
UNIT 18 PROBLEM, CRISIS AND DECLINE

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Nature of Kingship
- 18.3 Conflict between the Nobility and the Sultans
- 18.4 Crisis in Revenue Administration
- 18.5 Rise of Regional States
- 18.6 The Mongols
- 18.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.8 Key Words
- 18.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

18.0 OBJECTIVES

The Sultans of Delhi faced many political and administrative problems. With the passage of time, these problems became so critical that they generated political crisis and eventually led to the decline of the ruling dynasties. This Unit attempts to consider the following aspects:

- Nature of kingship;
- Conflict between the Sultan and the nobles,
- Crisis in the Revenue Administration;
- Rise of Regional States, and
- The Mongols.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

During the Sultanate period (1206-1526 A.D.), five dynasties ruled India. Since the Turks came from Central Asia, they, in the initial stage, were unaware of the Indian political and economic system. To maintain their rule, the Turks introduced many administrative practices which, by and large, continued for a long time with some changes. A study of the political history indicates that the rulers had to cope with internal strife and external dangers, especially the running struggle between the nobility and the Sultans which contributed towards the gradual decline of the Delhi Sultanate.

18.2 NATURE OF KINGSHIP

No clear and well-defined law of succession developed in the Sultanate. Hereditary principle was accepted but not adhered to invariably. There was no rule that only the eldest son would succeed (primogeniture). In one case, even a daughter was nominated (for example, Raziya Sultan). At any rate, a slave, unless he was manumitted, that is, freed, could not claim sovereignty. In fact, as it operated in the Sultanate, 'the longest the sword, the greater the claim'.

Thus, in the absence of any succession rule in the very beginning intrigues surfaced to usurp power. After Aibak's death, it was not his son Aram Shah but his slave and son-in-law Iltutmish who captured the throne. Iltutmish's death (1236 A.D.) was followed by a long period of struggle and strife when finally Balban, Iltutmish's slave

of the "Forty" fame, assumed power in 1266 A.D. You have already seen how Balban attempted to give a new shape to the concept of kingship to salvage the prestige of the office of the Sultan, but the struggle for power that started soon after Balban's death confirms again that the 'sword' remained the main deciding factor. Kaiqubad was installed at the throne against the claims of Balban's nominee, Kaikhusrau. Later, even he was slain by the Khalji Malik (1290 A.D.) who laid the foundation of the Khalji rule. In 1296 A.D. Alauddin Khalji, killed his uncle, Jalaluddin Khalji and occupied the throne. Alauddin Khalji's death signalled civil war and scramble for power. Muhammad Tughluq's reign weakened due to the rebellions of *amirs*. Rivalries that followed after Feroz Tughluq ultimately led to the rise of the Saiyyids (1414-51 A.D.).

With the accession of the Lodis (1451-1526 A.D.) a new element—the Afghans was added. The Afghans had a certain peculiar concept of sovereignty. They were prepared to accept the position of a Sultan over them, but they sought to partition the empire among their clans (*Farmulis*, *Sarwanis*, *Niyazis*, etc.). After the death of Sultan Sikandar Lodi (1517 A.D.), the empire was divided between Ibrahim and Jalal. Even the royal privileges and prerogatives were equally shared by the clan members. For example, keeping of elephants was the royal privilege but Azam Humayun Sarwani is reported to have possessed seven hundred elephants. Besides, the Afghans entertained the concept of maintaining tribal militia which in the long run greatly hampered the military efficiency of the Central Government. It is true that Sikandar Lodi tried to keep the ambitious Afghan nobles in check, but it seems that the concept of Afghan polity was more tilted towards decentralization that created fissures in the end.

18.3 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE NOBILITY AND THE SULTANS

The political history of the Sultanate period testifies that consolidation and decline of the Sultanate were largely the result of constructive and destructive activities of the nobles (*umara*). The nobles always tried to maximise their demands in terms of the economic and political gains.

Under the Ilbarite rule (1206-90 A.D.), the conflicts usually revolved around three issues: succession, organization of the nobility and division of economic and political power between them and the Sultans. When Qutbuddin Aibak became the Sultan, his authority was not accepted by the influential nobles such as Qubacha (governor of Multan and Uchh), Yilduz (governor of Ghazni), and Ali Mardan (governor of Bengal). This particular problem was inherited by Iltutmish who finally overcame it through diplomacy as well as by force. Later, Iltutmish organised the nobles in a corporate body, known as *turkan-i chihilgani* ("The Forty") which was personally loyal to him. Naturally, other groups of nobles (see Unit 17) envied the status and privileges of the members of the "Forty", but this does not mean that the latter were free from their internal bickerings. At the most they united in one principle: to plug the entry of non-Turkish persons in the charmed circle as far as possible. On the other hand, the "Forty" tried to retain its political influence over the Sultan who would not like to alienate this group, but at the same time would not surrender his royal privilege of appointing persons of other groups as officers. Thus, a delicate balance was achieved by Iltutmish which broke down after his death. For example, Iltutmish had declared his daughter, Raziya, as his successor during his life, but some nobles did not approve her succession after his death, because she tried to organize non-Turkish groups (Abyssinians and Indians) as counterweight to the "Forty". That was one main reason why a number of nobles of this group supported her brother, Ruknuddin whom they thought to be incompetent and weak, thereby giving them an opportunity to maintain their position. This spectacle continued during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-66 A.D.) also, as exemplified by the rise and fall of Imaduddin Raihan, an Indian convert. This episode coincided with the banishment of Balban who was the *naib* (deputy) of Sultan Mahmud (and also belonged to the "Forty") and his subsequent recall.

During Balban's reign (1266-87 A.D.), the influence of the *turkan-i chihilgani* was minimised. Since he himself was a member of the "Forty" before his accession, he was fully aware of the nobles' rebellious activities. Therefore, he eased out the "tallest poppies" amongst them through assassin's dagger or poisoning, even including his cousin. On the other hand, he formed a group of loyal and trusted nobles called "Balbani". The removal of many members of the "Forty" deprived the state of the services of veterans and the void could not be fulfilled by the new and not so experienced "Balbani" nobles. This situation inevitably led to the fall of the Ilbarite rule, paving the way for the Khaljis.

The reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316 A.D.) saw a broadening in the composition of nobles. He did not admit of monopolisation of the state by any one single group of nobles. State offices were open to talent and loyalty, to the exclusion of race and creed. Besides, he controlled them through various measures (see Unit 17).

Moreover, the enhancement of land revenue up to 50 per cent of the surplus produce (see Unit 16) must have pacified the nobles because an increase in the revenue of their respective *iqta* would have raised their salary, too. Territorial expansion also provided enough resources towards recruiting persons with *talent*. The case of Malik Kafur, an Abyssinian slave, is well-known. But this situation was shortlived: the death of Alauddin Khalji brought out once again the dissensions and conspiracies of the nobles, leading to the elimination of the Khaljis as rulers.

As for the Tughluqs, you know (see Unit 17) how Muhammad Tughluq made attempts to organize nobles again and again, with turns and twists. But all his efforts failed to put them under check. Even the Khurasanis, whom he used to call "*Aizzah*" (the dear ones), betrayed him. The problems created by the nobles can be gauged from the fact that twenty-two rebellions took place during his reign with the loss of at least one territory, later known as Bahmani kingdom.

The crisis set in motion after Muhammad Tughluq's death seems to have gone out of hands. Under these circumstances, Feroz Tughluq could not be expected to be stern with the nobles. They were given many concessions. They succeeded in making their *iqtas* hereditary. The appeasement policy of Sultan pleased the nobles, but in the long run, it proved disastrous. The army became inefficient because the practice of branding (*dagh*) of the horses introduced by Alauddin Khalji was almost given up. It was not possible, henceforth, for his descendants or later rulers to roll back the tide of decline of the Delhi Sultanate.

Under the Sayyids (1414-51 A.D.) and the Lodis (1451-1526 A.D.), the situation did not appear to be comfortable: the former were not at all fit for the role of saviours. Sikandar Lodi made the last attempt to prevent the looming catastrophe. But dissensions among the Afghans and their unlimited individual ambitions hastened the final demise, actually its murder, with Babur as the executioner.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Critically examine the role of nobility in the disintegration of the Sultanate.

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) How far did the absence of law of primogeniture contribute to the decline of the Sultanate?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) Discuss the chief characteristic features of the Afghan theory of kingship.

18.4 CRISIS IN REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

Ilutmish had introduced a sound system of revenue assignments (*iqta*) through which the vast bureaucracy was maintained. Feroz Tughluq's reign, however, saw deterioration in its working. During his reign, revenue assignments tended to be hereditary and permanent. This applied even to the (royal ?) soldiers (*yan-i hashm*). "If a person died," says Afif, "his office would go permanently to his son; if he had no son, then to his son-in-law; if he had no son-in-law, then to his slave; if he had no slave then to his women." Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517 A.D.) stopped to reclaim the balance (*fawazil*). The tendency of the principal assignees to sub-assign their territories also increased greatly during his reign.

All this had deep implications. It meant not only loss of vast revenue resources to the state exchequer but by making the assignments permanent the Sultan allowed the assignees to develop strong local roots which led to wide-scale corruption and turbulence.

18.5 RISE OF REGIONAL STATES

You have already studied that the clashes between the nobles and the Delhi Sultans marred the Sultanate from the beginning of its foundation. But, so long as the centre was powerful to retaliate, the rebellions were successfully crushed. Signs of physical disintegration were witnessed for the first time during Muhammad Tughluq's reign in 1347 A.D. with the establishment of the Bahamani kingdom. But the Sultanate remained intact at least nearly for fifty years when finally the Timurid invasion (1398 A.D.) exposed its weakness. It provided ample opportunity for the nobles to establish their own areas of influence, independent of the Sultan. Governors like Khwaja Jahan (Jaunpur) in 1394, Khwaja in 1394, Dilawar Khan (Malwa) in 1401, Zafar Khan (Gujarat) in 1407, and some regions in Rajasthan also declared their independence during the 15th century. Bengal was already a semi-independent kingdom since the days of Bughra Khan (for details see Block 8). The Sultanate practically shrank to the radius of 200 miles around Delhi. It had deep implications. Loss of the fertile provinces of Bengal, Malwa, Jaunpur and Gujarat curtailed greatly the vast revenue resources of the state. That, in turn disabled the centre to wage long wars and organise campaigns against the refractory elements. The situation became so critical under the Sayyids and the Lodis that even for regular revenue exactions the Sultans had to send yearly campaigns. For example, forces were sent repeatedly to suppress the Katehr and Mewati chiefs with frequent intervals from 1414 to 1432 A.D. Similarly, the chiefs of Bayana and Gwalior also showed their reluctance to pay revenue and, as a result, repeated campaigns followed from 1416 to 1506 A.D. All this shows that the control of the Sultans during the 15th century remained nominal and only minimum efforts would have sufficed to overthrow the Sultanate.

18.6 THE MONGOLS

To what extent the Mongol invasions could be held responsible for the decline of the Delhi Sultanate? As you have read in Block 4, the Mongol danger first appeared

overcome it through diplomacy. Their invasions continued up to the period of Muhammad Tughluq with intervals. Balban, Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq were very much conscious of the Mongol assaults and resisted them successfully. True, much money and time had to be spent and thousands of soldiers were sacrificed, but it does not seem that these invasions enfeebled the Sultanate in any substantial manner. Occasional shocks were awesome but without any visible damage to the economy or the state apparatus.

✓ Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the implications of Feroz Tughluq's policy of making the assignments (*iqta*) permanent and hereditary?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) To what extent rise of the regional states led to the decline of the Delhi Sultanate?

.....

.....

.....

.....

18.7 LET US SUM UP

One political reason for the decline of the Sultanate was the absence of any well-established and universally accepted law of succession. This was in line with the entire history of the Islamic polity. As long as a Sultan was strong and was able to gain the support of some groups of nobles, he could continue with some superficial semblance of dynastic stability. Dissensions and conflicts amongst the ruling groups might remain apparently dormant in such circumstances; but at the slightest opportunity their internal struggle would come to the force often in a violent fashion. Initially, the *iqta* system served the central authority: its elements of transfer and non-permanence ensured the Sultan's power. On the other hand, the gradual disappearance of these principles, especially during Feroz Tughluq's rule, paved the way for the steady dissipation of the state's authority. The upshot was the emergence of autonomous and, then, independent political centres in different regions. The Mongols might have hammered the Sultanate off and on but, on the whole, their forays did not affect the Sultanate's political and economic fortune.

18.8 KEY WORDS

- Aizzah** : "Dear Ones" (Khurasani nobles under Muhammad Tughluq)
- Umara** : Nobles (plural of *amir*)
- Yaran-i hashm** : Soldiers

18.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sec. 18.2
- 2) See Sec. 18.2
- 3) See Sec. 18.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 18.4
- 2) See Sec. 18.5

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*.

W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*. (Chapters II & III; Appendices A, B and C).

R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*.

K.S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis* (Chapter XI).

Mohammad Habib & K.A. Nizami, *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol V.

Tapan Ray Chaudhuri & Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol, I, pp. 45-82.)

APPENDIX

A REPRODUCTION FROM W.H. MORELAND, AGRARIAN SYSTEM OF MOSLEM INDIA

Provincial Governors in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

The words "Province," and "Governor" are used in Chapter II to represent two groups of terms, which I take to be either precisely synonymous, or else distinguished only by minor differences, of no practical importance for our present purpose. The first group is *wilayat*, *wali*. The word *wilayat* is used in the chronicles in various senses, which can almost always be recognised with certainty from the context: it may mean (1) a definite portion of the kingdom, that is, a province; (2) an indefinite portion of the kingdom, that is, a tract or region; (3) the kingdom as a whole; (4) a foreign country; (5) the home-country of a foreigner (in which last sense a derived form has recently become naturalised in English as "Blighty"). *Wali* occasionally means the ruler of a foreign country, but the ordinary sense is Governor of a province of the kingdom, that is to say, a localised officer serving directly under the orders of the King or his Ministers.

So far as I know, it has never been suggested that the *Wali* held anything but a bureaucratic position at this period, and the word Governor represents it precisely, as is the case throughout the history of Western Asia. The position is different in regard to the second group of terms *iqta*, *muqti* (more precisely, *iqta*, *muqti*). Various translators in the nineteenth century rendered these terms by phrases appropriated from the feudal system of Europe; their practice has been followed by some recent writers, in whose pages we meet "fiefs", "feudal chiefs", and such entities; and the ordinary reader is forced to conclude that the organisation of the kingdom of Delhi was heterogeneous, with some provinces ruled by bureaucratic Governors (*Wali*), but most of the country held in portions (*iqta*) by persons (*Muqti*), whose position resembled that of the barons of contemporary Europe. It is necessary, therefore to examine the question whether these expressions represent the facts, or, in other words, whether the kingdom contained any element to which the nomenclature of the feudal system can properly be applied. The question is one of fact. The nature of the European feudal system is tolerably well known to students: the position of the *Muqtis* in the Delhi kingdom can be ascertained from the chronicles; and comparison will show whether the use of these archaic terms brings light or confusion into the agrarian history of Northern India.

The ordinary meaning of *Iqta* in Indo-Persian literature is an Assignment of revenue conditional on future service. The word appears in this sense frequently in the Moghul period as a synonym (along with *tuyul*) of the more familiar *jagir*; and that it might carry the same sense in the thirteenth century is established, among several passages, by the story told by Barani (60, 61) of the 2000 troopers who held Assignments, but evaded the services on which the Assignments were conditional. The villages held by these men are described as their *iqtas*, and the men themselves as *iqtadars*. At this period, however, the word *iqta* was used commonly in a more restricted sense, as in the phrase "the twenty *iqtas*", used by Barani (50) to denote the bulk of the kingdom. It is obvious that "the twenty *iqtas*" points to something of a different order from the 2000 *iqtas* in the passage just quoted; and all through the chronicles, we find particular *iqtas* referred to as administrative charges, and not mere Assignments. The distinction between the two senses is marked most clearly by the use of the derivative nouns of possession; at this period, *iqtadar* always means an assignee in the ordinary sense, but *Muqti* always means the holder of one of these charges. The question then is, was the *Muqti*'s position feudal or bureaucratic?

To begin with, we may consider the origin of the nobility from whom the *Muqtis* were chosen. The earliest chronicler gives us the biographies¹ of all the chief nobles

¹ T. Nasiri, book xxii, p. 229 ff. I follow the Cambridge History in using the form *Iluttmish* for the name usually written *Altamash*.

of his time, and we find from them that in the middle of the thirteenth century practically every man who is recorded as having held the position of *began* his career as a royal slave. Shamsuddin Iltutmish, the second effective king of Delhi, who had himself been the property of the first king, bought foreign slaves in great numbers, employed them in his household, and promoted them, according to his judgement of their capacities, to the highest positions in his kingdom. The following are a few sample biographies condensed from this chronicle.

Taghan Khan (p. 242) was purchased by Shamsuddin, and employed in succession as page, keeper of the pen-case,¹ food-taster, master of the stable, *Muqti* of Badaun, and *Muqti* of Lakhnauti, where the insignia of royalty were eventually conferred on him.

Saifuddin Aibak (p. 259) was purchased by the king, and employed successively as keeper of the wardrobe, sword-bearer, *Muqti* of Samana, *Muqti* of Baran, and finally Vakil-i dar, apparently, at this period, the highest ceremonial post at Court.²

Tughril Khan (p. 261) also a slave, was successively deputy-taster, court-usher, master of the elephants, master of the stable, *Muqti* of Sirhind, and later of Lahore, Kanauj, and Awadh in succession; finally he received Lakhnauti, where he assumed the title of king.

Ulugh Khan (p. 281), afterwards King Balban, is said to have belonged to a noble family in Turkistan,³ but was enslaved in circumstances which are not recorded. He was taken for sale to Baghdad, and thence to Gujarat, from where a dealer brought him to Delhi, and sold him to the King. He was employed first as personal attendant, then as master of sport, then master of the stable, then *Muqti* of Hansi, then Lord Chamberlain, and subsequently became, first, deputy-King of Delhi, and then King in his own right.

It seems to me to be quite impossible to think of such a nobility in terms of a feudal system with a king merely first among his territorial vassals: what we see is a royal household full of slaves, who could rise, by merit or favour, from servile duties to the charge of a province, or even of a kingdom—essentially a bureaucracy of the normal Asiatic type. The same conclusion follows from an examination of the *Muqti*'s actual position: it is nowhere, so far as I know, described in set terms, but the incidents recorded in the chronicles justify the following summary.

1. A *Muqti* had no territorial position of his own, and no claim to any particular region: he was appointed by the King, who could remove him, or transfer him to another charge, at any time. The passages proving this statement are too numerous to quote: one cannot usually read ten pages or so without finding instances of this exercise of the royal authority. The biographies already summarised suffice to show that in the thirteenth century a *Muqti* had no necessary connection with any particular locality; he might be posted anywhere from Lahore to Lakhnauti at the King's discretion. Similarly, to take one example from the next century, Barni (427 ff.) tells how Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, on his accession, allotted the *iqtas* among his relatives and adherents, men who had no previous territorial connection with the places where they were posted, but who were apparently chosen for their administrative capacity. Such arrangements are the antithesis of anything which can properly be described as a feudal system.

¹ *Dawat-dar*. The dictionary-meaning of "Secretary of State" does not seem to be appropriate here, for we are told that on one occasion Taghan Khan was sharply punished for losing the king's jewelled pen-case, and I take the phrase to denote the official responsible for the care of the king's writing materials. In later times the Chief Dawatdar was a high officer.

² The exact status of the *vakil-i dar* at this period is a rather complex question, but its discussion is not necessary for the present purpose.

³ The chronicler is so fullsome in his praise of Balban, under whom he was writing, that this statement may be merely a piece of flattery, but there is nothing intrinsically improbable in it, having regard to the circumstances of the time. Writing in the next century, Ibn Batuta recorded (iii 171) a much less complimentary tradition; it is unnecessary for me to enquire which account is true, because both are in agreement on the essential point, that Balban was brought to India as a slave.

2. The *Muqti* was essentially administrator of the charge to which he was posted. This fact will be obvious to any careful reader of the chronicles, and many examples could be given, but the two following are perhaps sufficient. Barni (p. 96) tells at some length how Balban placed his son Bughra Khan on the throne of Bengal, and records the advice which he gave on the occasion. Knowing his son to be slack and lazy, he insisted specially on the need for active vigilance if a king was to keep his throne, and in this connection he drew a distinction between the position of King (*iqlimdari*) and that of Governor (*wilayatdari*) a King's mistakes were, he argued, apt to be irretrievable, and fatal to his family, while a *Muqti* who was negligent or inefficient in his governorship (*wilayatdari*), though he was liable to fine or dismissal, need not fear for his life or his family, and could still hope to return to favour. The essential function of a *Muqti* was thus governorship, and he was liable to fine or dismissal if he failed in his duties.

As an instance from the next century, we may take the story told by Afif (414), how a noble named Ainulmulk, who was employed in the Revenue Ministry, quarrelled with the Minister, and was in consequence dismissed. The King then offered him the post of *Muqti* of Multan, saying, "Go to that province (*iqta*), and occupy yourself in the duties (*Karha wa kardarha*) of that place." Ainulmulk replied: "When I undertake the administration (*amal*) in the *iqta*, and perform the duties of that place, it will be impossible for me to submit the accounts to the Revenue Ministry; I will submit them to the Throne." On this, the King excluded the affairs of Multan from the Revenue Ministry, and Ainulmulk duly took up the appointment. The language of the passage shows the position of a *Muqti* as purely administrative.

3. It was the *Muqti's* duty to maintain a body of troops available at any time for the King's service. The status of these troops can best be seen from the orders which Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq issued¹ to the nobles "to whom he gave *iqtas* and *wilayats*." "Do not," he said, "covet the smallest fraction of the pay of the troops. Whether you give or do not give them a little of your own rests with you to decide; but if you expect a small portion of what is deducted in the name of the troops, then the title of noble ought not to be applied to you; and the noble who consumes any portion of the pay of servants had better consume dust." This passage makes it clear that the strength and pay of the *Muqti's* troops were fixed by the King, who provided the cost; the *Muqti* could, if he chose, increase their pay out of his own pocket, but that was the limit of his discretionary power in regard to them.

4. The *Muqti* had to collect the revenue due from his charge, and, after defraying sanctioned expenditure, such as the pay of the troops, to remit the surplus to the King's treasury at the capital. To take one instance (Barni, 220 ff.), when Alauddin Khalji (before his accession) was *Muqti* of Karra and Awadh and was planning his incursion into the Deccan, he applied for a postponement of the demand for the surplus-revenue of his provinces, so that he could employ the money in raising additional troops; and promised that, when he returned, he would pay the postponed surplus-revenue, along with the booty, into the King's treasury.

5. The *Muqti's* financial transactions in regard to both receipts and expenditure were audited by the officials of the Revenue Ministry, and any balance found to be due from him was recovered by processes which, under some kings, were remarkably severe. The orders of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, quoted above, indicate that under his predecessors holders of *iqtas* and *wilayats* had been greatly harassed in the course of these processes, and he directed that they were not to be treated like minor officials in this matter. Severity seems to have been re-established in the reign of his son Muhammad, for Barni insists (pp. 556, 574) on the contrast furnished by the wise and lenient administration of Firuz, under whom "no Wali or *Muqti*" came to ruin from this cause. The processes of audit and recovery thus varied in point of severity, but they were throughout a normal feature of the administration.

This statement of the *Muqti's* position indicates on the face of it a purely bureaucratic organisation. We have officers posted to their charges by the King, and transferred, removed, or punished, at his pleasure, administering their charges under his orders, and subjected to the strict financial control of the Revenue Ministry.

¹ Barni, 431.

None of these features has any counterpart in the feudal system of Europe; and, as a student of European history to whom I showed the foregoing summary observed, the analogy is not with the feudal organisation, but with the bureaucracies which rulers like Henry II of England attempted to set up as an alternative to feudalism. The use of feudal terminology was presumably inspired by the fact that some of the nobles of the Delhi kingdom occasionally behaved like feudal barons, that is to say, they rebelled, or took sides in disputed successions to the throne; but, in Asia at least, bureaucrats can rebel as well as barons, and the analogy is much too slight and superficial to justify the importation of feudal terms and all the misleading ideas which they connote. The kingdom was not a mixture of bureaucracy with feudalism its administration was bureaucratic throughout.

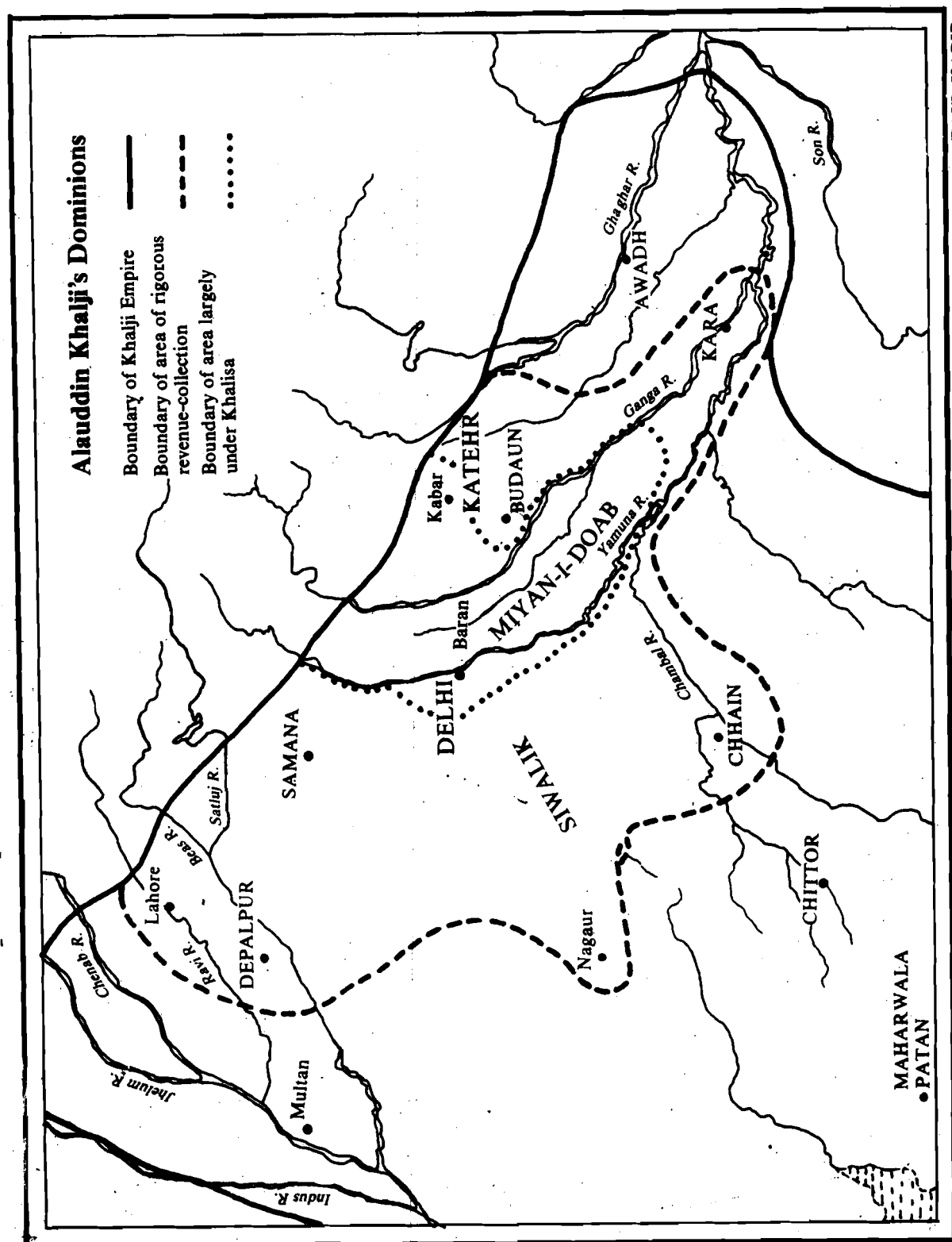
The question remains whether there were differences in status or functions between the Wali and the *Muqti*. The chronicles mention a Wali so rarely that it is impossible to prepare from them a statement similar to what has been offered for the *Muqti*. The constantly recurring double phases, walis and *Muqtis*, or *iqtas* and wilayats, show that the two institutions were, at any rate, of the same general nature, but they cannot be pressed so far as to exclude the possibility of differences in detail. A recent writer has stated that the difference was one of distance from the capital,¹ the nearer provinces being *iqtas* and the remote ones wilayats; but this view is not borne out by detailed analysis of the language of the chronicles. Looking at the words themselves, it is clear that Wali is the correct Islamic term for a bureaucratic Governor; it was used in this sense by Abu Yusuf (e.g. pp. 161, 163) in Baghdad, in the eighth century, and it is still familiar in the same sense in Turkey at the present day. I have not traced the terms *Iqta* or *Muqti* in the early Islamic literature to which I have access through translations, but taking the sense of Assignment in which the former persisted in India, we may fairly infer that the application of *iqta* to a province meant originally that the province was assigned, that is to say, that the Governor was under obligation to maintain a body of troops for the king's service. It is possible then that, at some period, the distinction between Wali and *Muqti* may have lain in the fact that the former had not to maintain troops, while the latter had; but, if this was the original difference, it had become obsolete, at any rate, by the time of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, whose orders regarding the troops equally to both classes, to "the nobles to whom he gave *iqtas* and wilayats."

The chronicles indicate no other possible distinction between Wali and *Muqti*, and the fact that we occasionally read² of the *Muqti* of a Wilayat suggests that the terms were, at least practically, synonymous. The possibility is not excluded that there were minor differences in position, for instance, in regard to the accounts procedure of the Revenue Ministry, but these would not be significant from the point of view of agrarian administration. In my opinion, then, we are justified in rejecting absolutely the view that the kingdom of Delhi contained any element to which the terminology of the feudal system can properly be applied. Apart from the regions directly under the Revenue Ministry, the entire kingdom was divided into provinces administered by bureaucratic Governors; possibly there may have been differences in the relations between these Governors and the Ministry, but, so far as concerns the agrarian administration of a province, it is safe to treat Wali and *Muqti* as practically, if not absolutely, synonymous.

¹ Qanungo's *Sher Shah*, p. 349, 350. Barani, however, applies the term wilayat to provinces near Delhi such as Baran (p. 58), Amroha (p. 58), or Samana (p. 483); while Multan (p. 584) and Marhat, or the Maratha country (p. 390) are described as *iqta*. Some of the distant provinces had apparently a different status in parts of the fourteenth century, being under a minister (Vazir) instead of the Governor (Barani, 379, 397, 454, & C.), but they cannot be distinguished either as *wilayats* or as *iqtas*.

² For instance, T. Nasiri; *Muqti* of the Wilayat of Awadh (246, 247); *Muqti* of the Wilayat of Sarsuti (p. 256). As has been said above, Barani (96) describes the duties of a *Muqti* by the term Wilayatdari.

It may be added that the latter term did not survive for long. In the *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*, written about the middle of the fifteenth century, the title is preserved in summaries of earlier chronicles, but in dealing with his own times the writer consistently uses the term Amir. This term had already been used by Ibn Batuta a century earlier; he speaks of Indian Governors sometimes as Wali, sometimes as Amir, but never, so far as I can find, as *Muqti*; and possibly Amir was already coming into popular use in his time. Nizamuddin Ahmad, writing under Akbar, usually substituted Hakim, as is apparent from a comparison of his language with that of Barni, whom he summarised; Firishta occasionally reproduced the word *Muqti*, but more commonly used Hakim, Sipahsalar, or some other modern equivalent; and *Muqti* was clearly an archaism in the time of Akbar.



FAIZ HABIB