till the eighth/fourteenth century that there was a voluntary recognition by non-Muslims of the authority of Muslim ruling institutions. Peter Hardy, "Growth of Authority Over a Conquered Political Elite: Early Delhi Sultanate as a Possible Case Study" in J. F. Richards, ed. *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 218–19.

larger political process of Arab expansion taking place in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. Historical evidence suggests that the conquest of Sindh must be viewed in the context of a series of military expeditions taking place in the north-western peripheral regions of India under the Pious Caliphs and the Umayyads. Moreover, the story of the Arab rule in Sindh and its neighbouring regions does not end with the demise of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim in 96/715, just four years after the invasion. The conquered regions comprising Sindh, Multan, Gujrat, Makran and Ṭurān later on came to be ruled by varied dynasties which were subdued by the Ghaznavid and Ghaurid rulers in fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries respectively. Thus, a little less than the five century long rule of the Arabs in north-western India, which has received little scholarly attention of historians, is a crucial but missing link in the narrative of the emergence of Muslim rule in India. Another missing link is the advent of the Arab settlers in the coastal regions of India which continued for centuries. These Muslim settlers introduced their faith to the indigenous population and made considerable conversions among them as well. These new converts along with the migrant Muslims later provided the social base to the Muslim rule in these regions.

Another major disconnect in the history of the origin and development of Muslim rule in India is the shift from the Arab expansionists of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries to the Turkish conquerors of fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries. On the one hand, the rise of the Turks as regional military leaders in the 'Abbāsīd Empire or 'Turkish militarism' led to the weakening of the central authority of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, and on the other hand, it gave way to expansion in the east. The military expansion under the Ghaznavids and the Ghaurids in India can be understood within this context. Though Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghaznah was more interested in expansion towards Central Asia rather than India, his repeated expeditions in the north-western frontier regions of India paved the way for its future conquest by the Ghaurids. It is important to recall here that the Ghaurids, unlike the Ghaznavids, were not ethnically Turks, but the Turkish slave generals of the Ghaurids played a crucial role both in expansion and state formation in India.

