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AN EMPIRE BUILDER OF THE  
SIXTEENTH CENTURY



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No. 3

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19

# AN EMPIRE BUILDER OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

A SUMMARY ACCOUNT OF THE  
POLITICAL CAREER OF  
ZAHIR-UD-DIN MUHAMMAD  
SURNAMED BABUR

BEING THE UNIVERSITY LECTURES FOR 1915-16

BY

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INDIAN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ALLAHABAD

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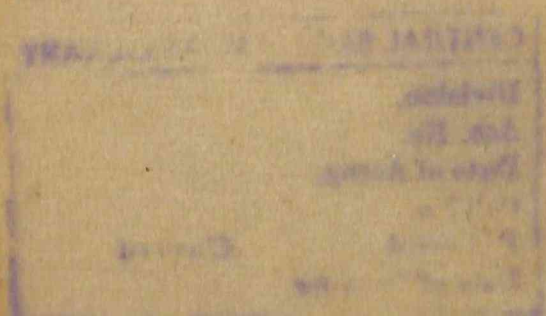
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OF GRATITUDE OWED BY STUDENTS  
OF INDIAN HISTORY IN GENERAL  
AND BY THE AUTHOR IN  
PARTICULAR





## A SUMMARY LIST OF AUTHORITIES FOR THE CAREER OF BABUR

### *A.—Principal Sources.*

#### 1. The *Memoirs* of Babur himself.

A Turki text was published by Ilminski in 1857, and another (in facsimile from the Hyderabad Codex) by Mrs. Beveridge in 1905. This latter is probably a direct copy from Babur's autograph text: see *J.R.A.S.*, 1906, p. 87.

Of the Turki text there are two principal Persian versions, the first by Payanda Hasan, and the second associated with the name of Mirza Abd-ur-Rahim.

The best translations are three in number. That of ERSKINE AND LEYDEN (1826), now rare, is based upon the second Persian version. It is extremely good reading, racy and vivid, but not always faithful to its original. The translation of PAVET DE COURTEILLE (1871) is based upon Ilminski's Turki text, and has remained until lately the nearest approach to the *Memoirs* as Babur wrote them which was accessible to readers of European languages. The third and latest translation, not yet complete, is the most faithful of all, being based upon the important Hyderabad codex. It is the work of MRS. A. S. BEVERIDGE. To this my obligations are great.

The *Memoirs*, even when the "personal equation" is allowed for, do not supply all the details necessary for Babur's life. There are three important "blanks" in them, the first including the years 1503-1504, the second 1508-1519, the third 1520-1525. Recourse must therefore be had to other authorities.

2. The *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* of Mirza Haidar Dughlat. The only translation is that of N. Elias and Denison Ross. The author was Babur's cousin, and in intimate contact with him during the "Kabul" period of his career. Mirza Haidar's work is particularly valuable as helping to supply the blanks in the *Memoirs*; but as the author was a rigid Sunni, a great hater of Shah Ismael and all his works, he is inclined to side with the Uzbeks in 1510 and the following years. Here he is not to be trusted.





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3. The *Habib-us-Siyar* of Khwandamir. Lithographed editions have been published at Bombay and Tehran. It is a universal history: but chapters iii. and iv. of Book III. are particularly important for the relations between Babur and Shah Ismael. The author was a well-informed contemporary, who visited Babur in India, but preserved a detached attitude. The work was begun in A.H. 927, and was perhaps continued down to A.H. 935. Very little use has been made of it, probably because it has never been translated. It was not known to Erskine.

4. The *Ahsan-us-Siyar* of Mirza Barkhwardar Turkman. The only copy known to me is the imperfect one in the library of Nawab Abdussalam Khan of Rampur (U.P.), which recounts in great detail the relations between Babur and Shah Ismael (to whom the book was dedicated). This history is noteworthy because the author, a Shi'a, who wrote with the professed object of correcting the *Habib-us-Siyar*, confirms it in all important respects. The book was finished in A.H. 937.

5. The *Shaibani Nama* of Mirza Muhammad Salih is the versified history of Babur's great antagonist. It has been edited and translated by A. Vambéry. It is very important as showing the Usbeg side of the struggle between Babur and Shaibani.

6. The *Alim arai Abassi* of Mirza Sikandar Munshi is primarily a history of the Safawi king Shah Abbas (A.D. 1588-1628) and was composed in 1616. But there is a detailed account of the origin of the Safawi dynasty, and of the relations between Babur and Shah Ismael. I have used the Bodleian Fraser MSS., 144, 147, 145.

7. The *Humayun Nama* of Gulbadan Begam, Babur's daughter, contains some intimate personal recollection of the author's father. The whole account, however, is exceedingly partial, and unreliable where it is concerned with the relations between Babur and his sons, which are represented as being the best possible. It has been excellently edited by Mrs. Beveridge.

### B.—Minor Sources.

8. The *Tarikh-i-Hakki* of Shaikh Abd-al-Hakk bin Saif-ud-Din Dihlawi is useful for the reigns of the Lodi dynasty. What the author reports of the time of Bahlol and his successors, he knows from actual eyewitnesses or from hearsay. The text I have used is Bodleian Fraser MS., 162.

9. The *Ahsan-ut-Tawarikh* of Hasan is a chronicle of the reigns of Shah Ismael and Shah Tahmasp from A.H. 900-985. There is, however, an unfortunate lacuna (A.H. 913-931) in the texts I have seen, which deprives the book of much of its value as a source for Babur's history. I have used the Bodleian Ouseley MS., 232.





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10. The *Tarikh-i-Firishta* of Muhammad Bin Kasim is useful for helping to supply gaps in the *Memoirs*. The account of Babur is, like the rest of the book, sane, accurate and well-balanced. The most accessible version is the Calcutta reprint of Briggs' translation, but it is not faithful throughout.

11. The *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* of Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad is a good general history of India from the Muhammadan invasions to the latter part of the sixteenth century. There is a short but good account of Babur. I have used the Bodleian Elliot MS., 381.

12. The *Akbar nama* of Abu'l Fazl contains an introductory chapter dealing with Babur, based principally upon the *Memoirs*, but too laudatory to be trusted. It is, however, occasionally worth consulting, and is readily accessible in the Bibliotheca Indica edition. It is being translated by Mr. H. Beveridge.

### C.—Modern Works.

13. Erskine. *A History of India in the Time of Babur and Humayun* (1854) is a fine and scholarly piece of work, excellent alike from the Indian and from the Persian point of view. Its solid learning and sound judgment will always make it difficult to supersede. But the author did not make use of some important sources, particularly Nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, so that his conclusions need re-stating in certain respects.

14. Lane Poole. *Baber*. (Rulers of India.) This is the best short account of Babur's career at present available, but it is based entirely on translated sources, the author relying on Nos. 13, 2, and 1 (Pavet de Courteille's translation).

15. Caldecott. *Life of Baber*. A readable summary based principally on the *Memoirs*.

For other books consulted, the reader is referred to the footnotes, where full particulars will be found.



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## NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

For the privilege of reproducing these illustrations from the famous Alwar Codex of the *Memoirs*, and the less known Agra College Codex, I am indebted to the kindness of H.H. the Maharajadhiraj of Alwar, and of Mr. Cuthbertson Jones, Principal of Agra College. Mr. Ram Prasad Tripathi, M.A., Reader in Modern Indian History in the University, has kindly assisted me in the selection and annotation of the examples chosen.

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## INTRODUCTION

BABUR'S PLACE IN INDIAN HISTORY; BEING A BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF THE POLITICS OF HINDUSTAN IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO  
THE MUGHAL INVASION

PERHAPS in the whole course of mediæval history there is no period which shocks our modern sense of political decorum so violently as the hundred years constituting the fifteenth century of the Christian era. The fourteenth century, in East and West alike, had been a period of promising, if premature, development. There had grown up everywhere compact, centralised monarchies, strong to all outward appearance; prepared, as it would seem, to play a great part in the amelioration of social and political conditions. In the civilisation of the West, the middle classes had begun to demand and to receive a share of power: in the East, strong monarchs had arisen, who had encouraged trade, extended their dominions on all sides, maintained the peace, and suppressed disorder with a ruthless hand. But to this sudden and precocious development there succeeded a period of decay still more startlingly rapid. The political units which had seemed so stable prove to be lacking in all the essentials of unity: the centralised monarchies which had seemed so strong fall apart into a helpless congeries of jarring fragments. The elements of disorder, which had apparently been banished, make their appearance in forces more formidable than ever. In East and West alike, the fifteenth century is a time of unparalleled confusion, an irrational, formless epoch, lacking alike in the elements of coherence and stability. Political society seems to be in the melting pot: history at first sight takes on the guise of ignoble



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scuffling of kites and crows : and the casual observer despairs of discovering any clue to the bewildering confusion of parties, factions and politics.

And yet a more careful examination reveals at length the falsity of such an impression. The confusion, bewildering as it may seem, is a mere ruffling of the surface of things, which leaves almost unaffected the lower depths where the vital constituents of society lie concealed. Beneath all the apparent chaos, the elements from which in the future modern political society will be constructed, are slowly taking shape, until the moment comes when they rise into view, dominant and incontrovertible.

It is the peculiarity of the sixteenth century of the Christian era that in East and West alike it witnessed the commencement of this process of reconstruction. The change was not an unmixed blessing. The fifteenth century, for all its confusion and pettiness, had been an epoch when the arts of life had flourished. In the little courts of the little princes, whether of India or of Europe, building and the fine arts had in certain directions been cultivated to a pitch of perfection which in its own way has never been equalled, far less surpassed, by any subsequent epoch. The sixteenth century, a period of comprehensive schemes and far-reaching enterprises, is in many respects harder and less humane. Drawn on a bolder scale, it lacks at once the delicacy and the minuteness which distinguish the more elaborate and less obvious design of the period immediately preceding.

The beginning of the sixteenth century in India as elsewhere is thus a period of transition, and in order that it may become intelligible, it must be looked at in the light of the conditions out of which it has taken shape.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the armies of the Khiljis and the Tughlaqs had carried the banners of the kingdom of Delhi far and wide. From the Sindh to the Bay of Bengal, from the Himalayas to the Krishna, the dynasty of Delhi held sway. That this sway was at all times effectual cannot be maintained in the face of authenticated facts. The



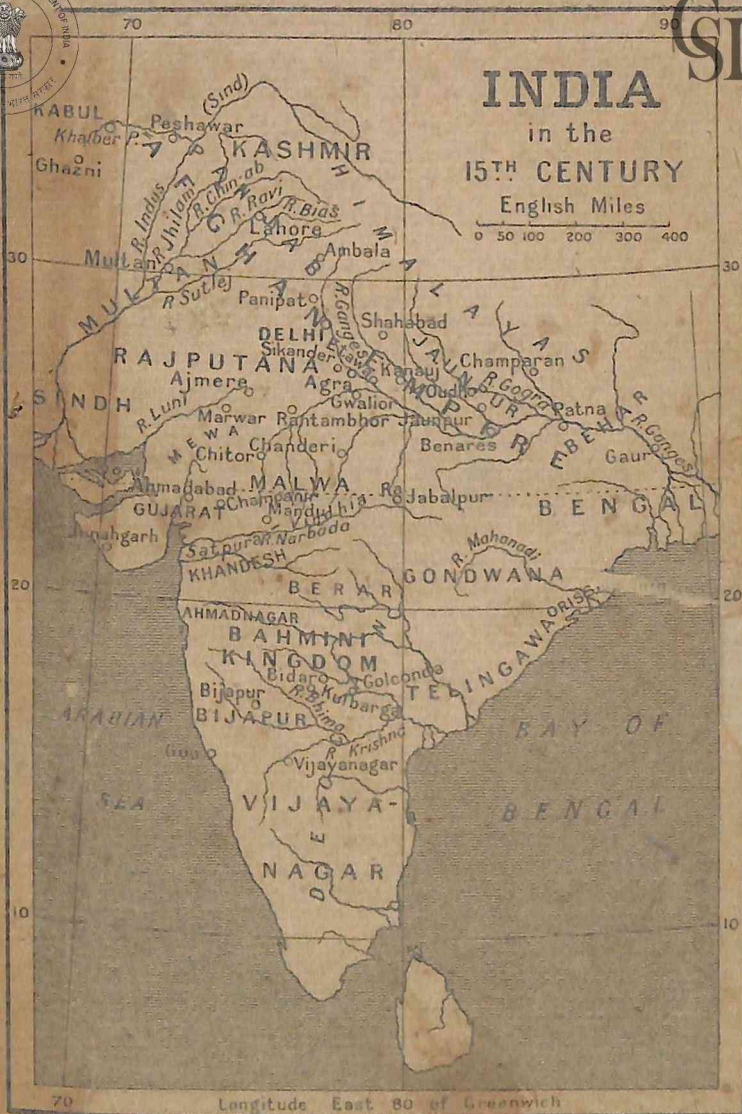
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# INDIA

in the  
15TH CENTURY

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requently occurring revolts in outlying districts, which too often make a king's reign assume the guise of one protracted military expedition, show that these monarchs were not completely masters in their own house. Yet there can be no question that Ala-ud-din Khilji and Muhammad bin Tughlak exercised over their dominions an authority that was, broadly speaking, effective.

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the picture gradually changes. As the central authority grows weak in proportion to the strain thrown upon it by the burden of empire, one by one the outlying provinces become troublesome. In most cases, events follow the same course. A trusted servant of the reigning king is sent to put down disorder. He finds himself master of a compact province, in touch with local interests, out of touch with the court of Delhi. Insensibly he becomes an independent monarch, sometimes after an unsuccessful attempt has been made to reduce him to obedience, more often after death or intrigue has removed his old master and set up on the throne of Delhi a Pharaoh who knows not Joseph. And in this way it came about that the empire of Delhi was reduced to a shadow of its former self, until the invasion of Timur in 1398 brought the tottering structure to the ground, and invested its end, all undeservedly, with the dignity of a tragedy. Thus, during the fifteenth century, there is no history of Hindustan: for Hindustan has become a mass of separate states. Yet the history of these states is well worthy of attention, since they were the embodiment of the materials with which the constructional work of the next century was to be carried on.

Taking our stand in the middle decade of the fifteenth century, we observe that these petty realms fall into four well-defined groups. First, there is what may be called the Northern belt of Muhammadan powers, which sweeps in a great semicircle from the mouth of the Sindh to the Bay of Bengal. At the southern extremity, we have the kingdom of Sindh: further north, that of Multan: next, the Panjab, nominally a vice-royalty of Delhi, but in practice the preserve



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of three powerful Afghan families. Then comes Delhi itself, with its immediate neighbourhood, the rulers of which still claim to be Emperors of Hindustan, despite the ridicule excited far and wide by their pretensions.<sup>1</sup> To the south and east lies Jaunpur, the capital of the Sharqi dynasty, which rules the bulk of the land constituting the modern provinces of Agra and Oudh : while further eastward still is the kingdom of Bengal, living its life apart, and taking but small share in the ephemeral politics of Hindustan. The second group may be termed the Southern Muhammadan belt. First is Gujarat on the west, a well-defined geographical unit. Farther east is Malwa, with Mandu as its capital. South of Malwa is the little kingdom of Khandesh. And south of Khandesh is the great realm of the Deccan, ruled by its Bahmanid dynasty. Wedged in between the Northern and the Southern band of Muhammadan states lies Rajputana, deathless and indomitable after centuries of exterminating warfare, fast regaining some measure of its old strength through the divisions which have overtaken the politics of Islam. Of its principalities the more notable are Marwar, and, above all, Mewar, now rapidly rising into a power of the first rank. To the south of the Southern Muhammadan belt there lies another great Hindu power, the empire of Vijayanagar, whose wars with its northern neighbours make up much of the history of Southern India during the fifteenth century : while to the east lies the Hindu kingdom of Orissa, politically of little importance, but acting as a barrier, more or less effectual, to the southerly expansion of Bengal. With the kingdoms of the Far South we are not concerned. They are too remote from Hindustan proper to be of any account in our estimate of the political situation of that region. To sum up, then, the distribution of political forces in the middle of the fifteenth century. There are two great groups of Muhammadan

<sup>1</sup> There was a contemporary Persian saying :

*Badshahi Shah Alam,  
Az Delhi ta Palam.*

"The empire of Shah Alam stretches from Delhi to Palam." Palam is a village quite close at hand.





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powers, each group menaced on the south by a formidable Hindu polity. I propose to outline in the briefest possible manner, the development of each of these kingdoms, so that, at the end of our survey, we may be in a position to form some estimate of the political forces which have to be reckoned with in Hindustan at the opening of the sixteenth century. We shall find it, I think, most convenient to start from the south, and work upwards, finally concentrating the knowledge we have acquired upon a single central point—the Afghan Kingdom of Delhi.

The origin of the great Hindu empire of Vijayanagar is very obscure. It certainly took its rise from the confusion into which the terrible raids of Muhammad bin Tughlak plunged the somewhat decadent Hindu states of the south. Suddenly awakened to the necessity of opposing to the forces of Islam some fresh political combination, two Kanarese feudatories of the recently extinguished Hoysala power, Bakka and Harihara, erected a new empire upon the ruins of many old ones. Little is known of the personality of the first two rulers: both must have been strong men, possessed of political insight, for their kingdom grew with amazing rapidity. Bakka is said to have reigned from 1334 to 1367, and his brother from 1367 to 1391. Half a century after Harihara's death, the kingdom was visited by an Arabian ambassador named Abd-ur-razzak, who has left in his book *Matta-us-Sadain*, a striking description of its power and prosperity. From this description the following extracts are taken :—

“From our former relation, and well-adjusted narrative, well-informed readers will have ascertained that the writer Abd-ur-razzak had arrived at the city of Vijayanagar. There he saw a city exceedingly large and populous, and a king of great power and dominion, whose kingdom extended from the borders of Sarandip to those of Gulbarga, and from Bengal to Malabar, a space of more than 1000 parasangs. The country is for the most part well cultivated and fertile, and about three hundred good seaports belong to it. There are more than 1000 elephants, lofty as the hills and gigantic as demons. The army consists of eleven laes of men (1,100,000). In



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the whole of Hindustan there is no *rai* more absolute. *Rai* is the title by which the kings of that country are designated.

"The city of Vijayanagar is such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth. It is so built that it has seven fortified walls, one within the other. Beyond the circuit of the outer wall there is an esplanade extending for about fifty yards, in which stones are fixed near one another to the height of a man; one half is buried firmly in the earth, and the other half rises above it, so that neither foot nor horse, however bold, can advance with facility near the outer wall.

"The fortress is in the form of a circle, situated on the summit of a hill, and is made of stone and mortar, with strong gates, where guards are always posted, who are very diligent in the collection of taxes (*jizyat*).

"The seventh fortress is placed in the centre of the others, and occupies ground ten times greater than the chief market of Hirat. In that is situated the palace of the king. From the northern gate of the outer fortress to the southern is a distance of two statute parasangs, and the same with respect to the distance between the eastern and western gates. Between the first, second, and third walls, there are cultivated fields, gardens, and houses. From the third to the seventh fortress, shops and bazars are closely crowded together. By the palace of the king there are four bazars, situated opposite to one another. That which lies to the north is the imperial palace or abode of the *Rai*. At the head of each bazar, there is a lofty arcade and magnificent gallery, but the palace of the king is loftier than all of them. The bazars are very broad and long, so that the sellers of flowers, notwithstanding that they place high stands before their shops, are yet able to sell flowers from both sides. Sweet-scented flowers are always procurable fresh in that city, and they are considered as necessary sustenance, seeing that without them the people could not even exist. The tradesmen of each separate guild or craft have their shops close to one another. The jewellers sell their rubies and pearls and diamonds and emeralds openly in the bazar. . . .

"This country is so well populated that it is impossible in a reasonable space to convey an idea of it. In the king's treasury there are chambers, with excavations in them, filled with molten gold, forming one mass. All the inhabitants of the country, whether high or low, even down to the artificers of the bazar, wear jewels and gilt





ornaments in their ears and around their necks, arms, wrists, and fingers.

But what, it may be asked, can have been the political importance to Hindustan in the fifteenth century of a kingdom so remote? Briefly the answer is as follows. The Rayas of Vijayanagar were engaged in a constant struggle with the states constituting what I have called the Southern Muhammadan belt, weakening their resources, disturbing their combinations, threatening their safety, and thus effectually preventing any one of them from acquiring such an ascendancy over the others as would have exposed Rajputana to a combined attack from its enemies on the south. Such is the political influence of Vijayanagar during the fifteenth century; and, in smaller degree, the same may be said of its much less important sister state Orissa.

This brings us to the Southern belt of Muhammadan powers, and first of all, to the great Bahmanid kingdom of the Deccan. Like all the Muhammadan kingdoms of the day, it found its origin in a successful revolt from Delhi. The Deccan provinces having become troublesome, a court favourite named Zafar Khan, surnamed Bahmani, was despatched to reduce them to order. Finding his task to his liking, he declared himself independent in 1347, under the title of Ala-ud din. Until his death in 1358, he reigned prosperously over a vast dominion, stretching from Berar on the north to the River Krishna on the south, and from the ocean on the west to Indore on the east.<sup>2</sup> His son Muhammad, who succeeded

<sup>1</sup> Elliot and Dowson, iv. 106-107.

<sup>2</sup> Zafar Khan seems to have made a great impression upon the men of his day, to judge from the number of legends which deal with his rise from obscurity to eminence. The favourite story is this: In his youth he was the servant of a Brahman, named Ganga. While ploughing his master's field, the young man turned up a pot of gold coins, which he promptly delivered to his master. Ganga, struck by the honesty of the servant, cast his horoscope, and, discovering that he was destined for great things, had him educated along with his own sons. When a suitable opportunity offered, the young man was taken to Delhi, where he quickly rose to favour and eminence. It was in gratitude to his old master, the legend runs, that Zafar Khan assumed the surname *Bahmani*.



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him, was a mighty man of valour, who found ample scope for his fighting proclivities in struggles with his powerful neighbour, Vijayanagar. The kingdoms were for some time equally matched, but there is no doubt, despite the partialities of Muhammadan historians, that the expansion of the Bahmanid kingdom was effectually checked, so that later monarchs were fain to devote themselves more particularly to the arts of peace. Of these rulers the most notable was Firoz Shah (1397-1422), who may be called the Akbar of the South. Talented and eccentric,<sup>1</sup> eclectic in his religion, a great builder, as the ruins of his capital Gulbarga yet witness, he presided beneficently over the golden age of his people. But perhaps the most notable thing about the Bahmanid empire is the disproportion which existed between its vast size and resources, and its small political importance. The explanation has already been furnished. But for the restraining influence of Vijayanagar, the Bahmanid kingdom might well have proved the centre of a fresh Muhammadan polity, embracing all Hindustan. As it was, its power rapidly declined. The dynasty became decadent. From 1450 onwards the extensive territory was only held together by the ability and energy of the famous Mahmud Gawan, whose courage, honesty and enlightenment have passed into a bye-word. After his unjust execution in 1481,<sup>2</sup> the kingdom split up gradually into a number of independent states, of which the most important were Berar (1484-1527), Ahmadnagar (1489-1633), Bijapur (1489-1686), and Golconda

<sup>1</sup> Firoz Shah is said to have had an extremely cultivated taste in wine and women—particularly the latter. His haram was popularly supposed to contain ladies of every known nationality, Occidental as well as Oriental. It was the king's proudest boast that he could converse with every fair one in her own tongue.

<sup>2</sup> The false accusation and violent death of this upright minister constitute one of the tragedies of mediæval India. His enemies forged a letter under his seal, which purported to invite the Raja of Orissa to invade the kingdom. The date of his judicial murder is commemorated in the two popular *tarikhs* :

*Qul-i-na hagg.* ("The unjust slaying.")

*Bi gonah, Mahmud Gawan shahid shud.* ("Guiltless, Mahmud Gawan became a martyr.")





## 1. AN EMPIRE BUILDER OF THE 16TH CENTURY

(1512-1687). From this multiplication of kingdoms there resulted, of course, a grave diminution of Muhammadan power in Central India at the opening of the sixteenth century.

North of the Bahmanid realm, lay the small and relatively insignificant kingdom of Khandesh, which derived its origin from the day when Firoz bin Tughlak appointed one Malik Raja Farrukhi<sup>1</sup> governor of the country between the Satpura-Vindhia range and the Deccan plateau. Malik Raja shortly declared his independence, and ruled his small realm wisely and well until his death in 1399. His successor, Malik Nasir, attempted to interfere in the Deccan wars, but, as might be expected from the meagreness of his resources, with indifferent success. Under the last notable monarch, Adil Khan Farrukhi (1457-1503), great progress was made in the civilisation of the country. The manufacture of gold and silver cloth, as well as the making of fine muslins, which still remain the staple industries, were then introduced under state encouragement. For some time the little kingdom lingered on as a political entity, protected by its very insignificance, until at last Akbar's reign saw its close. Like the small states of fifteenth-century Italy, it was the home of much quiet prosperity. Its political importance is slender: but it affords a good example of the manner in which the amenities of life may flourish under conditions which prohibit the exercise of the arts of politics.

North again of Khandesh, lay the kingdom of Malwa. At first governed by a local Rajput dynasty, the land had been annexed in 1304 by Ala-ud-din Khilji. Its independence dates from the appointment of Dilawar Khan Ghorī, a Delhi nobleman, as viceroy in 1387. Quickly consolidating his position, in 1401 he declared himself king, founding a state

<sup>1</sup> The story of this man's rise to favour, as told in the popular legend, is, whether true or false, typical of contemporary manners. Sultan Firoz, when on a hunting expedition, found himself separated from his retinue as night fell. He came upon the fire of a solitary hunter, who invited him to share the meal which was being prepared. So excellent was the camp-cooking that the Sultan, revealing his identity, promptly took the stranger into his service. From this day onwards, Malik's rise was so rapid that the surname *Farrukhi* (fortunate) was bestowed upon him, and by him was transmitted to the dynasty he founded.





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which lasted until 1531. On the subsequent history of the kingdom we cannot dwell: suffice it to say that throughout the whole of its short career, Malwa suffered by its proximity to the rising Rajput power of Mewar, which was far too strong for it. Hoshang Shah (1405-1435), the greatest of its kings, succeeded in holding his own for some time: but towards the end of his reign, the great Rana Kumbha of Mewar proved irresistible. In 1440 the ambitious Mahmud Khan Khilji, who, as Wazir, had seized the throne in 1435, was ignominiously defeated and captured by the Rajputs under Rana Kumbha. By the end of the fifteenth century the affairs of the kingdom are completely dominated by Rajputs. Hindus occupy the leading positions in the state: and the famous Rajput chieftain Medni Rao plays the part of kingmaker. When the puppet king Mahmud II., wearied of Hindu domination, invokes the aid of the King of Gujarat, Medni Rao calls in Rana Singram Singh of Mewar, who not only hales Mahmud captive to Chitor in 1519, but carries war into the sphere of Gujarat by storming and capturing Ahmadnagar in 1520. It is in the internal politics of Malwa that we see most clearly the working of that growing Rajput predominance which is the leading factor in the political situation at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Last of the Muhammadan kingdoms of the South, comes Gujarat. This province had been conquered by the forces of Islam in 1196, and continued to be subject to the Kings of Delhi, at any rate in name, until the time of Timur's invasion. For the whole of the previous decade signs of disorder had been apparent: and Muzaffar Khan, an administrator of marked ability, had been despatched from Delhi to restore good government. Throwing off the yoke of the Sultan, he set up in 1396 an independent kingdom which lasted until 1572. In 1410 Muzaffar was poisoned by his grandson, Ahmad Shah, who, despite the unpromising beginning of his reign, proved an able and successful ruler. He made head against the great Sultan Hoshang of Malwa, he regulated the army, he placed the finances upon a sound footing, and he laid the foundation for the future greatness of Gujarat under Sultan Mahmud Bigarha



(1459-1511). This ruler, whose reign is still remembered as a golden age, was singularly fortunate both in home and foreign politics. Not only did he maintain good peace, and encourage trade : he succeeded, in addition, in opposing the formidable Rajput confederacy, extending his dominions by the conquest of Junahgarh and Champanir. His successor, Muzaffar II., was, however, less favoured by fortune. In attempting to prevent Malwa from falling entirely under Hindu domination, he became involved in a disastrous war with Mewar. At his death, there was a disputed succession ; and when Babur entered India on his fifth expedition, he found Gujarat distracted by internal troubles.

We now come to Rajputana, which at the close of the fifteenth century has begun once more to loom large on the political horizon. Mewar, long recognised as the premier state of the Rajput confederacy, had been raised to great power under the able Kumbha, whose reign of fifty years (1419-69) witnessed the erection of thirty-two out of the eighty-four fortresses by which his realm was defended. He successfully resisted all the attempts of his Muhammadan neighbours to check his rising power, and in 1440, at the head of forces estimated at the figure of 100,000 horse and foot and 1400 elephants, he inflicted a crushing defeat upon the combined forces of Malwa and Gujarat. After his murder in 1469, his work was carried on by his successor Rai Mal, whose reign was, however, disturbed by the far-famed feuds of three knightly sons, Singram Singh, Prithwi Raj, and Jai Mal. At length in 1509, Singram Singh succeeded to the throne by the death of his brothers. In his reign, Mewar reached the zenith of her glory. "Eighty thousand horse, seven rajas of the highest rank, one hundred and four chieftains with five hundred war elephants, followed him into the field." He controlled, directly or indirectly, the entire resources of Rajasthan. Eighteen pitched battles did he gain against the Kings of Delhi and Malwa : no force in Hindustan could face him in the field. As Shaikh Zain afterwards wrote : "There was not a single ruler of the first rank in all these great countries like Delhi,





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Gujarat, and Mandu, who was able to make head against him. The banners of the infidel flaunted over two hundred cities inhabited by people of the Faith." Such was the power of the Hindu confederacy, and such the decline of the resources of Islam, when the balance was once more turned against the Rajputs by the coming of Babur and his Turkish warriors from the north.

The Muhammadan states of the Northern Circle need not occupy much of our time. The little province of Sindh, the scene of the earliest advance of Islam into India, was too remote from Delhi to be effectually controlled from the capital. In the course of the thirteenth century the local Rajput dynasty, the Sumeras, had been subdued : but in 1336 another Rajput dynasty, the Jams of the Sumana tribe, re-established their independence. They ruled the kingdom until 1520, when it was conquered by Shah Beg Arghun, the governor of Qandahar, who was seeking a realm which would remove him from the sphere of Babur's activities. Shah Beg's son, Shah Husain, consolidated his conquest by annexing Multan and extinguishing the local Lunga dynasty. The province was finally reunited to Delhi in 1590, and throughout the whole of its history exercised but little influence upon the politics of Hindustan.

*Bengal* Bengal now demands a word. From the earliest days of its conquest by the Muhammadans, it had manifested a self-sufficiency which had tended to isolate it from the main stream of politics. It continued in nominal subjection to Delhi throughout the thirteenth century, but in the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlak it revolted. After a brief period of complete anarchy, the power was seized by Shams-ud-din, who ruled from 1344 to 1357. The dynasty he founded lasted until 1386, when after another period of anarchy, the throne came into the possession of a Hindu zamindar named Raja Kans, whose family reigned until 1426. During most of the fifteenth century, power continued in the hands of the Abyssinian mercenaries, who constituted the royal bodyguard ; and in 1461 Malik Andil, a slave, ascended the throne with their support. He ruled in great splendour for more than thirty



years, maintaining excellent order, encouraging trade, and building lavishly, but taking little share in external politics. He founded no dynasty, and before the beginning of the sixteenth century a successful revolution had placed the Wazir, Saiyid Sharif, on the throne with the title of Ala-ud-din. He reigned until 1523, when he was succeeded by Nasib, his son. ✓ As may be gathered from this brief survey, Bengal was of small importance as a factor in the politics of Hindustan. It interfered very little with its neighbours : it was commercial, literary, and artistic.

*Jaunpur* The same may well be said of Jaunpur, at any rate, in the heyday of its prosperity. As an independent kingdom, it dates from 1394, the time when Mahmud bin Tughlak raised his minister, the eunuch Khwaja Jahan, to the governorship of the country which constitutes the bulk of the United Provinces of modern India. The governor soon declared himself independent, with the title *Malik-us-sharq*.<sup>1</sup> Under his adopted son, Ibrahim Shah (1401-1440), the power of the kingdom ruled from Jaunpur grew apace. That monarch maintained his independence, consolidated his dominions, kept clear of foreign politics, and devoted himself to the encouragement of architecture, industry, and agriculture. Under his peaceful rule the kingdom grew compact and strong—so much so, indeed, that his successor, Mahmud Shah (1440-57), felt himself encouraged to make a bid for empire on the extinction of the Saiyid dynasty. But Bahlol Lodi, the Viceroy of the Panjab, proved at once too quick and too powerful, so that Mahmud was forced to an ignominious retreat. His death in 1457 was followed by a period of intrigue and murder, from which emerged triumphant the last of the Sharqi kings, Husain Shah. Vain, ambitious, but able withal, he conquered Orissa from its ancient Hindu dynasty; he attacked Gwalior, and forced the Raja to pay tribute. But unfortunately for himself, in 1473 he was led to make an unprovoked attack upon Bahlol Lodi. The Delhi monarch, like the honest man he was, attempted to make terms: but all

<sup>1</sup> King or Prince of the East



accommodation having proved impossible, he marched out, defeated the aggressor in three pitched battles, and seized his enemy's capital, Jaunpur. Five years later, the eastern realm was formally re-annexed to Delhi.

We now come to the Kingdom of Delhi itself, of which the history is too well known to detain us long. In 1451, the so-called Saiyid dynasty came to an end by the abdication of the feeble Shah Alam, and the powerful Afghan families who ruled the Panjab in his name put forward their own most prominent man, Bahlol of the Sahu Khail, of the Lodi tribe. He was a good fighter, a simple-natured man who hated display, but above all things, a far-sighted politician, who based his power upon the allegiance of men of his own blood, and realised to the full the manner in which this allegiance was to be won and retained.

The following extract from the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* illustrates the impression he made upon contemporaries <sup>1</sup> :—

“ In his social meetings he never sat on a throne, and would not allow his nobles to stand ; and even during public audiences, he did not occupy the throne, but seated himself upon a carpet. Whenever he wrote a *firman* to his nobles, he addressed them as *Masnad 'Ali* ; and if at any time they were displeased with him, he tried so hard to pacify them that he would himself go to their houses, ungird his sword from his waist, and place it before the offended party : nay, he would sometimes even take off his turban from his head, and solicit forgiveness, saying : ‘ If you think me unworthy of the station I occupy, choose some one else, and bestow on me some other office.’ He maintained a brotherly intercourse with all his chiefs and soldiers. If any one was ill, he would himself go and attend on him.”

Being blessed with a disposition of this kind, Bahlol was able as King of Delhi to confirm the allegiance of the tribesmen with whose help he had formerly ruled the Panjab. Delhi and its surroundings were quickly reduced to order by his strong hand, and towards the end of his reign he was able, as we have already seen, to re-annex the kingdom of Jaunpur, which had been independent for three-quarters of a century. His power was, however, personal rather than official, resting as it did

<sup>1</sup> Elliot and Dowson, iv. 436-437.



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upon the swords of his tribesmen, who lent him their support, not because he was king, but because he was a popular hereditary chieftain. The *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi* is full of passages which throw a vivid light upon his peculiar position. The following is an example :

“Sultan Bahlol was at Dipalpur when he heard the distressing intelligence of the siege of Delhi, and he said to his nobles and ministers : ‘The countries of Hind are broad and rich, and their kings are of Indian extraction. In my own land I have many kinsmen renowned for their valour and strength, who are pressed for a livelihood. Were they here they would be relieved from the contempt of poverty, and I could grasp Hind and destroy my enemies.’

“His chiefs replied : ‘ . . . It is expedient under present circumstances that His Majesty the Sultan should send letters to the chiefs of the tribes in the Roh country to this effect : “God in His goodness has granted the kingdom of Delhi to the Afghans, but the other kings of Hind wish to expel them from the country. The honour of our women is concerned ; the lands of Hind are broad and rich, and can afford maintenance to many. Come, then, to this country ; the name indeed of sovereignty shall remain with me, but whatever countries we may conquer shall be shared between us as brothers. Sultan Mahmud is now besieging Delhi, where the families of the Afghans are. If you feel disposed to assist me, you must do so now, and with a large force.”’ . . . The king, approving of this advice, issued *firman*s to the chiefs of the various Afghan tribes. On receipt of the *firman*s, the Afghans of Roh came, as is their wont, like ants and locusts, to enter the king’s service.”<sup>1</sup>

That the new monarchy he founded was largely personal is proved by the history of his son and successor, Nizam Khan, who ruled as Sultan Sikandar from 1489 to 1517. He ascended the throne without serious opposition, but found that his father’s place was one not easy to fill. Although he was nominal ruler over the Panjab, Delhi and Jaunpur, the country was actually in the hands of vassals upon whose allegiance his power depended. As the author of the *Waqi’at-i-Mushtaki* says :

“One half of the whole country was assigned in *jagir* to the *Farmulis*, and the other half to the other Afghan tribes. At this

<sup>1</sup> Elliot and Dowson, iv. 306-307.





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time the Lohanis and Farmulis predominated. The districts of Saran and Champaran were held by Mian Husain; Oudh, Ambala and Hodhna by Mian Muhammad Kala Pahar: Kanauj by Mian Gadai: Shamsabad, Thanesar, and Shahabad by Mian 'Imad: Marahra by Tatar Khan, brother of Mian Muhammad: and Haryana, Desua, and other detached parganas by Khwajagi Shaikh Said.

"The chief of the Sarwanis was Azam Humayun, and the principal chieftains of the Lodis were four:—Mahmud Khan, who had Kalpi in *jagir*: Mian 'Alam, to whom Etawah and Chandwa were assigned: Mubarak Khan whose *jagir* was Lucknow: and Daulat Khan who held Lahore. Among the Sahu-Khails, the chiefs were Husain Khan and Khan Jahan, both from the same ancestor as Sultan Bahlol; Husain Khan, son of Firoz Khan, and Qutb Khan Lodi Sahu-Khail.

"Some kept great establishments. Azam Humayun, Jagirdar of Karra, used to buy 2000 copies of the Qoran every year, had 45,000 horse under his command, and 700 elephants. Among those of lesser note, were Daulat Khan, who had 4000 cavalry: Ali Khan Ushe, who had 4000 also: Firoz Khan Sarwani, who had 6000. Among other nobles, there were 25,000 more distributed. Ahmad Khan also, the son of Jumal Khan Lodi Sarang Khani, when he was appointed to Jaunpur, had 20,000 cavalry under him."

This period of openhanded rule was subsequently regretted as a Golden Age. The historians of the Afghan dynasty, writing in the time of the Mughal emperors, are never tired of describing the good old days of Sultan Sikandar. The following is a typical extract<sup>1</sup>:

"Every business had its appointed time, and an established custom was never changed. . . . He always behaved to the nobles and great men of his time in the way he did on the first day of the interview. . . . Every chief had his appointed post in his presence, where he always stood. The Sultan daily received an account of the prices of all things, and an account of what had happened in the different districts of the Empire. If he perceived the slightest appearance of anything wrong, he caused instant inquiries to be made about it. . . . In his reign, business was carried on in a

<sup>1</sup> Elliot and Dawson, iv. 448-449.



peaceful, honest, straightforward way. A new sort of life obtained for people high and low were polite, and self-respect, integrity and devotion to religion prevailed, like as had never been the case in former reigns. The study of belles lettres was not neglected. . . . Factory establishments were so encouraged that all the young nobles and soldiers were engaged in useful works. . . . All the nobles and soldiers of Sikandar were satisfied: each of his chiefs was appointed to the government of a district, and it was his especial desire to gain the good-will and affections of the body of the people. For the sake of his officers and troops, he put an end to war and disputes with the other monarchs and nobles of the period, and closed the road to contention and strife. He contented himself with the territory bequeathed him by his father, and passed the whole of his life in the greatest safety and enjoyment, and gained the hearts of high and low."

It may well be imagined that a tactless or unpopular ruler could involve this strange polity in inextricable confusion. Sikandar's son, Ibrahim, though brave, was haughty, morose, and suspicious. The result was disastrous. Not only did he alienate the nobles upon whose support his power rested: not only did he drive into active opposition the very men he ought to have conciliated at all hazards: but, to make matters worse, he attempted to play the tyrant. His cruelties and crimes destroyed all the good work of his father and grandfather. The kingdom of Delhi was distracted: the Panjab and Jaunpur were in open revolt; twice had Ibrahim been defeated by the Rajputs.<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, was the political situation in Hindustan at the opening of the sixteenth century. The Muhammadan powers were weak, distracted by their own divisions; the Rajput confederacy, led by Mewar, was almost ready to seize the empire which lay within its grasp. But the Fates willed otherwise. That Singram Singh was cheated of his prize, that the forces of Islam were re-established, that the Rajputs doomed to endure rather than enjoy, was the result of

<sup>1</sup> Tod, *Annals of Mewar*, chapter ix





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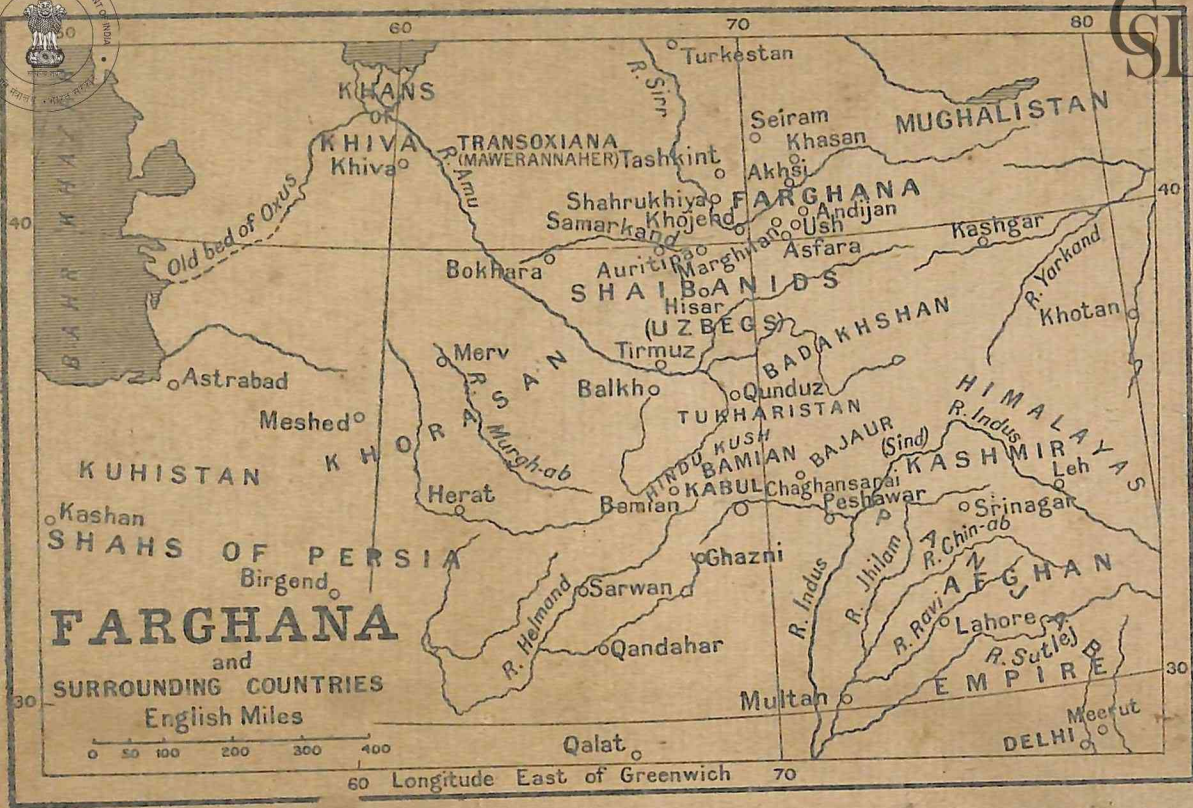
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by a single remarkable individual, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad, surnamed Babur, the Tiger.<sup>1</sup> It is with his life-story, perhaps the most romantic in the whole course of Oriental history, that the following pages are concerned.

<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Vincent Smith has pointed out (*Akbar*, 9, note 2), the Turki word *Bābur* (*tigris regalis*) has no connection with the Arabic *Babar*, "a lion." Cf. Redhouse, *Turkish Lexicon*, and Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, s.n.



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## CHAPTER I

## THE BOYHOOD OF BABUR

*Authorities.*—*Babur-nama*: *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*: *Habib-us-Siyar*:  
*Shaibani Nama*: *Ahsan-ut-Tawarikh*.  
*Modern Works.*—*Erskine*: *Lane Poole*.

## RULERS AT THE TIME OF BABUR'S ACCESSION

Sultan Mahmud Khan (elder maternal uncle)—Tashkint, Sairam, Shahrukhia.

Sultan Ahmad Khan (younger maternal uncle)—Region between Tashkint and Yelduz.

Sultan Ahmad Mirza (elder paternal uncle)—Samarkand and Bokhara.

Sultan Mahmud Mirza (younger paternal uncle)—Hisar, Badakhshan, and Qunduz.

Sultan Ulugh Beg Mirza (youngest paternal uncle)—Kabul and Ghazni.

Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara (head of the House of Timur in power)—Khorasan and Herat.

"In the month of Ramzan of the [Hijra] year 899,<sup>1</sup> in the twelfth year of my age,<sup>2</sup> I became ruler in the country of Farghana."<sup>3</sup>

With these words, abruptly enough, Babur begins the story of his adventurous life, and from the first to the last page of his thick volume, our interest in the man and his writings never for one moment flags. But before we can fairly take up our task of tracing his career from its beginning in a petty principality of Turkistan to its close in the empire of Hind, we must spend a short space in making clear who he was, and what were the circumstances of his accession.

<sup>1</sup> Babur's father, 'Umar Shaikh, was killed on June 8th, 1494 (Ramzan 4, 899 A.H.).

<sup>2</sup> Babur was born on Friday, February 14th, 1483 (Muharram 6, 888 A.H.).

<sup>3</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 1 and n.

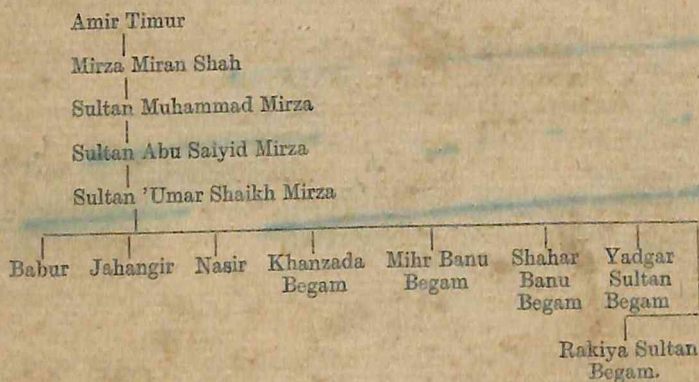




As has often been remarked, Babur could trace descent from the two greatest empire builders who have ever afflicted Asia—Temujin, surnamed Chingiz Khan and Timur the Lame. On his father's side, he was a direct descendant, in the fifth generation, of Timur, while through his mother he could trace his origin, in the fourteenth degree, from Chingiz.<sup>1</sup> We are not concerned here with these remoter roots of Babur's family tree, except to point out that if the forces of heredity count for anything in the shaping of a man's career, Nature would seem to have done her utmost to make Babur a conqueror by instinct. We shall, however, find it necessary to say a word about his paternal and maternal grandfathers, in order to make it apparent that the Fates had joined forces with Nature to make him a conqueror by environment, surrounded from his earliest infancy by an atmosphere of intrigue and ambition.

Babur's grandfather on his father's side, the Timurid

<sup>1</sup> Babur's paternal descent is as follows :—



On his mother's side it ran as follows :—His mother, Kutluk-nigar Khanum, daughter of Yunus Khan, the son of Wais Khan, the son of Shir Ali Khan, the son of Muhammad Khwaja Khan, the son of Khizr Khwaja Khan, the son of Tughlak Timur Khan, the son of Isan-bugha Khan, the son of Dawa Chichan, the son of Borak Khan (Ghias-ud-din), the son of Sukar, the son of Kamgar, the son of Chaghatai, the son of Chingiz. (Erskine, i. 78 ; P. de Courteille, i. 17-18).



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Sultan Abu Saiyid Mirza, after many perils and reverses of fortune, succeeded in conquering the land of Mawerannaher or Transoxiana, which had belonged to his uncle, and in extending his kingdom over Khorasan as far as Mekran and the Indus. His capital was Herat, and from it for twenty years he ruled his extensive dominions in great power and prosperity until 1469, when he met his death in the famous "disaster of Iraq."<sup>1</sup> Venturing into the province of Azerbaijan, for the purpose of settling a dispute between two Turkoman tribes of that region, he was entrapped with his whole force in a narrow defile near Ardebil. He himself perished, and of his large army but few returned to bear the heavy tidings to Herat. So great had been the slaughter that the day was long remembered; and throughout Transoxiana was regarded as a fixed point in time from which other dates were reckoned. On the death of Sultan Abu Saiyid, his dominions were divided amongst his sons, of whom four became independent rulers. Sultan Ahmad Mirza, the eldest, succeeded in occupying the heart of his father's kingdom, the far-famed provinces of Samarkand and Bokhara, the very name of which was a synonym for culture, luxury and wealth. Sultan Mahmud Mirza, the third son, became ruler of Badakshan, Khutlan, and other provinces lying between the Hindu Kush and the Asfera mountains. Ulugh Beg Mirza retained the government of Kabul and Ghazni, which he had held during the lifetime of his father. The fourth son, 'Umar Shaikh Mirza, Babur's father, also succeeded in retaining his own appanage, the kingdom of Farghana.

Farghana, now a small province of Russian Turkistan about 50,000 square miles in extent, is a fertile country, of fairly equable climate, very rich in fruit and in crops, abounding in small game of every description. A well-marked geographical unit, it is hedged round with lofty mountains on all sides save the west. Through gaps in these mountains the great river Sirr flows from west to east, dividing the ridge-rimmed plain into two unequal portions, so that of the seven principal

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi.*





Administrative districts, two lie north of the river, and five to the south of it. From the military point of view, Farghana in the time of Babur presents some interesting points. Briefly, the situation is somewhat as follows. The most prosperous districts, those at which an invader would naturally aim, lie to the south of the river. Of this southern region the chief town is Andijan, which has always been the capital of the whole province. In the fifteenth century, it was a well-fortified place. Slightly to the west of Andijan lies another, weaker, city, Marghilan, and to the south, some distance away, is Ush. But the real key to Farghana, the strong fortress of Akhsi, lies to the north of the river, guarding the western approach—the only path by which a considerable force can penetrate into the heart of the country. When once Akhsi had fallen to an invader, the districts north of the Sirr were in his power. He could then choose his place for forcing the next line of defence, the river itself. When that had been accomplished, he could overrun the fertile plain between the stream and the mountains, compelling the inhabitants to take refuge in the cities of Andijan and Marghilan, which he could besiege at his leisure, master of all the resources of the country.

As may well be imagined, however, these resources were not very considerable. Farghana did not offer much encouragement to a ruler who designed to set his foot upon the path of conquest. None the less, 'Umar Shaikh Mirza, Babur's father, being a man of little caution and less scruple, was constantly on the watch for an opportunity to interfere to his own advantage in the affairs of his neighbours. His particular antagonists, as generally happened at this period, were members of his own family. With his elder brother, Sultan Ahmad Mirza, his relations were persistently hostile.<sup>1</sup> More than one reason contributed to this. In the first place, the restless 'Umar Shaikh coveted the possessions of his more fortunate brother, and was perpetually intriguing against him. Sultan Ahmad, of course, replied by menacing the borders of Farghana with a powerful force, and by attempting, more than once, to

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* Cf. also P. de Courteille, i. 14; Ilminski, 9.





add Farghanah to his own dominions. 'Umar Shaikh, well aware of the inferiority of his own resources, was afraid of his brother, as well as envious of him. Finally, there was a constant bone of contention between the two in the shape of the border provinces of Tashkent and Shahruckhia, to which each laid claim.

The contest was very unequal, on account of the immense superiority in material resources possessed by the elder brother; and there can be no doubt that what made it possible for 'Umar Shaikh to continue the struggle was the constant support afforded him by his father-in-law, Babur's maternal grandfather, Yunus Khan.

Yunus Khan was descended in the twelfth degree from the great Chingiz, and was the eldest son of that Wais who had held rule as Grand Khan of the Mongols.<sup>1</sup> He did not, however, succeed his father in the normal manner; for the free and independent tribesmen having selected his younger brother, Yunus was compelled to abandon Mongolistan, and live for many years as an exile at the court of the ruler of Badakhshan. Here he acquired such an education as fell to the lot of few of his compatriots: he lost the rough habits which were the reproach of the nomadic tribes over which his family held sway, acquiring instead the manners and customs of an educated Persian gentleman. At the age of forty, he was suddenly called out of his life of cultured ease by Sultan Abu Saiyid Mirza—the same who afterwards perished in the “disaster of Iraq”—and persuaded to reassert his pretensions to the Grand Khanate of the Mongols. With the support of his patron, he succeeded after many vicissitudes in vindicating his claim: and in the year 1465–66 was acknowledged as Grand Khan. When Sultan Abu Saiyid and his army were cut off, Yunus Khan applied all his great resources in assisting the sons of his benefactor. He married three of his daughters to the three Mirzas, Sultan Ahmad Mirza of Samarkand, Sultan Mahmud Mirza of Badakhshan, and Sultan 'Umar Shaikh Mirza of Farghana. He was thus placed in an admirable

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this book the word Mongol is used in the narrower ethnological sense: the word Mughal in the broader popular sense.



position to play the part of mediator in the quarrels of his sons-in-law : and being a man of singularly upright and lovable character, his authority was great among them. He had a particular affection for 'Umar Shaikh : and time and time again interfered to save his favourite from the consequences of his unwisdom. On one occasion in particular, when Sultan Ahmad and 'Umar Shaikh were confronting one another in battle array, he threw his resources into the scale on the side of the weaker, and thus produced a postponement of hostilities until the famous saint Khwaja Nasir-ud-din 'Ubaidulla, who had hurried to the spot, was able to patch up a treaty of peace.<sup>1</sup> But perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the respect in which the Grand Khan was held by all lies in the fact that when Sultan Ahmad and 'Umar Shaikh failed to come to any understanding about the disputed border provinces of Tashkent and Shahrukha, both parties agreed to solve the difficulty by handing over to him the lands in question. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Babur's maternal grandfather made a great impression upon contemporaries. Not only did he present the paradoxical combination of Mongol blood and Persian culture : he possessed in addition a commanding personality and great charm of character. The following description which has been left by an eye-witness is not without interest to us, for there can be little doubt that Babur himself had much in common with the Khan his grandfather.

"I had heard that Yunus Khan was a Mongol, and concluded that he was a beardless man, with the rude manners and deportment of an inhabitant of the desert. On the contrary, I found him a handsome man with a fine bushy beard, of elegant address, of most agreeable and refined manners and conversation, such as are very seldom to be met with in the most polished society." <sup>2</sup>

So long as Yunus lived, his mediating influence was always exerted to mitigate the strife of his sons-in-law : but when he died in 1486-7 their struggles broke out with renewed ferocity. We must examine these disputes in brief outline, for upon

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* ; Erskine, i. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*





them depended the political situation at the time of Babur's accession.

The first consequence of the death of Yunus was the reopening of the whole question of Tashkent and Shahruxhia. His elder son, Mahmud Khan, who reigned over the tribes round about that region, naturally refused to surrender the district ; on the other hand, both the Timurid brothers, Sultans Ahmad Mirza and 'Umar Shaikh Mirza, claimed that the provinces of Tashkent and Shahruxhia had only been held by Yunus pending the settlement of the conflicting claims to them. 'Umar Shaikh, restless as ever, was the first to take action. His long years of friendship with Yunus had led him to despise the Mongol power. Anxious to get the start of his brother, he rashly staked all the resources of his little kingdom on a single throw. By a sudden dash he succeeded in gaining possession of Ushtur, one of the principal fortresses of Tashkent. But, as he ought to have foreseen, he was too weak to hold it in face of the superior resources of Mahmud Khan. The "Elder Khan," as he is generally termed, did not even trouble to invite the assistance of his younger brother Ahmad, the ruler of Northern Mongolistan. He attacked Ushtur immediately in person, stormed it after a tremendous fight, and put the garrison to the sword. 'Umar Shaikh lost his best troops, and for the moment, all power of aggressive action. During his period of enforced inactivity, he doubtless had ample time to regret his ill-advised attack upon his powerful brother-in-law.<sup>1</sup>

It was now the turn of Sultan Ahmad Mirza. The discomfiture of his brother 'Umar Shaikh must have caused him considerable satisfaction : but he himself, despite his superior resources, was to fare, if anything, worse than the ruler of Farghana. Collecting an army 150,000 strong, he led it against Tashkent in the following year. Mahmud Khan advanced to meet him, and took up a position between the town and the River Sirr. Unluckily for Sultan Ahmad, there was in his army a certain Shahi Beg or Shaibani, of whom we shall have more to say.<sup>2</sup> This man made overtures to

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi.*

<sup>2</sup> *Shaibani Nama* : also s.n. in Index.





Mahmud Khan, and arranged to bring about the discomfiture of his own side. What happened was this. Mahmud Khan allowed his adversary to cross the river which separated the two armies, and then suddenly attacked him in front. The treacherous Shaibani fell at the same time on his rear. Taken on both sides, the army of Sultan Ahmad was thrown into confusion, and finally driven into the river it had just crossed. The slaughter was terrible, and large numbers of the troops perished in the Sirr. This disaster was to have an important bearing upon the fortunes of Babur.

Sultan Ahmad returned to Samarkand with a wholesome respect for the power of Mahmud Khan. After a short time, an alliance was arranged between the late antagonists: and Sultan Ahmad gave one of his daughters in marriage to Mahmud. But 'Umar Shaikh of Farghana was incapable of learning by experience. So soon as ever he could collect sufficient resources to bring an army into the field, he recommenced his old policy of interfering in the concerns of his neighbours. At length he provoked his brother and his brother-in-law, Sultan Ahmad Mirza and Sultan Mahmud Khan, to take vigorous action against him. In 1494, wearied of his constant intrigues, they determined to deprive him of his dominions, and thus prevent him from stirring up any further trouble. Accordingly they arranged a joint invasion of Farghana. Sultan Ahmad, advancing from Samarkand, was to enter the country by the road to the south of the Sirr, and march straight upon Andijan, the capital. Mahmud Khan, as befitted his larger resources, was to penetrate by the pass to the north of the river, and seize the fortress of Akhsi. The first stages of the campaign were duly carried out, and it must have seemed that Farghana was doomed. 'Umar Shaikh did the only thing possible under the circumstances. Having put his capital under the governorship of his eldest son Babur, leaving Khudai-birdi, who had been his own guardian,<sup>1</sup> and some other trusty begs

<sup>1</sup> See P. de Courteille, i. 25; Uminski, 16. Khudai-birdi had been made Master of the Household by Sultan Abu Saiyid, and Babur notes his great administrative ability.



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to advise him, he himself set out for the threatened northern districts, entered Akhsi, and prepared to make a desperate resistance.

At this juncture, however, occurred the curious accident which saved Farghana. 'Umar Shaikh Mirza, like so many of his Turkish house, was extremely interested in the breeding and training of tumbler pigeons. One day in Akhsi he entered a pigeon cot which was built upon the side of a hill sloping down to the river below. The foundations gave way, the house fell upon him, and he was instantly killed.<sup>1</sup> This happened on Monday, June 8th, 1494.

At first sight, nothing could have seemed more disastrous for the kingdom. Two powerful armies were already within its borders, and Babur, the late monarch's eldest son, was but eleven years old. As a matter of fact, the death of 'Umar Shaikh removed the only bond which had united the foe into a common purpose. Him they had hated; they had no grudge against his son. Both Sultan Ahmad Mirza and Mahmud Khan coveted Farghana, and thus each was unwilling that the other should possess it. At the same time, it was determined to proceed with the reduction of the province, although each of the invaders kept a wary eye on the other. Everything thus turned upon the personality of the heir apparent. Was he to undergo the fate of the "rightful heir" of fairy lore: or was he to frustrate the intentions of the two "wicked uncles"?

Zahir-ud-din Muhammad, surnamed the Tiger, had been born on Friday, February 14th, 1483. He was thus just eleven years and four months old when his father's sudden death seated him on the throne. His two half-brothers, Jahangir Mirza and Nasir Mirza, were respectively two years and four years younger. Of his early boyhood we know little: probably because it was mainly spent in the company of the

<sup>1</sup> There is nothing in the *Memoirs* or the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* to justify Erskine's contention that pigeon-cot and all fell with 'Umar Shaikh into the river. There is no reason to suppose that the hill on which the building stood was precipitous.





masters from whom he learned so much. He was extremely well educated, wrote a good hand, and later produced some notable verse.<sup>1</sup> In view of his times and lineage, it is hardly necessary to say that he was an admirable horseman, a fine shot, a good swordsman, and a mighty hunter. Even before he was called upon to fill his father's place, he had given evidence that he possessed no common qualities as a leader of men. That he was chosen to govern the capital during his father's absence at Akhsi shows indeed but little, for infants in arms were in that age sometimes placed in titular command of an invading army.<sup>2</sup> But the history of his doings during the first stormy months of his reign inclines us to believe the statements of Khwandamir as to his remarkable precocity. There is little doubt that Andijan obeyed its youthful governor, whose insight into character at an early age, and whose keenness of observation are amply apparent from the thumb-nail sketches he has left of those with whom he came into contact during these years of boyhood.

Consider this impressionistic study of his father, 'Umai Shaikh Mirza, remembering that Babur when only eleven years old saw him for the last time.<sup>3</sup>

"He was a short and stout, round-bearded and fleshy-faced person. He used to wear his tunic so very tight that to fasten the strings he had to draw his belly in, and, if he let himself out after tying them, they often tore away. He was not choice in dress or food. He wound his turban in a fold; all turbans were in four folds in those days; people wore them without twisting and let the ends hang down. In the heats, and except in his Court, he wore the Mughul cap. . . . He had a poetic nature, but no taste for composing verses. He was so just that when he heard of a caravan returning from China as overwhelmed with snow in the mountains of Eastern Andijan, and that of its thousand heads of houses two only had escaped, he sent

<sup>1</sup> There are a few lines in Babur's own hand in the famous little Rampur codex of his Turki poems.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the expedition carried out under the nominal command of the infant Shah Tahmasp: *Habib-us-Siyar* and *Ahsan-us-Siyar*. Another example is that of Murad Mirza, who accompanied Humayun's Persian allies in 1544-45.

<sup>3</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 14. Cf. also P. de Courteille, i. 12, 13 (Iliminsk





THE NOBLES OF FARGHANA DO HOMAGE TO BABUR.

(Alwar Codex.)



THE NOTABLES OF ANDIJAN PAY THEIR RESPECTS TO BABUR  
(*Alwar Codex.*)



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his overseers to take charge of all goods, and though no heirs were near, and though he was in want himself, summoned the heirs from Khurasan and Samarkand, and in the course of a year or two had made over to them all their property, safe and sound.”

Such sketches might be multiplied indefinitely, but one more must suffice :—

“Ali Dost Taghai was a relation of my mother’s mother. I favoured him more than he had been favoured in ‘Umar Shaikh Mirza’s time. People said, ‘Work will come from his hand.’ But in the many years he was in my presence, no work to speak of came to sight. . . . He was worthless by nature and habit, a stingy, severe, strife-stirring person, false, self-pleasing, rough of tongue and cold of face.”<sup>1</sup>

The author of these shrewd strokes had need of all his alertness if he was to keep his head amidst the difficulties that surrounded him. At the time of ‘Umar Shaikh Mirza’s accident, Babur was living in his summer quarters, the Four Gardens, at Andijan. Here it was that the news of his father’s death reached him on Tuesday, June 9th. Young as he was, he acted with great decision. The first thing was, plainly, to make sure of the citadel. He mounted at once with his retainers, and was preparing to enter the town, when a sudden doubt struck one of his begs.<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Mirza was invading the country in force: supposing the garrison of Andijan should seize the young prince, and hand him over to his uncle to save the land from ravage? He mentioned the matter to his master, who realised the imminence of the danger. It was almost decided that the young prince should retire to the foot hills of Auzkint, when the matter came to the ears of the loyal begs within the town. Treachery to their new master was the last thing that occurred to them, and they hastened to assure him of their good faith. From the country round about, the old servants of his father flocked into the fort, paid their respects to the prince, and diligently set themselves to make good the towers and ramparts of the defensible area. “After waiting

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> Sherim Taghai.



upon me," says Babur, "they set themselves with one heart and mind, and with zeal and energy to hold the fort."<sup>1</sup>

The situation was fast becoming critical. To the north Akhsi still held out under the nominal command of Babur's next brother, the nine-year-old Jahangir, advised by the flower of 'Umar Shaikh's trustiest warriors:—but in the south, things were looking very black. Sultan Ahmad was advancing at a terrible speed. Auratipa, Khojend, and Marghilan successively fell before him, and finally he encamped at Qaba, only a short distance from the capital. As he approached, there must have been many anxious hearts in the garrison: how could their young master hope to hold out against his uncle's superior resources? One at least of the Andijan notables, a certain Darwesh Gau, made what Babur characterises as "improper proposals"—doubtless, proposals for handing the young prince over to his uncle as the price of the retirement of the Samarkand forces. But he was promptly put to death, and the unanimity of the garrison was restored by the swift retribution which overtook the traitor. Before making up their minds to stand a siege, however, Babur's party attempted to arrive at an amicable agreement with the invading forces. The proposals addressed to Sultan Ahmad are described by Babur as follows: "As he himself would place one of his servants in the country, and as I was myself both a servant and a relation, he would attain his end most readily and easily if he entrusted the service to me."<sup>2</sup> But the ingenious attempt at compromise failed. "Sultan Ahmad Mirza," says Babur, "was a mild, weak man, of few words, who, without his begs, decided no opinion or compact, action or move; they paid no attention to our proposal, gave it a harsh answer, and moved forward."<sup>3</sup>

Things were in this condition, and the garrison was preparing itself to endure a siege, when suddenly the whole aspect of affairs altered. The army of the invaders came to a halt almost under the walls of Andijan, and offered the most liberal terms. Several reasons contributed to this change of

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. Ilminski, 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; Ilminski, 20, 21.



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front on the part of Sultan Ahmad. In the first place, he was profoundly discouraged by the loyalty of the countryside. "They" (the invaders), says Babur, "found in our soldiers and peasants a resolution and single-mindedness such as would not let them flinch from making offering of their lives so long as there was breath and power in their bodies."<sup>1</sup> Next, a grievous murrain afflicted the horses of the Samarkand troops, so that they died in crowds. But the final cause determining Sultan Ahmad to leave his nephew in peace was this. In marching from Qaba he had been forced to cross a stagnant, morass-like water, spanned by a single bridge. The narrow footway became overcrowded, so that numbers of men and horses and camels were pushed off, perishing miserably in the swamp. The whole thing was so horribly reminiscent of the disaster of the Sirr, seven years before, that Sultan Ahmad's nerve gave way. He was only anxious to get out of the country before ill-luck once more overtook him.<sup>2</sup> In consequence, he hastily patched up a peace with his nephew, and, to the amazement of all, retired as fast as he had advanced. Thus, all unexpectedly, the most imminent of the dangers threatening Babur passed away.

There was, however, still a hostile force within his territory. His mother's brother, Mahmud, the Elder Khan, had advanced along the north side of the river, and, according to agreement, had duly laid siege to Akhsi, as has already been related. But the garrison, headed by Ali Darwesh Beg, Mirza Kuli Kukuldash, and others, opposed a desperate resistance. The presence of the young Jahangir Mirza was doubtless an encouragement to faithful service. So well did the garrison fight that Mahmud, profoundly discouraged by the unexpected retreat of his ally Sultan Ahmad, finding that he could gain nothing but hard knocks, decided to retire also. He fell sick, and took advantage of the fact to withdraw with as good a countenance as possible.

There remained one further adversary. Aba-bikr Dughlat of Kashgar, who had for some years been supreme in Kashgar and Khotan, took advantage of the distresses of Farghana to

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. Ilminski, 21.





build a fort in the neighbourhood of Auzkint. From this vantage point he harried the country far and wide. As soon as the more formidable of his adversaries had been disposed of, Babur's party turned their attention to Aba-bikr. Dumb-founded by the change in the aspect of affairs, Aba-bikr was very happy to receive permission to retreat with a whole skin.

Babur's party had now an instant's breathing space, and they employed it to the best possible advantage. His father's household having come from Akhsi to Andijan, the customary mourning was fulfilled, and the young prince turned his attention to the administration of the country and the ordering of the army. The real head of affairs at this time was his grandmother, Aisan-daulat Begam, whose prudent advice was responsible for much of his success. Probably at her instance the government of Andijan and the control of the Gate was assigned to Hasan, son of Yakub: Auzun Hasan was given command of Akhsi, and Marghilan was entrusted to Ali Dost Taghai. To other nobles who had displayed their loyalty in the recent troubles, grants of land, of office or of money were made according to the particular circumstances of each. Finally the army was carefully ordered: and the contributions of men owed by the newly-appointed office-holders were, it must be presumed, accurately determined.

The process of reorganisation had hardly been completed before news was brought of another bewildering change in the political situation. Sultan Ahmad Mirza had been in poor health during his Farghana campaign—a fact which may help to explain the unexpected termination of the expedition—and in the middle of July, 1494, he suddenly died. He left no sons; so his begs, after consultation, offered the throne to his younger brother, Sultan Mahmud Mirza, who ruled over Badakshan and the provinces between the Asfera mountains and the Hindu Kush. Sultan Mahmud Mirza accepted the invitation, made over Hisar to one son, Bokhara to another, and himself came to Samarkand. He seated himself upon the throne, without opposition. Master not only of his own but of his brother's dominions, his resources were very great. A





AISAN-DAULAT BEGAM ORDERING THE REALM OF HER GRANDSON BABUR.  
(Agra Codex.)



AISAN-DAULAT BEGAM GIVES ORDERS FOR THE ARREST OF THE  
CONSPIRATORS,  
(Agra Codex.)



tern ruler, and an administrator of marked ability, he quickly replaced his new provinces to order. The nobles of Samarkand found to their dismay that they had exchanged King Log for King Stork. He executed two of his kinsmen; he imprisoned three others. Secure from all opposition, he revised the revenue assessment, and insisted on the payment of dues and imports by those who had formerly been excused on the ground of their sanctity. This raised a howl of wrath from the clergy, and, in combination with the vicious private life he led, made Sultan Mahmud extremely unpopular. But his authority was too strong to be shaken. He let his new subjects grumble, and pursued his own policy unmoved.<sup>1</sup>

Soon he began to cast his eyes about him, in search of further acquisitions. It occurred to him that Farghana was not only a desirable addition to his possessions: it offered a particularly promising field for intrigue. The ruler was young and inexperienced: there were, moreover, two younger brothers who might be used as tools in the game, and a number of ambitious begs, who were already becoming disappointed at their failure to bend the will of the boy king in their own interests. Accordingly, Sultan Mahmud Mirza took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the despatch of a complimentary embassy to Babur, in order to win over the powerful Hasan, son of Yakub, Babur's master of the Gate, who ruled in Andijan.<sup>2</sup>

Five or six months later, that is, towards the end of 1494, Babur found himself confronted by a formidable conspiracy. Hasan-i-Yakub plotted to dethrone his master, and to supplant him by the young Jahangir, in whom he hoped to find a pliant tool. He succeeded in securing a certain following among the disaffected begs, although the majority remained true to Babur. The wise Aisan-daulat Begam took charge of the crisis: <sup>3</sup> a meeting of the loyalists was held in her presence,

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 40-41; *Habib-us-Siyar*; P. de Courteille, i. 49-50 (Uminski, 29, 30).

<sup>2</sup> The ambassador's name was 'Abdu'l Qadus Beg, and he seems to have been a blood-kinsman of Hasan-i-Yakub.—A. S. Beveridge, 42.

<sup>3</sup> For her authority over her grandson's affairs, see A. S. Beveridge, 43; cf. Uminski, 31.





and it was decided to strike the first blow. Taking the opportunity of his absence from the citadel on a hawking excursion, they arrested Hasan's trustiest followers. On the news of this, Hasan at once set off for Samarkand, presumably to invite the active co-operation of Sultan Mahmud Mirza. Not desiring to appear empty-handed before his employer, he turned aside from the direct road, hoping to surprise Akhsi. Babur promptly despatched a body of men to head him off, and in a night attack the traitor was killed by a chance arrow from the bow of one of his own partisans.<sup>1</sup> So far so good: but the agent having been disposed off it remained to reckon with the principal. However, at the critical moment fortune once more favoured Babur, for Sultan Mahmud Mirza died suddenly in January, 1495.

Instantly all was in confusion throughout his realm, and the tables were completely turned. Instead of being menaced to the south and west by a powerful neighbour, anxious to swallow him up, Babur now found himself confronted by a distracted kingdom, in the affairs of which he might well hope to interfere to his own profit. No sooner was Sultan Mahmud Mirza dead, than the usual scramble for the dominions of a departed monarch began. He left five sons, but for the moment we need concern ourselves with three only, Sultan Mas'ud Mirza, Sultan Baisanghar Mirza, and Sultan Ali Mirza.<sup>2</sup> At the time of their father's death, the two elder sons were absent at their respective governments, Sultan Mas'ud Mirza in Hisar, and Sultan Baisanghar Mirza in Bokhara. As a result the wazir, Khosru Shah, made a bold attempt to seize Samarkand and the royal treasure. Being eminently and deservedly unpopular, however, he was expelled from the capital by a general uprising, and sent off to Hisar under escort. The succession was settled upon Baisanghar, the second son, by a council of the begs, who passed over the elder son, Mas'ud, apparently on account of his weaker personality. But Bai-

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 44. *Habib-us-Siyar*.

<sup>2</sup> The two remaining sons were Sultan Husain Mirza and Sultan Wais Mirza. A. S. Beveridge, 47.



Baisanghar had scarcely taken his seat on the throne of Samarkand when fresh trouble began. A discontented party, headed by Junaid Barlas and other notables, invited the intervention of Mahmud, the Elder Khan. A strong force of Mongols promptly invaded the country, commanded by the Khan's most experienced general, Haidar Kukuldash. But Baisanghar resolved to strike a stout blow for his inheritance, marched out, and inflicted upon the invaders a crushing defeat near Kan-bai. So many of the captives were beheaded in Baisanghar's presence that his tent had to be shifted three times because the ground was cumbered with corpses.<sup>1</sup>

Babur was watching the affairs of Samarkand with great interest. Like his father before him, his earliest dreams had been connected with that city, indissolubly associated with the glory and greatness of Amir Timur. Could he but seat himself upon the throne of his mighty ancestor, fame would be his, and he would die content. But before he could turn his attention to such a project, there were other matters, nearer home, which must be settled. Khojend, to which his father had long laid claim, had slipped from Farghana during the recent troubles, and was now a dependency of Samarkand: Auratipa, another district which had formerly been in the possession of 'Umar Shaikh, had undergone a similar fate, and was now being held by Sultan Ali Mirza on behalf of his brother Baisanghar. Finally, one of the tribes which dwelt between Kashgar and Farghana was making difficulties about the payment of tribute. With so much on his hands, Babur must have been somewhat annoyed to find himself involved in sudden hostilities with Baisanghar himself. The new Sultan of Samarkand, apparently desirous of continuing the projects against Babur which had been interrupted by the death of Sultan Mahmud, won over a Mongol chief named Ibrahim Saru, who had formerly been in the service of 'Umar Shaikh. This man seized Asfera, a fortress near the southern border of Farghana, and declared for Baisanghar. Most fortunately for Babur, the declaration was ill-timed. At that precise moment

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 52; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 64 (Ilminski, 38).





the Sultan of Samarkand, being called upon to meet the army of Mahmud, the Elder Khan, was in no case to send assistance to Ibrahim Saru. Babur had thus time to nip the intended rebellion in the bud. Quick action was necessary, and in May, 1495, he rode out of Andijan to attack Asfara. By the end of the month, he had isolated the fortress from all possibility of succour.

The place at length surrendered, Ibrahim Saru returned to his allegiance, and was admitted to favour once more. Flushed with this success, Babur determined to follow it up by attacking Khojend. The commander, probably despairing of assistance from Baisanghar, who was still engaged with the Mongols, surrendered the place at once.

As fortune would have it, Mahmud, the Elder Khan, happened just then to be in the neighbouring province of Shahrukha. It occurred to Babur that it would be wise to go and look up his maternal uncle, not merely to see how the land lay, but also to assure the Khan that no ill-will was borne for the attack on Akhsi. The interview between uncle and nephew was formal enough, but apparently satisfactory so far as it went.

"I waited on the Khan in the garden Haidar Kukuldash had made outside Shahrukha. He was seated in a large four-doored tent set up in the middle of it. Having entered the tent, I knelt three times, he for his part, rising to do me honour. We looked one another in the eyes, and I returned to my place. After I had kneeled, he called me to his side, and showed me much affection and friendliness."<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, Babur set off for Andijan, while despatching a force to collect the arrears of tribute from his defaulting subjects. This enterprise also was entirely successful; and the army returned to the capital with some 20,000 sheep and 1500 horses, seized from the tribesmen. The last of the enterprises which remained was that of Auratipa. Here Babur met a check. Sultan Ali Mirza did, indeed, hurry away when he heard of the approach of the Farghana contingent, but he

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 54.



left his guardian, Shaikh Zu'n-nun Arghun behind with an inadequate force. When Babur arrived, he found the place too strong for him, and turned back to Andijan. Soon afterwards, however, his uncle Mahmud, the Elder Khan, attacked Auratipa in his turn. He was more successful, for he took it, and gave it to a certain Muhammad Husain Dughlat, whom we shall meet again.

Babur returned to his capital, on the whole well satisfied. He had put down rebellion, he had exacted his tribute, he had recovered an important possession. He now set to work to organise his resources for further efforts. Meanwhile, he found much to interest him in the affairs of Baisanghar Mirza, Sultan of Samarkand.

The unlucky kingdom of Samarkand, having beaten off the Mongol army of Mahmud, the Elder Khan, found itself confronted by a new and most formidable adversary. Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, descendant of an elder son of Amir Timur, was ruler of Khorasan, and the most powerful of all the princes of his house. From his capital, Herat, he controlled an immense kingdom. Highly educated, a liberal and discriminating patron of art and letters, his court was the most brilliant in Asia. But he was ambitious and self-seeking, always ready to extend his dominions at the expense of his neighbours.<sup>1</sup> Taking advantage of the troubles of the kingdom of Samarkand, he advanced against Hisar with a powerful force. He went into winter quarters at Tirmiz, where he was observed from across the river by Sultan Mas'ud Mirza, the elder brother of Baisanghar. For most of the winter the opposing forces watched one another : but at last Sultan Husain Baiqara crossed by a feint, and compelled his adversary to fall back into Hisar, which was promptly besieged. At the same time he sent two detachments, one under his eldest son, Badi-uz-Zaman Mirza, against Qunduz, where Khosru Shah, the late wazir, was holding out : and another against Khutlan under a young son, Muzaffar Husain Mirza. Sultan Mas'ud promptly fled to bear the bad news to Baisanghar in Samarkand, and it

<sup>1</sup> *Habib-us-Siyar*, ii. 256-60 ; *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.





seemed that the whole country would fall into Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara's hand. Many of the Uzbek soldiers of fortune who had been in the service of the Samarkand rulers thought all was over, and came to offer their swords to Babur. But, as it happened, things went badly for the invaders. Hisar held out bravely: Khosru Shah twice repulsed forces sent against him; so that at last the great ruler of Khorasan was glad to make peace and withdraw. Babur must have been greatly relieved: for had Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara established himself in Samarkand, the prospects of a successful attack upon the city of Timur would have been much reduced. And at this moment an event occurred which must have filled him with renewed hopes. A formidable conspiracy broke out in Samarkand on the part of the local begs, who complained that their Sultan showed too much favour to the men of Hisar, the companions of his boyhood. 'It was agreed to depose him, and set his younger brother, Sultan Ali, in his place. Baisanghar was kidnapped and actually on his way to the famous Guk Sarai, whither the princes of the House of Timur never went save to be crowned, blinded or bowstrunged,<sup>1</sup> when he managed to make his escape to the house of a well-known Khwaja. The sanctity of his host protected him until an uprising of the populace restored him to his throne. The unfortunate Sultan Ali was in his turn sent to the Guk Sarai: but by some chance his eyes did not lose their sight when the fire-pencil was drawn across them. He escaped to his partisans in Bokhara, and in a moment the kingdom of Samarkand was in the throes of civil war. Sultan Baisanghar moved against his brother, but was beaten off with some loss, and driven back into his capital.

On the receipt of this news, Babur acted with decision.

<sup>1</sup> There is a note by Babur which is of some interest in this connection: "The Guk Sarai is one of Timur Beg's great buildings in the citadel of Samarkand. It has this singular and special characteristic, if a Timurid is to be seated on the throne, here he takes his seat: if one lose his head, coveting the throne, here he loses it: therefore the name Guk Sarai has a metaphorical sense, and to say of any ruler's son, 'They have taken him to the Guk Sarai' means, to death." A. S. Beveridge, 63. The building is, however, older than Timur. Cf. Petis de la Croix, *Chingiz Khan*, 171; and Erskine, i. 98.



HAMZA SULTAN, MAHDI SULTAN, AND SOME OTHER CHIEFTAINS FROM  
SAMARKAND AND BOKHARA COME TO SEEK BABUR'S SERVICE.  
(Agra Codex.)





## THE BOYHOOD OF BABUR

GL  
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Though but fourteen years of age, he determined to strike a blow for himself, and to seat himself, if possible, upon the throne of his ancestor Timur. Accordingly, in the middle of July, 1496, he got his men to horse, and advanced to the siege of Samarkand. Here he found two of his cousins already encamped beneath the walls: Sultan Ali, who was bent on revenge, and Sultan Mas'ud, who was in love with a Samarkand lady. The three princes besieged the town for three or four months, but as winter was coming on, they withdrew early in September. Babur and Sultan Ali arranged to renew the siege next year. Sultan Mas'ud, having won his lady love, went back to Hisar well content. Sultan Ali retired to Bokhara, to make his preparations for next year's campaign. Babur recrossed the hills to Farghana, and entered Andijan with a similar end in view.

With this siege of Samarkand, fruitless as it was, the first period of Babur's life comes to a close. He is a boy no longer, but a man and a warrior, eager to win fame and glory, impatient of control, and longing to pit himself against the other competitors in the fascinating game of high politics: a game in which the stake was an empire and the counters were kingdoms.



## CHAPTER II

## THE TRAINING OF A WARRIOR

*Authorities.*—*Babur-nama*; *Habib-us-Siyar*; *Shaibani Nama*; *Alim arai Abassi*; *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.

*Modern Works.*—*Erskine*; *Lane Poole*; *Vambéry's History of Bokhara*.

BABUR was now fairly embarked upon his adventurous career as prince-errant. He spent the winter of 1496-7 in making careful preparations for his intended attack on Samarkand in the spring. He succeeded in keeping his project a complete secret from Baisanghar. At last, when all was ready, he sprang to horse in May, 1497, and took the road to Samarkand, leaving Auzun Hasan and Ali Dost Taghai in charge of the affairs of his capital.

The unfortunate Sultan Baisanghar received a most unpleasant surprise. He had been well aware that his brother, Sultan Ali, was about to renew the attack: and, encouraged by a small success, had marched out to oppose him. The two brothers were lying face to face when Babur's scouting parties made their appearance. Baisanghar, dumbfounded at the approach of this unexpected adversary, broke up his camp and retired in confusion. He only just escaped in time, for a flying column of the Farghana troops surprised his rearguard at night, inflicted severe losses, and brought off a mass of spoil.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 66; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 83 (Ilminski, 48). At this point a good many of the Uzbek nobles who had been in the service of the House of Timur, deserted to follow the rising fortunes of Shaibani. Among them was Muhammad Salih Mirza, the author of the *Shaibani Nama*. See Vambéry, chapter xv.; A. S. Beveridge, 64.





## THE TRAINING OF A WARRIOR

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Joining forces with Sultan Ali, Babur advanced on Samarkand. Shiraz fell to the invaders; more and more of Baisanghar's men came over and took service with them. These soldiers of fortune, who were always ready to desert a losing cause, were principally Mongols. Babur was fully aware of their unreliability, and he had, moreover, a personal dislike to their race. He cannot, therefore, have been sorry, when an opportunity presented itself, to show them that he meant to be master. Some of them were brought before him on the charge of behaving brutally to humble village elders. Babur, who took great pride in the discipline and restraint of his troops, ordered the plunderers to be cut to pieces. This act of stern justice was to be the cause, as we shall see, of much future trouble; but meanwhile the lesson was effectual. One day during the advance, a sudden alarm was raised, and the Musulman traders who had come to the camp to buy and sell were plundered. "But," says Babur with great pride, "such was the discipline of our army, that an order to restore everything having been given, the first watch of the next day had not passed before nothing, not a tag of cotton, not a broken needle's point, remained in the possession of any man of the force: all was back with its owners."<sup>1</sup>

Babur encamped before the town, and the siege work was pushed on. There were frequent skirmishes with the garrison, and on the whole, the besiegers had the advantage. But a "deceitful" message, inviting Babur to send a picked detachment to the "Lovers' Cave," resulted in a small party of his best troops being destroyed by the ambushed enemy.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 66; P. de Courteille, i. 85. Babur's low opinion of the Mongols is plainly expressed in several passages of the *Memoirs*. Compare the following:—"The horde of Mongols have uniformly been the authors of every kind of mischief and disaffection: up to the time of writing they have rebelled against me on five occasions" (P. de C., i. 139-40; Ilminski, 80). And on speaking of Sultan Kuli Chinak, who rebelled, Babur says: "It is certain that his reprehensible conduct is entirely to be ascribed to his Mongol nature" (P. de C., i. 140; Ilminski, 80).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the account in the *Habib-us-Siyar*, from which it appears that the message itself was genuine enough, but that it led Babur to anticipate no opposition. It was the town-rabble which fell upon his men. See below.

operations dragged on through the hot weather, and the situation of the garrison gradually became critical. Sortie after sortie was repulsed with loss, until at length they were shut entirely within the walls of the town. Baisanghar grew desperate: none of his own house would help him, and as a last resort, he made a frantic appeal for help to Shaibani Khan, governor of Turkistan.

Shaibani, whom we have met before under his alternative title of Shahi Beg, was the grandson of a certain Abu-l-khair, a prince who united into one powerful confederacy the nomadic Uzbek tribes of the north-western steppe.<sup>1</sup> The infant empire was wrecked by the jealousy of the wilder and more conservative elements composing it, and Shaibani, the hope of his house, was forced to seek service abroad to repair his shattered fortunes. With a small band of devoted followers, he hired himself out, now to this prince, now to that; ever increasing his resources, and ever pursuing his own interests, ruthless and unscrupulous. We have already seen how he betrayed his master, Sultan Ahmad Mirza, at the battle of the Sirr. As a reward for this piece of treachery, Mahmud, the Elder Khan, had made him Governor of Turkistan. From that time forward, he came into prominence as the great enemy of the Timurids in general, and of Babur in particular. His power, his cunning, his cruelty, made him a most formidable opponent; and until the hand of death finally removed him, he was to constitute an insuperable barrier to the career of the young prince of Farghana.

At the moment, however, fortune smiled on Babur. He had just moved his troops into winter quarters, and had taken summary vengeance upon certain leaders of the mob which had slain the Lovers' Cave band.<sup>2</sup> When Shaibani came up hot-foot, hoping to surprise the besiegers, he found them too strong to be attacked. Baisanghar, disappointed with the prudence of his ally, showed his chagrin openly, and Shaibani, piqued,

<sup>1</sup> See *Shaibani Nama* (for later career); *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*; *Habib-us-Siyar*; *Alim arai Abassi*; and among modern authorities, Erskine, i. 30-34, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. note <sup>1</sup> above. This seems to confirm the *Habib-us-Siyar's* account of the event.





withdrew his forces. He had, however, as Erskine remarks,<sup>1</sup> seen the richness of the prey and the weakness of the defenders. Henceforth Samarkand, with its wealth and luxury, fascinated him, and he determined to wrest it from the hands of the house of Timur. At the moment, however, there was nothing for him but retreat. The field was left open for his young rival.

The siege had now lasted seven months, and the city could not hold out much longer. When Shaibani withdrew, the last hope of successful resistance vanished. So Baisanghar, with two or three hundred half-starved followers, slipped out of the town one night and rode for Qunduz, to seek shelter from the former wazir, Khosru Shah. He was nearly intercepted by his brother Mas'ud, but at length reached Qunduz in safety. Khosru received him kindly, seeing in him a useful instrument for his own ends.

So, at the end of November, 1497, Babur realized the dream of his life. Riding out of his cantonments, he took the road to the city of his ancestors. "To give us honourable meeting on the road were nobles and braves, one after the other. . . . Thus by God's favour were the town and country of Samarkand taken and occupied."<sup>2</sup> Sultan Ali Mirza, for his part, passed on and took possession of Bokhara.

The joy of Babur knew no bounds. Years afterwards, from the garden house at Sikri, where, as his daughter Gulbadan tells us, he sat writing his book,<sup>3</sup> his mind went back to the glories of that day. With pride he dwelt upon the wonders of Timur's city: its splendid palaces, its mosques, its gardens, its colleges and its walls: upon the wealth and prosperity of the regions dependent upon it: upon the history of its successive captures and recaptures by prince after prince, conqueror after conqueror. Not all his triumphs in Hindustan could eclipse the memory of that day when he entered Samarkand, a victor hardly fifteen years old.

<sup>1</sup> Erskine, i. 74.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 74; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 96 (Ilminski, 55).

<sup>3</sup> Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun Nama*, f. 15 (a); ed. A. S. Beveridge, p. 19.



But his throne was no easy resting-place. It was impossible to satisfy at the same time his new subjects and his old soldiers. Both the one and the other were exhausted by the long siege. The troops deeply resented the prohibition of plundering, and commenced to clamour for their pay. It was impossible to raise any money from the half-starved city, and Babur's men began to desert in crowds, making their way back to Andijan. Nor was this all. Auzun Hasan, who had been left in Andijan, when ordered to round up and send back the deserters, made common cause with another high beg, Sultan Ahmad Tambal, in demanding that Andijan and Akhsi should be handed over to Jahangir, Babur's brother. Doubtless they hoped to use the younger prince as a tool for the advancement of their own interests. For several reasons the demand could not be granted. The chief was, of course, that Babur depended on Farghana for the support which was to make him secure in Samarkand. But besides this, Mahmud, the Elder Khan, had already put in a demand for Andijan and Akhsi; and Babur had no wish to be involved in war with his uncle. When their proposal was refused, the two conspirators raised a body of troops and laid siege to the citadel of Andijan. The loyal garrison held out under Ali Dost Taghai, but sent urgent messages to Samarkand: "They are besieging us in this way: if at our cry of distress you do not come, things will go all to ruin. Samarkand was taken by the strength of Andijan: if Andijan is in your hands, God willing, Samarkand can be had again."<sup>1</sup> At this very moment, unfortunately Babur was recovering from a serious illness, and the attempt to transact business in his weak state of health brought on a relapse. "Not having been able to take due care in the days of convalescence," he says, "I went all to pieces again, and this time I became so very ill that for four days my speech was impeded, and they used to drop water into my mouth with cotton. Those with me, begs and bare braves alike, despairing of my life, began to take thought each for himself."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 88.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*





THE MESSENGER FROM THE INSURGENTS HEARS THAT BABUR  
IS DYING.

(Agrā Codex.)



## THE TRAINING OF A WARRIOR

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SL

By an unpardonable error of judgment, a messenger from the insurgents was admitted to Babur's sick-bed. Of course, he rode back post-haste to report that the prince was on the point of death. As a matter of fact, in a few days, Babur was able to set out for Andijan, but it was too late: the citadel had surrendered on the very day he had left Samarkand, and his capital was in the hands of his foes. Nor was this all. As soon as his presence was removed from Samarkand, his partisans became discouraged, his enemies carried matters with a high hand, his cousin Sultan Ali Mirza was called from Bokhara, and the city of Timur slipped from his grasp.

The unfortunate Babur had now only Khojend as his base. He appealed to the Elder Khan for help: and the joint forces marched on Akhsi. But just at the critical moment, when another march would have regained the country, Mahmud Khan allowed himself to be cajoled by promises and bribes into deserting his nephew and withdrawing his forces. Worse was to follow. Babur's men began to slip away from him one by one until only the two or three hundred personal followers, who accompanied him throughout all his wanderings, remained. The poor little prince was bitterly disappointed: "It came very hard on me; I could not help crying a good deal," he says.<sup>1</sup>

Khojend was a poor place, and could not accommodate Babur's court, reduced as it was. Even apart from his ambitious designs, it would soon be necessary to seek fresh quarters. During the summer of 1498, however, all his efforts proved fruitless. Borrowing some men from his uncle Mahmud Khan, he tried an advance on Samarkand, only to find that the formidable Shaibani was dangerously close at hand. Again he had to retreat. Another attempt on Andijan half-heartedly supported by Mahmud Khan, failed also: and nothing remained but to cast himself upon the charity of Muhammad Husain Dughlat, the ruler of Auratipa, who was prevailed upon to lend Pashaghar, one of his villages. Here Babur passed the winter as best he might, waiting for what

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 91.





fortune would send him, not a whit daunted by the unprosperous complexion of his affairs.

The winter season passed, and Babur, still uncertain where to turn, went to the summer pastures in the south of Auratipa. Suddenly his luck changed. One day, about the time of Afternoon Prayer, a solitary horseman appeared at the foot of the valley where the prince was encamped. He proved to be the body servant of Ali Dost Taghai, who had so rashly surrendered the citadel of Andijan on the news of Babur's illness. He brought such a message as would have gladdened the heart of any exiled monarch: Ali Dost apologised for his past misdeeds, prayed to be received into grace, and offered to make over Marghilan to Babur.

The chance was too good to be missed. Babur and his little band of 240 men sprang to the saddle, and rode all that night. By dawn of the third day, they had covered the hundred and fifty miles of road to Marghilan. As they approached the city, doubts began to assail them. How if the message had been a ruse to decoy the prince into the clutches of his foes? But it was now too late to hesitate. Putting a bold face on the matter, Babur rode up to the gate. After a short parley, Ali Dost Taghai, on the promise of pardon, admitted him. Babur was once more in possession of a walled town.

Trusty emissaries were despatched to scour the country for troops and supplies: from all sides men and munitions began to come in. Babur had been generally beloved, not merely for his personal charm, but for the excellent order he maintained. On the other hand, Auzun Hasan and Sultan Ahmad Tambal, who now swayed Farghana in the name of their puppet Jahangir, being, as Babur says, "heathenish and vicious tyrants," had inflicted great misery upon peasants and clansmen alike. They gathered a considerable force, none the less, and attempted to besiege Marghilan, but could not succeed in fighting their way through the suburbs. Meanwhile the mob of Akhsi rose against the garrison, drove them into the citadel, and admitted Babur's followers to the town.



## THE TRAINING OF A WARRIOR

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SL

The news grew better and better. A useful contingent came in from Mahmud Khan. A picked body of Auzun Hasan's most trusted retainers, which had been despatched to the help of his supporters in Akhsi, was cut to pieces as it crossed the river.<sup>1</sup> Finally, when Auzun Hasan and Tambal were retreating in confusion upon Andijan, a message was brought that their own governor of the fortress had declared for Babur.

The whole kingdom now came over, and in June, 1498, Babur was once more master of Farghana. Sultan Ahmad Tambal fled to Auzkint: Auzun Hasan threw himself into Akhsi and was allowed to make terms. All traces of rebellion died out, and it might have seemed that Babur's troubles were for the moment over.

Such, however, was not the case. A single false step undid the work of many weeks of hard fighting. When the rebellious chieftains had submitted, the bulk of their followers joined Babur. These followers were principally Mongols. We have already noticed Babur's dislike of the race, and the stern measures he adopted during the Samarkand expedition to keep them in hand. They on their part, had but little cause to love a ruler who put down plundering so sternly and was so ridiculously careful about protecting the lives and property of humble villagers who were incapable of protecting themselves. Several of Babur's trustiest followers were annoyed to see these Mongol mercenaries decked out in the plunder of honest men. On the strength of their representations, Babur was persuaded to issue an order that the Mongols should restore all goods recognised and claimed by their rightful owners. The command was most ill-timed. As he himself admits: "Reasonable and just though the order was, I now understand it was a little hasty; with a worry like Jahangir seated at my side, there was no sense in frightening people in this way."<sup>2</sup>

The Mongols rebelled, and promptly marched off to join

<sup>1</sup> The *Habib-us-Siyar*, which has a slightly different account, says that Auzun Hasan's troops owed their disaster to the Mongol troops sent by Mahmud Khan, whose intervention took them by surprise.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 104.





Tambal, who thereupon renewed hostilities. A force of Babur's men led by Kasim Beg was severely defeated, and Tambal was even able to besiege the capital for nearly a month. When he failed to effect anything there, he went off to Ush. There was nothing for it but another regular campaign.

In August 1499, accordingly, Babur, after collecting his partisans, marched on the Ush district, which was the centre of Tambal's power. While he was on the way thither, that active rebel attempted to surprise Andijan, but fortunately the garrison received the alarm just in time, and Tambal had to retire. Babur, on his part, sat down before the strong fortress of Madu, held by Tambal's younger brother. The place was vigorously assailed. An attack was delivered at dawn on one day, and in the morning of the next day, the garrison asked for terms, and left their defences.

Soon after this success, Babur, encouraged by the arrival of fresh parties of his adherents, determined to venture upon a pitched battle. Tambal, on his part, moved round and got between Babur and the capital. Nothing could have suited the prince better. The battle took place at a village called Khuban, about 15 miles from Andijan. Babur with his usual prudence had drawn up his troops in the traditional order of his race: vanguard, centre, left and right. His well-trained foot soldiers were provided with mantelets, in case it became necessary to retire and act on the defensive. But, as luck would have it, they were not needed. It was a cavalry combat, and Babur's horse quickly swept their opponents off the field. Unfortunately, much of the fruits of victory were lost through over-caution, the pursuit not being pushed far enough. None the less Babur was very pleased. "This was my first ranged battle: the most High God, of His own favour and mercy, made it a day of victory and triumph."<sup>1</sup>

Tambal retreated to Auzkint, and Babur went into winter quarters to observe him. Unfortunately, it was found impossible to keep his army together. The greatest of all the

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 113.

begs, Kambar Ali, insisted on going to his own district,<sup>1</sup> and Babur, weakened by his untimely withdrawal, could no longer keep the field. He retired to Andijan, but was aroused to sudden action by the news that the Elder Khan, his uncle, influenced by certain relations of Tambal high in his favour, had despatched assistance to the Farghana rebels. Tambal left Auzkint, and advanced into the plains: the new troops laid siege to Kasan, not far from Akhsi. Babur acted with his usual promptitude, collected a handful of followers, and rode through the bitter cold of mid-winter to Akhsi. "So mightily bitter was the cold that night," he says, "that it bit the hands and feet of several men, and swelled up the ears of many, each ear like an apple."<sup>2</sup> On the news of his approach, the Khan's men retreated in dismay, and Babur nearly succeeded in capturing Tambal himself, who was hastening to join his allies. Unfortunately Babur's begs persuaded him to wait until daylight before delivering an attack: and in consequence, Tambal slipped away. The cause of the rebels was now hopeless; but in February, 1500, when Babur was eagerly looking forward to crushing them altogether, he was dismayed to find that his two greatest begs, Ali Dost Taghai and Kambar Ali, were arranging for an accommodation. It was clearly not to their interest to allow their young master to become too absolute, or else he might make himself entirely independent of their influence. They therefore insisted upon a division of the territory of Farghana between Babur and his brother Jahangir. The Akhsi side of the river was to belong to the younger, the Andijan side to the elder, with the proviso that when Babur regained Samarkand, Jahangir was to have Andijan as well as Akhsi. Babur was very indignant, but dared not break openly with his powerful feudatories.

The success of this stroke seems to have turned the head of Ali Dost Taghai. Governor of Andijan for Babur, he ruled like an independent prince. Assuming absolute control over

<sup>1</sup> In light of subsequent events there can be little doubt that he deliberately designed to prevent Babur gaining a decisive success.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 116.





his young master's household, he dismissed in disgrace trusty servants like Khalifa and Kasim Beg, who had shared so many hardships. His son went further, and started receptions and a public table as if he had been a Sultan. Babur's position became most difficult,<sup>1</sup> and he was eagerly looking for a pretext to escape a tutelage so irksome when he received a sudden summons to Samarkand.

Much had happened in that kingdom since Babur had left it in February, 1498. Sultan Ali Mirza, the former ally of Babur, had seized Samarkand itself soon afterwards, and still continued to rule the city and its immediate neighbourhood. But the most striking feature in the recent politics of the country had been the sudden rise to power of the unscrupulous wazir, Khosru Shah, whose attempt to seize the capital on the death of Sultan Ahmad Mirza has already been related. When Baisanghar had been expelled by Babur and Sultan Ali, he had fled to Khosru Shah in Qunduz, and had been kindly received. Khosru, with the principal claimant to the throne in his grasp, promptly set about laying his hands upon the other possible competitor. His task was not difficult. Mas'ud Mirza had displayed in the government of Hisar that lack of capacity which had caused him to be passed over when the throne of Samarkand had been in question. He had shown such favour to his father-in-law, Shaikh Abdullah Barlas, that he had offended all those nobles upon whom the safety of his person and possessions depended. Khosru Shah's plans were laid accordingly. Taking Baisanghar with him he marched on Hisar, sending forward an envoy to amuse Mas'ud with the proposal for a joint advance on Samarkand. As soon as he got close to the town, all those who were discontented with Mas'ud fled to Baisanghar : and the unfortunate ruler made his escape, almost unaccompanied, just as the forces of his enemies were closing round the town. He fled to Sultan Husain Mirza

<sup>1</sup> It was while Babur was in this situation that he was suddenly smitten with affection for a boy in the camp bazaar, named Baburi. Babur's own account of the episode is most singular. See A. S. Beveridge, 120-1; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 162-3 (Ilminski, 92, 93).

Baiqara, but found him engaged in open warfare with his son Badi-uz-Zaman, and in no case to afford much assistance to fugitive princes. Khosru Shah, having installed Baisanghar in Hisar, commenced to negotiate with Mas'ud. That infatuated prince, leaving his safe refuge with Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, put himself in Khosru's hands. Khosru Shah, though he had been his guardian from childhood, seized him and blinded him. At the mention of this horrid deed, Babur's wrath grows hot as he writes : " A hundred thousand curses light on him who planned and did a deed so horrible ! Up to the very verge of the Resurrection, let him who hears of this act of Khosru Shah, curse him : and may he who hearing, curses not, know cursing equally deserved." <sup>1</sup>

One brother being blinded, the fate of the other was not long delayed. In August, 1499, Baisanghar was seized with his begs, and suffered death by the bowstring when only 22 years of age. Khosru was now master of Qunduz, Hisar and all the region round about. He had already begun to cast eyes upon Samarkand : but unfortunately for himself, there were other and nobler rivals in the field.

The affairs of Samarkand at this juncture were such as to inspire with hopeful interest everyone except the unfortunate occupant of its throne. Sultan Ali had the ill-luck to fall out with the powerful Tarkhan family, who had secured almost all the revenue of the districts of Samarkand and Bokhara in their own hands. The Tarkhans, finding their power menaced, invoked the aid of some of the Elder Khan's Mongols. These however, proved a broken reed. Not only were they uncomfortable allies <sup>2</sup> : they were also unlucky enough to be defeated by Sultan Ali. The Tarkhans then sent a messenger to Babur, offering him the throne of Samarkand.

We have seen the condition in which the proposal found

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 96.

<sup>2</sup> The Mongols apparently thought of making Muhammad Mazid, the head of the Tarkhans, a prisoner. This naturally alienated the Tarkhan faction, who retired from the alliance. The Mongols, not being able to stand alone, went home : but on the way were caught and defeated.





Babur. The chance of escaping from his irksome restraints was too good to be missed. Hastily arranging matters with Jahangir, regardless even of the surprise by Tambal's partisans of the fortress of Ush, he took the Marghilan road. On the way to Asfera, he picked up the trusty Kasim Beg with a useful contingent and pushed on. Soon he got news that there was another competitor in the field. Shaibani, with a formidable force, had already taken Bokhara, and was rapidly approaching Samarkand. Babur had many friends in the town, but they wished him to come as close as possible before they declared for him. He on his part held off until they should commit themselves openly, because his force was far too small to make any real demonstration against a fortified city. Hence it came about that Shaibani won the race. His admission to the town, where he had few partisans, was due to the almost incredible folly of Sultan Ali's mother, who agreed to procure its surrender in return for a promise that the Uzbek chief would marry her, and provide for her son out of his other dominions. Accordingly in July, 1500, Samarkand passed into the hands of Shaibani. The sequel may be imagined. Sultan Ali was murdered, his mother became the most despised of Shaibani's concubines, and a massacre of Babur's partisans took place.

The prince of Farghana, finding that his prize had for the moment slipped from his grasp, avoided Samarkand and moved off in the direction of Hisar. He was joined by a certain number of the Samarkand notables who had fled from Shaibani, but as soon as he approached Hisar and the territory of Khosru Shah, these left him. Having only some two or three hundred trusty followers left him, Babur might well have despaired of success in his enterprise. But anything was better than his restricted life in Andijan, and he determined to try his fortune once more. He thought of reaching his uncle Ahmad, the Younger Khan, and asking his help : but he gave up the idea, and decided to achieve his aim with his own resources, or not at all. Accordingly, he marched on Samarkand again.

Shaibani, despising so small a body of men, took no notice. Indeed, the Uzbek had good reason for confidence.



## THE TRAINING OF A WARRIOR

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Encamped at some distance from the town were three or four thousand of his war-hardened troops, with as many more of the local levies. Within the citadel were five or six hundred soldiers under a trusty commandant. Babur, on the other hand, had only 240 men, good and bad. What happened must be told in his own words, so vividly rendered by Mrs. Beveridge :—

“ Having discussed the position with all my begs and unmailed braves, we left it at this :—that as Shaibani Khan had taken possession of Samarkand so recently, the Samarkandis would not be attached to him nor he to them ; that if we made an effort at once, we might do the thing ; that if we set ladders up and took the fort by surprise, the Samarkandis would be for us ; how should they not be ? Even if they gave us no help, they would not fight us for the Auzbegs ; and that Samarkand once in our hands, whatever was God's will, would happen.

“ Acting on this decision, we rode out of Yar-yilaq after the Mid-day Prayer, and on through the dark till midnight, when we reached Khan-yurti. Here we had word that the Samarkandis knew of our coming ; for this reason we went no nearer to the town, but made straight back from Khan-yurti. It was dawn when, after crossing the Kohik-water below Rabat-i-khwaja, we were once more in Yar-yilaq.

“ One day in Fort Asfidik a household party was sitting in my presence ; Dost-i-nasir and Nuyan Kukuldash and Khan-quli-i-Karim-dad and Shaikh Darwesh and Mirim-i-nasir were all there. Words were crossing from all sides when (I said), ‘ Come now : say when, if God bring it right, we shall take Samarkand.’ Some said, ‘ We shall take it in the heats.’ It was then late in autumn. Others said, ‘ In a month,’ ‘ Forty days,’ ‘ Twenty days.’ Nuyan Kukuldash said, ‘ We shall take it in 14.’ God showed him right ! we did take it in exactly 14 days.

“ Just at that time I had a wonderful dream :—His Highness Khwaja 'Ubaid'l-lah (Ahrari) seemed to come ; I seemed to go out to give him honourable meeting ; he came in and seated himself ; people seemed to lay a table-cloth before him, apparently without sufficient care, and, on account of this, something seemed to come into his Highness the Khwaja's mind. Mulla Baba (? Pashaghari) made me a sign ; I signed back, ‘ Not through me ! the table-



layer is in fault !' The Khwaja understood and accepted the excuse. When he rose, I escorted him out. In the hall of that house he took hold of either my right or left arm and lifted me up till one of my feet was off the ground, saying, in Turki, 'Shaikh Maslahat has given (Samarkand).' I really took Samarkand a few days later.

"In two or three days move was made from Fort Asfidik to Fort Wasmand. Although by our first approach, we had let our plan be known, we put our trust in God and made another expedition to Samarkand. It was after the Mid-day Prayer that we rode out of Fort Wasmand, Khwaja Abu'l-makaram accompanying us. By midnight we reached the Deep-fosse-bridge in the Avenue. From there we sent forward a detachment of 70 or 80 good men who were to set up ladders opposite the Lovers'-cave, mount them and get inside, stand up to those in the Turquoise Gate, get possession of it and send a man to me. Those braves went, set their ladders up opposite the Lovers'-cave, got in without making any one aware, went to the Gate, attacked Fazil Tarkhan, chopped at him and his few retainers, killed them, broke the lock with an axe, and opened the Gate. At that moment I came up and went in.

"Abu'l-qasim Kohbur himself had not come with us, but had sent 30 or 40 of his retainers under his younger brother, Ahmad-i-qasim. No man of Ibrahim Tarkhan's was with us ; his younger brother, Ahmad Tarkhan, came with a few retainers after I had entered the town and taken post in the Monastery.

"The townspeople were still slumbering ; a few traders peeped out of their shops, recognised me, and put up prayers. When, a little later, the news spread through the town, there was rare delight and satisfaction for our men and the townsfolk. They killed the Auzbegs in the lanes and gullies with clubs and stones like mad dogs ; four or five hundred were killed in this fashion. Jan-wafa, the then governor, was living in Khwaja Yahya's house ; he fled and got away to Shaihaq Khan.

"On entering the Turquoise Gate I went straight to the College and took post over the arch of the Monastery. There was a hubbub and shouting of 'Down ! down !' till day-break. Some of the notables and traders, hearing what was happening, came joyfully to see me, bringing what food was ready and putting up prayers for me. At daylight we had news that the Auzbegs were fighting in the Iron Gate, where they had made themselves fast between the



THE STORMING OF SAMARKAND.  
(Agra Codex.)





## THE TRAINING OF A WARRIOR

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SL

(outer and inner) doors. With 10, 15 or 20 men, I at once set off for the Gate, but before I came up, the town-rabble, busy ransacking every corner of the newly-taken town for loot, had driven the Auzbeks out through it. Shaibaq Khan, on hearing what was happening, hurried at sunrise to the Iron Gate with 100 or 140 men. His coming was a wonderful chance, but, as has been said, my men were very few. Seeing that he could do nothing, he rode off at once. From the Iron Gate I went to the citadel and there dismounted, at the Bu-stan palace. Men of rank and consequence and various head-men came to me there, saw me and invoked blessings on me.

“Samarkand for nearly 140 years had been the capital of our dynasty. An alien, and of what stamp! an Auzbeg foe, had taken possession of it! It had slipped from our hands; God gave it again! plundered and ravaged, our own returned to us.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was the story of what was perhaps the most dashing of Babur's many daring exploits, and this alone would have secured him the fame he prized. But for all his love of action, it is perhaps in his patience and his endurance that he shows most plainly his greatness of mind. We shall see in the next chapter how he remained cheerful under successive shocks of adversity that would have driven most men to suicide; how he still retains his quiet confidence, relaxing no whit of his endeavours, while his dearest ambitions one by one lie withered at his feet, and his most trusted friends turn their back upon him in his day of adversity.

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 131-34.



## CHAPTER III

## DAYS OF ADVERSITY

*Authorities.*—*Babur-nama* ; *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* ; *Habib-us-Siyar* ; *Shaibani Nama* ; *Mir Khwand's Rauzat-us-Safa* (ed. Rehatsek).

*Modern Works.*—*Erskine* ; *Lane Poole*.

BABUR had now won Samarkand for the second time against overwhelming odds, and his daring had been crowned with complete success. But the difficulty which had been overcome was as nothing to that which now confronted him. He had only some two hundred of his veterans, and for the rest, must rely upon the enthusiastic but undisciplined valour of the town mob. Outside the walls was Shaibani, with a force of five or six thousand men, well trained, well armed, well equipped, burning to revenge the unexpected wresting of the city from their grasp.

From the moment, however, these troubles seemed to melt away in magical fashion. The whole countryside came over to Babur. Shavdar, Sogd, and the neighbouring fortresses one by one expelled their Uzbek garrisons, or placed them under restraint and declared for the young prince of Samarkand. The affairs of Shaibani were in a very bad way : and at this inopportune moment arrived the wives and families of himself and of his chiefs, whom he had summoned from Turkistan when his triumph in Samarkand had seemed so complete. This combination of circumstances determined him to draw off to Bokhara, whence he could observe the fortunes of Babur and choose his own moment for striking a return blow at his rival.

Babur was well aware of the difficulties of his position ;





but made up his mind to keep hold of Samarkand as long as ever he could. Now was the opportunity, he felt, to curb once for all the ambition of Shaibani, so dangerous not only to the Prince of Farghana, but to the whole of his kin, the house of Timur. As the visible sign of his determination, he sent for his wife and his mothers. A few days after their arrival, his first child was born, but the infant, Fakhru'n-nisa, as she was named, died some six weeks afterwards. Babur had not much time for grief. He was despatching embassy after embassy to his Timurid kinsmen, urging them to send assistance, so that Shaibani might be crushed once for all. The response he received was very discouraging. From some he got a curt refusal; by others his request was ignored. From two sources only did he get insignificant help. His maternal uncles, the Khans, sent him four or five hundred men: his brother Jahangir, now sole ruler of Farghana, sent him a couple of hundred more.

After strengthening himself as well as he could throughout the winter, Babur determined in the beginning of 1501 to take the field. Doubtless he hoped that if he undertook a regular campaign against the Uzbeks, his kinsmen would abandon their apathetic attitude, and join their forces to his own. In this, as will be seen, he was partly justified. Moreover, Shaibani had begun to recover some of the ground he had lost in the summer before. He had regained the two forts of Qara-Kul and Dabusi, the first by the withdrawal of its garrison, the second by assault. These considerations, together, induced Babur to take the hazardous step of meeting his antagonist in the open.

Accordingly, in the months of April—May, 1501, Babur marched out of the city, and took up his position at the place called Bridge-head. He fortified his camp strongly with ditches and close-set branches, and awaited the coming of friend and foe. The foe was the first to arrive. Shaibani, who desired nothing better than to catch his enemy outside the strong walls of Samarkand, hurried up, and attempted to overwhelm Babur by a series of night attacks. But despite



his superiority in numbers, he could not force the strong position of his antagonist. Shaibani's situation was now critical. He had not been able to force an engagement and help was at hand, which would go some way towards offsetting that superiority in numbers which was his only hope. Although Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, Badi-uz-Zaman Mirza, and Khosru Shah remained inactive, yet Baqi Turkhan, head of the Samarkand party whom Shaibani had ruined, was only two days off, waiting to join Babur with about 2000 men; and Muhammad Mirza Dughlat, only a few hours off, was in command of a body of auxiliaries of about the same strength, despatched to Babur's help by his uncle the Khan. Matters were in this condition, when Babur deliberately threw away his chances of victory by engaging before his reinforcements arrived.

"The reason I was so eager to engage," he says, "was that on the day of battle the Eight Stars were between the two armies: they would have been in the enemy's rear for 13 or 14 days if the fight had been deferred. I now understand that these considerations are worth nothing, and that our haste was without reason."<sup>1</sup>

Babur was soon to have ample cause to regret his astrological superstitions. He marched his men out in the traditional formation, van, centre, right and left, and encountered the foe. His right rested upon the river Kohik—a fact which determined the course of the battle, for Shaibani determined to drive him into it. The Uzbek leader wheeled his right round Babur's left, and Babur, to avoid being outflanked, had to swing round to meet him, with his back to the river. This uncovered his centre, for the van, not having time to move round, remained on the right of the new position. Despite the stout fighting of the Samarkand troops, who at one time seemed likely to win the day by

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 139. Firishta II. 20 has a story that the subsequent defeat was due to the sudden desertion of the troops of Mahmud Khan and Jahangir Mirza; but this looks like later invention, and I find no confirmation of it. Perhaps it is a distorted version of the plundering of Babur's baggage by his Mongol auxiliaries.

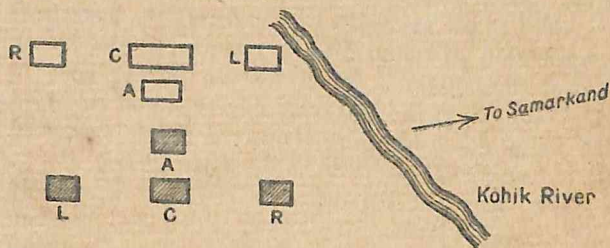


# BATTLE OF SAR-I-PUL.

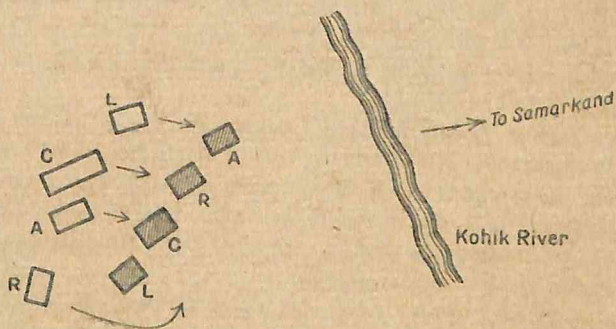
April-May 1501.

CSL



## POSITION 1.



## POSITION 2.



L - Left Wing  
C - Centre  
A - Advance Guard  
R - Right Wing

 Babur's troops  
 Shaibani's troops



sheer valour, Babur's left was crushed, his centre was taken in front and rear : and at the last moment the Uzbegs swung round both ends of his line, and attacked his rear in their terrible wheeling charge, the *tulghma*, which was their national manoeuvre. Babur's Mongol auxiliaries, seeing that the day was lost, added to the confusion by plundering the baggage—a full confirmation, as Babur bitterly remarks, of the innate depravity of their nature. There was no further hope of saving the day. With the half-score men who still remained with him, Babur swam his horse across the Kohik, accoutred as he was in heavy mail, and rode hard for Samarkand.

The consequences of the defeat of Sar-i-pul were most disastrous. Some of Babur's best men had fallen—Ibrahim Tarkhan, Ibrahim Saru, Ibrahim Jan, and others ; several more, like Muhammad Tarkhan and Kanbar Ali, fled for the time to Khosru. Many of his intimates deserted his fortunes altogether. None the less, Babur had no thoughts of submission, despite the fact that all the country save Samarkand itself quickly came into Shaibani's hand. He summoned a council of his begs, "and," he says, "after consultation, we resolved to make the fort fast, and look for life or death within it."<sup>1</sup>

Babur himself took up his quarters in the middle of the town, in tents pitched on the roof of Ulugh Beg Mirza's college. He then disposed his trustiest men to the towers and gates of the city walls, and awaited the arrival of Shaibani. He took all precautions against a surprise, frequently making the round of the walls in person.

In two or three days the Uzbek arrived, but for several days more he could not get near to the walls on account of the valour of the town mob, which harassed his men as they attempted to force a way through the suburbs. Growing bolder with success, the rabble tried making sallies against the besiegers, but were enticed into the open, caught, and roughly handled. Soon Shaibani had the town well enclosed. The

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 141 ; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 197 (Ilminski, 111).





Garrison was hopelessly inadequate, and more than once the Uzbeks actually succeeded in gaining entrance in an undefended quarter, only to be expelled by desperate fighting.

The siege dragged on all through the summer, and provisions began to run short.<sup>1</sup> The poorer classes began to feed on dogs and asses, and the horses of the garrison had to be fed on leaves<sup>2</sup> and wood-shavings. Having isolated the city, Shaibani made no further attacks upon it, but invested it from some distance, keeping the worn-out garrison continually alarmed. Envoys and messengers had been sent repeatedly to all sides and quarters for help, but none came. "Sultan Husain Mirza," complains Babur, "gave us not even the help of an encouraging message," but on the contrary sent an envoy to Shaibani.

Babur's position was now hopeless, and his men began to desert.

"Of help from any side we utterly despaired," he says, "no hope was left in any quarter: our supplies and provisions were wretched, what there was was coming to an end; no more came in. Meantime Shaibaq Khan interjected talk of peace. Little ear would have been given to his talk of peace if there had been hope or food from any side. It had to be! a sort of peace was made."<sup>3</sup>

Babur does not tell us what the terms of the peace were; he was evidently bitterly ashamed of them. But from other sources of information we learn that he was compelled to surrender the town at discretion, and to hand over his eldest sister, Khanzada Begam, in marriage to his enemy as the price for a safe-conduct for himself and the remaining members of his family.<sup>4</sup> It must have been a bitter blow to Babur's pride. He was now once more a wanderer, for Farghana, according to treaty, was in Jahangir's hands.

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Shaibani, with the resources of the country at his disposal, enjoyed the utmost plenty (*Shaibani Nama*).

<sup>2</sup> Mulberry and elm leaves were found the best.

<sup>3</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 147; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 205 (Ilminski, 116).

<sup>4</sup> *Shaibani Nama*, chap. xxxix.; *Habib-us-Siyar*, ii. 310; Gulbadan Begam's *Humayun Nama*, f. 36, ed. A. S. Beveridge, p. 2.



He had formed a fairly accurate idea of Shaibani's character, and accordingly put no reliance whatever upon the safe-conduct. He slipped out of the town at midnight with his mother and a few followers, intending to go to Auratipa, which he determined to beg from the Khan his uncle. He lost his way in the darkness,<sup>1</sup> and was hardly out of danger when day dawned. Babur, despite his situation, retained his gaiety, and beguiled the weary road by racing with Kasim Beg and Kambar Ali, sustaining, incidentally, a nasty fall. "My horse was leading," he says, "when I, thinking to look at theirs behind, twisted myself round; the girth may have slackened, for my saddle turned, and I was thrown on my head to the ground. Although I got up at once and remounted, my brain did not steady until the evening." Running short of provisions, it was found necessary to kill a horse, the flesh of which was spitted and roasted. Babur dared not halt for long; he was still in the power of his foes. All night the wearied party rode on, until, as dawn broke, they found themselves in friendly country. Shortly afterwards, they came to Dizak. "There," says Babur, "were fat meats, loaves of fine flour, plenty of sweet melons, and abundance of excellent grapes. From what privation we came to such plenty! From what stress to what repose!"<sup>2</sup>

Babur had now to find some refuge for the winter, which was rapidly drawing on. Depositing what baggage he had with him in the Auratipan village of Dikh-kat, he went to visit his uncle Mahmud Khan and his household. The Khan received him kindly, it seems, and actually made a half-promise to give Auratipa to his nephew; but when Babur went to stay with Muhammad Husain Mirza, who held it, he found it impossible to get it handed over. So after spending a few days in Auratipa, he decided to make the best of things, and be content with Dikh-kat. Characteristically enough, he adapted himself to his surroundings in a whole-hearted manner,

<sup>1</sup> The night was extraordinarily dark (*Shaibani Nama*, A. S. B., 147, n. 4).

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 147, 148.



abandoning all pretensions, and living as a simple guest in the headman's house. Here an encounter took place which was destined to exercise a supreme influence upon the shaping of his subsequent career. The headman was seventy or eighty years old, but his mother was still alive, aged 111. "Some relation of hers," says Babur, "would seem to have gone with Timur Beg's army to Hindustan; she had this in her mind, and used to tell the tale."<sup>1</sup> The stories the old lady told about the exploits of Babur's great ancestor fired the imagination of the young prince, and from this time forward there can be little doubt, the dream of renewing Timur's triumph in Hindustan remained at the back of his mind. There were, however, many troubles to be bravely endured, many difficulties to be encountered, before the dream was to be fulfilled. Meanwhile he lived the ordinary life of a hillman. "I constantly made excursions amongst the mountains round about. Generally I went barefoot, and from doing this so much, my feet became so that rock and stone made no difference to them."<sup>2</sup> To such a pass was come the late Sultan of Samarkand. Yet his cheerfulness diminished no whit. He tells with glee how one of his followers scored off a rustic, who had tried to be humorous at the expense of the strangers. Being in doubt as to where a mountain track led, Babur inquired of an oxherd. "Follow my ox," said the fellow, with a grin, "and don't stop till he does." "But supposing he leaves the track?" says Khwaja Asadu'llah, and leaves the rustic gaping.

Winter coming on, several of Babur's soldiers asked leave to go and visit their kin in Andijan. It was considered a politic stroke to send by them some presents to Jahangir, now ruler of Farghana, and Tambal, his right-hand man. Accordingly, Babur sent to his younger brother his own ermine cap, and to Tambal a large sword, which Nuyan Kukuldash,

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 150; cf. P. de Courteille, i. 210 (Ilminski, 118). As Delhi was taken in the winter 1398-9, the old lady must have been a very young girl, about five years old, at the time. Doubtless her "recollections" had not lost in frequent telling.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 150.



Babur's particular friend, had had made in Samarkand. Within twelve months, by a singular coincidence, this very sword was to come near putting a sudden end to the donor's career.

Soon, however, came news which brought Babur out of his retirement. Shaibani had crossed the Khojend river, and was plundering the districts of Shahrukha and Bishkint. On the chance of striking a blow at his enemy, Babur got to horse at once. The expedition, however, was not a success. The Uzbeks had retired before Babur came up; the weather was so bitter that he lost several men from the cold; and on the way back his dear friend Nuyan Kukuldash, the owner of the Samarkandi sword, met his death under suspicious circumstances near the home of a private enemy.<sup>1</sup> This last tragic event upset Babur very much. "His death made me strangely sad," he says; "for few men have I felt such grief. I wept unceasingly for a week or ten days."<sup>2</sup>

The spring came, and with it another raid of Shaibani, this time round about Auratipa. Again Babur attempted to strike at him, and again he escaped. Babur was now wearied of inaction. "It passed through my mind," he says, "that to wander from mountain to mountain, homeless and houseless, without country or abiding-place, had nothing to recommend it. 'Go you right off to the Khan,' I said to myself." No sooner said than done. Babur set off with his few followers, and joined his uncle in Tashkint. The Khan was in the midst of a demonstration in force against Tambal, who had been raiding Auratipa. Babur came just in time to witness the curious Mongol ceremony of acclaiming the standards, which he describes in some detail; but was disgusted to find that his uncle did not mean to make any real attempt against the enemy. "This move of the Khan's,"

<sup>1</sup> He was found dead at the bottom of a ravine, and the story was that he had fallen down in a drunken condition when on his way home from an entertainment at his enemy's house. Babur did not believe it, and he was in a position to judge.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 152.





THE MONGOL ARMY SALUTING THE YAKTAIL STANDARDS.  
(Agra Codex.)

he says, "was rather unprofitable: to take no fort, to beat no foe, he went out and went back"<sup>1</sup>

Babur was now to experience the bitterest fate which can befall a sensitive prince—dependence upon the charity of his relatives. "During my stay in Tashkent," he writes, "I endured much poverty and humiliation. No country, or hope of one. Most of my retainers dispersed; those left, unable to move about with me because of their destitution! If I went to my uncle's gate, I went sometimes with one man, sometimes with two. It was well he was no stranger, but one of my own blood."<sup>2</sup> To do the Khan justice, he seems to have tried to be kind to his unfortunate nephew: Babur speaks always of him in the most affectionate terms, using the word *dada* (father) to describe him. Most of the young prince's troubles seem to have arisen from the lack of outlet for his energy. He chafed against inaction, and he found versification, which he now took up, but small solace. Anything was better than this purposeless existence. With characteristic love of adventure, he decided to go to China—a country which he had always wished to visit, apparently because it was remote and the journey was dangerous. The difficulty was to get away from his relatives, who interpreted every desire to travel as a sign that something had been lacking in their hospitality, and thereupon redoubled their attentions. At last he hit upon the excuse of going to visit his uncle Ahmad, the younger Khan, who had lived remote for twenty years in the fastnesses of Northern Mughalistan, with the object of persuading him to join forces with his brother against Shaibani. But, as fate would have it, Ahmad Khan took it into his head at that very time to pay the visit himself, and Babur's excuse fell to the ground.

Babur gives a brilliant sketch of this strange new uncle of his, whom no one had seen for so long. "He was a man of singular manners," writes Babur, "a mighty master of the sword, and brave. . . . He never parted with his keen-edged sword, it was either at his waist or to his hand. He was a

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*





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<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

little rustic and rough of speech, through having grown up in an out-of-the-way place.”<sup>1</sup> None the less, Ahmad was a stickler for etiquette, and was mightily disconcerted when Babur happened to meet him unceremoniously, in the course of a ride. In his old-fashioned, long Mongol dress, surrounded by his retainers in their coats of Chinese satin brodered with stitchery, and their green shagreen saddles, he presented a striking figure in Babur’s eyes. But he received his nephew kindly, and gave him a dress of his own, which served as a disguise so complete that, as Babur relates with glee, even Khwajah Abu’l Makaram did not know him as he rode in his uncle’s train, but inquired: “Who is this honoured Sultan?”<sup>2</sup>

The two brothers, the Elder and the Younger Khans, met with great ceremony.

They then took council together, and determined to expel Tambal, now virtual master of Farghana in the name of Jahangir, and to restore Babur. With a joint force of some 30,000 men they marched for Andijan, leaving Tashkent, as Mir Khwand tells us,<sup>3</sup> on July 21st, 1502.<sup>4</sup> It was agreed that Babur, in command of a strong detachment, should work round by Ush and Auzkent, and turn Tambal’s rear, while the Khans, with the main body, should attack him in front. The movement promised brilliantly: Ush gladly surrendered: Marghilan followed its example after a day or two, and the whole countryside welcomed Babur with the greatest enthusiasm. The capital, Andijan, alone held out south of the river; but to the north, Tambal was still master, and remained watching the Khans carefully, in a strongly-fortified camp near Akhsi. Twice did Babur attempt Andijan itself, which was only kept from returning to its loyalty by Tambal’s garrison, and each time success was prevented by a mischance. The first occasion saw two divisions of the attacking party fall foul of one another in the darkness through a mistake in the password; the second occasion witnessed a greater disaster. The circumstances were as follows. Tambal’s

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 160, 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Rauzat-us-Safa*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Muharram 15th.





affairs were in a bad way : his garrison in Andijan was beginning to disperse, his friends had lost heart, and Babur was assured by all that the capital was his. Accordingly the young prince advanced, dispersed at nightfall a handful of troops which barred his passage, and encamped at the outskirts of the city, prepared to enter next day at his leisure. So confident was he of his triumph, that he encamped on level ground, without posting sentries or vedettes.

Meanwhile Tambal, aghast at the success which Babur was winning in the south, determined to see whether his own presence would not turn the tide. He broke up his camp near Akhsi, and rode hard for Andijan. Babur had been informed of this movement on the part of his adversary, but with the rashness of inexperience, took no precautions against it. Tambal arrived at the very time when he was least expected, and surprised Babur's careless camp.

Babur's force was dispersed, his chance of seizing Andijan was lost, and there was nothing for him to do but to rejoin his uncles. The Khans had moved away from Akhsi in pursuit of Tambal, and were now close to Andijan. They received him very kindly : Ahmad Khan in particular congratulating him on his bravery, and sending his own surgeon to treat his wounds. But Babur was dismayed to find that the places which had submitted were being assigned to the Younger Khan, not to himself, the rightful owner. The Akhsi country, which was poor, was assigned to Babur, while the rich southern country was given to Ahmad. The Elder Khan said very frankly that his brother, being remote from his own land, must have a base : that when they had made full preparations, they would expel Shaibani from Samarkand, reinstate Babur, and take Farghana as their reward. The plan was not unreasonable, on the face of it, but Babur did not trust his uncles. However, it had to be. Some of his men openly advised him to make peace with Tambal, divide the country with him, and expel the Mongols. But Babur, to his honour, refused to entertain the notion. "Would that be right?" said he. "The Khans are my blood relations : better serve them than rule for



Tambal." <sup>1</sup> Babur accordingly, set out to reduce the districts of Akhsi, while the Khans besieged Andijan—a curious reversal of the previous plan of operations.

No very striking success was obtained by either party. The Khans had no claim upon the allegiance of the Andijanis, who would not yield to them. Babur failed to surprise Akhsi, and nearly lost Pap, which had admitted his men, through the carelessness of the commanding officer. Yet Tambal's affairs looked so unpromising, that he determined to make an attempt to divide his antagonists. If he could come to some agreement with Babur, the Khans would have no standing ground: and must either retire or openly acknowledge an intention to deprive their nephew of his dominions. Accordingly, Shaikh Bayazid, Tambal's brother, who commanded in Akhsi, sent Babur a pressing invitation to go there. Babur gave the Khans a hint of what the enemy's probable intentions were, and they urged Babur to go to Akhsi and take the first opportunity of laying hands on Bayazid. This Babur refused to do, out of a sense of honour, but agreed to enter Akhsi and try and win him over. Babur accordingly accepted Bayazid's proposals, entered the city, and was given camping ground in the outer fort.

Tambal, however, had one trump card left. He invoked the aid of Shaibani. The ruler of Samarkand, well aware that the ruin of Tambal would mean an immediate attack upon himself, determined to take the offensive. Telling Tambal that he was soon coming, he encouraged him to hold out. The Khans, who were not prepared for the advent of a foe so formidable, at once broke up their camp in confusion, and marched round by Marghilan, in order to regain their own country without coming into contact with Shaibani. Tambal was hard at their heels, and the country-people, who had been treated very badly by the barbarous Mongol troopers, rose everywhere behind them. Before relating the disasters which overtook them, we must follow the fortunes of their nephew.

One morning, when Babur was in the hot bath, who should

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 169.





## DAYS OF ADVERSITY

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come but his brother Jahangir, a fugitive from Tambal and Tambal's ally the terrible Shaibani. He told Babur of the retreat of the Khans, and urged him to seize his host Bayazid and defend Akhsi. But Babur, with a fine sense of honour, refused to break his word even under these circumstances, though Bayazid had time to withdraw into the citadel, and hold it for his brother. Thither a few hours later, came Tambal himself, with a strong force of two or three thousand picked men. The mischief was done; but Babur, with his five or six score, determined to hold the town itself. At one time it looked as though a fight might be avoided, for Shaikh Bayazid came spurring up with talk of peace, and Babur agreed to a conference. But at the last moment Jahangir, to Babur's great indignation, treacherously kidnapped the envoy, and thus brought about a struggle which both sides would rather have avoided. How the forces of Babur were finally driven out of the town is vividly described by that prince, and is here reproduced in Mrs. A. S. Beveridge's spirited rendering:—

“ One side of the town was put into Jahangir Mirza's charge; as his men were few, I told off some of mine to reinforce him. I went first to his side and posted men for the fight, then to other parts of the town. There is a somewhat level, open space in the middle of Akhsi; I had posted a party of braves there and gone on when a large body of the enemy, mounted and on foot, bore down upon them, drove them from their post and forced them into a narrow lane. Just then I came up (the lane), galloped my horse at them, and scattered them in flight. While I was thus driving them out from the lane into the flat, and had got my sword to work, they shot my horse in the leg; it stumbled and threw me there amongst them. I got up quickly and shot one arrow off. My squire Kahil (lazy) had a weakly pony; he got off and led it to me. Mounting this, I started for another lane-head. Sl. Muh. Wais noticed the weakness of my mount, dismounted and led me his own. I mounted that horse. Just then, Qasim Beg's son, Qambar-ali came, wounded, from Jahangir Mirza and said the Mirza had been attacked some time before, driven off in panic, and had gone right away. We were thunderstruck! At the same moment arrived Sayyid Qasim, the commandant of Pap! His was a most unseasonable visit,



since at such a crisis it was well to have such a strong fort in our hands. Said I to Ibrahim Beg, 'What's to be done now?' He was slightly wounded; whether because of this or because of stupefaction, he could give no useful answer. My idea was to get across the bridge, destroy it and make for Andijan. Baba Sher-zad did very well here. 'We will storm out at the gate and get away at once,' he said. At his word, we set off for the Gate. Khwaja Mir Miran also spoke boldly at that crisis. In one of the lanes, Sayyid Qasim and Nasir's Dost chopped away at Baqi Khiz, I being in front with Ibrahim Beg and Mirza Quli Kukuldash. As we came opposite to the Gate, we saw Shaikh Bayazid, wearing his pull-over shirt above his vest, coming in with three or four horsemen. He must have been put into the charge of Jahangir's men in the morning when, against my will, he was made prisoner, and they must have carried him off when they got away. They had thought it would be well to kill him; they set him free alive. He had been released just when I chanced upon him in the Gate. I drew and shot off the arrow on my thumb; it grazed his neck, a good shot! He came confusedly in at the Gate, turned to the right and fled down a lane. We followed him instantly. Mirza Quli Kukuldash got at one man with his rugged-mace and went on. Another man took aim at Ibrahim Beg, but when the Beg shouted 'Hai! Hai!' let him pass and shot me in the arm-pit, from as near as a man on guard at a Gate. Two plates of my Qalmaq mail were cut; he took to flight and I shot after him. Next I shot at a man running away along the ramparts, adjusting for his cap against the battlements; he left his cap nailed on the wall and went off, gathering his turban-sash together in his hand. Then again, a man was in flight alongside me in the lane down which Shaikh Bayazid had gone. I pricked the back of his head with my sword; he bent over from his horse till he leaned against the wall of the lane, but he kept his seat and with some trouble made good his flight. When we had driven all the enemy's men from the Gate, we took possession of it, but the affair was past discussion because they, in the citadel, were 2000 or 3000, we, in the outer fort, 100 or 200. Moreover, they had chased off Jahangir Mirza, as long before as it takes milk to boil, and with him had gone half my men. This notwithstanding, we sent a man, while we were in the Gate, to say to him, 'If you are near at hand, come, let us attack again!' But the matter had gone past that! Ibrahim Beg, either because his horse was really weak or because of his wound, said, 'My horse is





done.' On this, Sulaiman, one of Muh. Ali's Mubashir's servants, did a plucky thing, for with matters as they were and none constraining him, while we were waiting in the Gate, he dismounted and gave his horse to Ibrahim Beg. Kichik (little) 'Ali, now the Governor of Koel, also showed courage while we were in the Gate; he was a retainer of Si. Muh. Wais and twice did well, here and in Aush. We delayed in the Gate till those sent to Jahangir Mirza came back and said he had gone off long before. It was too late to stay there; off we flung; it was ill-judged to have stayed as long as we did. Twenty or thirty men were with me. Just as we hustled out of the Gate, a number of armed men came right down upon us, reaching the town-side of the drawbridge just as we had crossed. Banda-ali, the maternal grandfather of Qasim Beg's son, Hamza, called out to Ibrahim Beg, 'You are always boasting of your zeal! Let's take to our swords!' 'What hinders? Come along!' said Ibrahim Beg, from beside me. The senseless fellows were for displaying their zeal at a time of such disaster! Ill-timed zeal! That was no time to make stand or delay! We went off quickly, the enemy following and unhorsing our men."<sup>1</sup>

With Tambal's men hard at his heels, Babur galloped off. One by one his worse-mounted followers were overtaken and unhorsed, and at last only he himself was left, while his pursuers were reduced to two. Fearing to drive him to extremes, they swore to lead him to his uncles the Khans, but treacherously sent to inform the Akhsi authorities of the young prince's whereabouts. Meanwhile they concealed him, as they pretended, from pursuit, but in reality, from the sight of parties of his friends who were looking for him. Yusuf, Bayazid's commandant, arrived at last with a party to arrest him. Babur, who was prepared for death, knelt down in a corner of the garden where he was hiding, and performed the proper ceremonies for quitting this life.

At this precise moment, tantalisingly enough, the *Memoirs* break off for some sixteen months. Somebody, probably Babur's great-grandson, the Emperor Jahangir,<sup>2</sup> was so vexed that he wrote an elaborate ending to the adventure, which

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 174-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, ed. Rogers and H. Beveridge, i. 109.



has slipped into the text, and is reproduced in full by Pavet de Courteille and Lane Poole. According to this, Babur's friends rode up just in time to save him from assassination, arrested his captors, and escorted him in safety to the Khans in Andijan. Unfortunately, there is not only a grave discrepancy of style between this passage and the rest of the *Memoirs*; but there are gross errors of chronology and circumstance. The Khans were not in Andijan at all, the names of Babur's rescuers are mentioned nowhere else, and the particulars of his subsequent movements are erroneous.<sup>1</sup>

Rescued he was, however; but of the particulars we know nothing. For his doings during the next sixteen months, we have to rely on other sources of information, particularly the *Shaibani-nama*.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded in joining his uncles, and was given a command of 1000 men. Farghana was now entirely in the hands of Shaibani, but the Khans did not propose to endure quietly the blow that had been inflicted upon their pride. Collecting their resources throughout the winter, they determined on a joint campaign. Shaibani, seeing that the struggle was to be deadly, retired to Samarkand to order his affairs for the contest. Babur's brother Jahangir took advantage of this withdrawal to seize Khojend.

The first incident in the campaign of 1503 was the siege and capture of Khojend by Shaibani, after a hard struggle. Meanwhile the Khans and Babur had advanced into Farghana, and were now in the neighbourhood of Akhsi. They designed to march straight on Andijan, which was once more in the possession of Tambal. The mass of their troops had been left in Tashkent to watch Shaibani, while they themselves moved quickly with a light force. By way of additional precaution, Auratipa was held by Muhammad Husain Kurkan,

<sup>1</sup> The credit of having finally demonstrated the spuriousness of this passage, which occurs both in the Ilminski and the Hyderabad codices, but not in the Persian translations, is due to Mrs. Beveridge. See Appendix D. to her *Fasciculus I.*, where the question is fully discussed.

<sup>2</sup> Further information is afforded by the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, the *Habib-us-Siyar*, and the *Alim arai Abassi*, which are the sources of the connected narratives found in *Firishta* (II. 23), and Khwafi Khan (*Muntakhab ul Lubab*, Bib. Ind. edition, vol. i., etc.).





who was to delay Shaibani as long as possible. But unfortunately for themselves, they lingered some days near Akhsi, where Bayazid, doubtless by Shaibani's orders, was delaying them by talking of surrender. Shaibani, on his part, dexterously slipping between the forces set to watch him, descended like a thunderbolt in overwhelming force upon the two Khans.<sup>1</sup> So quickly did he move, that he arrived at the same time as the couriers who hurried to warn them. The decisive action took place at Archian.<sup>2</sup> The Khans were utterly routed; their force dispersed; they were captured and brought to Shaibani. He spared their lives, at least for the moment, and dismissed them with marks of favour. "With your help and assistance," he is reported to have said, "I have won my power. I took you captive, but do not kill you; I let you go."

The subsequent fates of the unlucky brothers are briefly to be told. Ahmad the younger retired to Mongolistan, and shortly died, of sheer mortification. The story goes that as he pined away, his servants imagined that Shaibani had poisoned him, and counselled him to take an antidote. The Khan sighed and said: "Shaibani has indeed poisoned me. From a low degree of abasement he has raised himself to such a pitch that he has been able to take us two brothers prisoners, and set us free again. From this disgrace my malady arises. If you know of an antidote for this sort of poison, it will be useful indeed."<sup>3</sup> The elder brother also withdrew to the same desolate haunts, where Shaibani contemptuously allowed him to remain unmolested. But being treacherously persuaded to leave his security and come to Farghana, he was basely murdered, with five of his sons, by Shaibani's orders. This was five years after the fatal battle.

Meanwhile, what of Babur? Not having his *Memoirs* to help us, we have to fall back on other sources of information. He succeeded in escaping from Shaibani in the rout of Archian,

<sup>1</sup> He is said to have had 30,000 men to the Khans' 15,000.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. The battle was fought in Cancer, A.H. 908 (June, 1503).

<sup>3</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.



and with a very few followers attempted to take the road leading to Auzkint. But he found his way blocked: Shaibani had given orders for his capture, and to pursue his route would be extremely hazardous. He retraced his steps, and by devious paths managed at last to reach the hill country of Sukh and Hoshyar. For nearly a year he wandered about in great distress and misery, dependent for his safety upon the friendliness of the half-savage tribes of that region.<sup>1</sup> At this point the *Memoirs* are resumed, and he allows us to see him as he wanders homeless and hemmed in with enemies. His followers were only 300 strong, half naked, with sticks for their only weapons: shod in rough shoes, and clad in rags. There were only two tents among the whole party: Babur gave his own to his mother, who had managed to evade Shaibani and rejoin her sons.<sup>2</sup> But with all this misery, which might have broken the spirit of many a man, Babur retained his cheeriness. Not even two successive pieces of bad fortune could overcome him: the first, the desertion of his brother Jahangir, who left him and fled to Khorasan; the second, the cowardice of Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, who, instead of leading the surviving Timurids against Shaibani, as Babur had hoped, sent a long-winded message to the effect that he would remain on the defensive.

Well might Babur have despaired; but the miseries he underwent merely strengthened his determination to battle on in the face of fortune. We shall see in the next chapter how his pluck and perseverance were once more crowned with the reward they deserved, and how by the freak of chance his feet were set fairly on the road which was to lead him direct to the Empire of Hindustan.

<sup>1</sup> *Habib-us-Siyar*, ii. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, as Mrs. Beveridge suggests, through the good offices of her daughter Khanzada, Shaibani's wife.





## CHAPTER IV

## KABUL

*Authorities.*—*Babur-nama* ; *Habib-us-Siyar* ; *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* ;  
*Ahsan-ut-Tawarikh* ; *Firishta* ; *Shaibani-nama*.  
*Modern Works.*—*Erskine* ; *Lane Poole*.

THE apathy of Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara was destined to have a great influence upon the fortunes of Babur. It spurred him to take decisive action, and it put an end to his life of wandering in desert places. For not only did he realise with clearness that he must depend entirely upon his own energies ; he also foresaw that Shaibani would soon take advantage of the divisions of the House of Timur to destroy its members in detail. The Uzbek chief having taken Andijan from Tambal, was already advancing on Hisar and Qunduz, and the most ordinary considerations of prudence urged Babur to remove himself as far as possible from his enemy's neighbourhood.

There was one kingdom which seemed to offer some sort of opportunity to a landless prince, and to it Babur now turned his attention. It is said <sup>1</sup> that in the course of his wanderings, he had met at Tirmiz a certain Amir Muhammad Bakr, who, uneasy at the growing power of the Uzbeks, proposed to support him with men and money. Babur, who was tired of "moving from square to square like a king on a chessboard," asked his host frankly what he considered the most promising base from which to undertake operations against the Uzbeks. Amir Muhammad Bakr replied with equal frankness that it was no good thinking of Farghana, which, like many other kingdoms, was now entirely in Shaibani's hands ; and suggested that the young prince might try his fortune in Kabul.

<sup>1</sup> For the whole story see *Firishta*, ii. 23.



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Kabul, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> had belonged to Babur's paternal uncle Ulugh Beg Mirza, who had ruled it first as a prince, and later, after the death of his father Abu Saiyid Mirza, as independent king. (Ulugh Beg had died in 1501, leaving as heir an infant son, Abd-ur-razzak Mirza.) In consequence, the realm soon relapsed into anarchy. Everyone who could raise troops declared his independence. The power was first seized by a certain Zikr Beg, who ruled so arbitrarily that he was shortly afterwards assassinated. This caused fresh internal commotions; which, in their turn, invited the attacks of external foes. The neighbouring district of Garmsir was ruled by Zu-n-nun Beg Arghun, Sultan Ahmad Mirza's old retainer, whose defence of Auratipa against Babur we have already noticed. Zu-n-nun's youngest son, Muhammad Muqim, took advantage of the troubles in Kabul to invade the country with a body of Hazara troops, forcing the rightful heir, Abd-ur-razzak, to seek refuge among the Afghans. Muhammad Muqim, at the time when Babur first began to turn his eyes towards Kabul, had not only taken peaceful possession of the capital, he had also married a daughter of the late ruler; he had held his position for about two years and felt himself comparatively secure.<sup>2</sup>

Babur, however, had no intention of allowing Kabul to slip away from the control of his house, which had already suffered such grave diminution of power. Although at the moment his resources were extremely small, yet he had received many overtures from the Mongol mercenaries in the service of Khosru Shah. These men, always careful of their own skins, had begun to realise that their upstart master, able though he was, was but a man of straw compared with Shaibani, who must shortly sweep him aside without effort. Babur, on the other hand, in addition to being a prince of the blood and a warrior of repute, was known to be looking out for a sphere of activity which would put him for the moment beyond the reach of the Uzbeks. The determination of these Mongols to desert Khosru was strengthened by the news of Shaibani's advance on

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Firishta, ii. 24.





Qunduz, which caused their master to leave his territories and retire in the direction of Kabul.

Babur, much as he disliked the Mongols, was not above profiting by their treachery. Moreover, he hated Khosru Shah, not merely as the murderer of his cousin Baisanghar and the blinder of his cousin Sultan Ali, but also as a time-serving fellow, without birth and breeding, who had once displayed a singular lack of courtesy at a time when he himself had chanced to be passing through the Qunduz country with a small following. Accordingly, the prince had no compunction in accepting the overtures of Khosru's followers, who deserted their old master by thousands, leaving him without a single man on whom he could rely. He was compelled perforce to enter Babur's service, on the condition that his life should be spared and his private fortune respected.<sup>1</sup>

Babur, to his honour, stood fast by his engagement, and refused to deliver Khosru to the young Wais Mirza, who made the formal blood-claim for the injuries inflicted upon his unhappy brothers. Khosru was given an escort and dismissed, with three or four strings of camels laden with gold, silver and jewels. His camp and equipment remained in Babur's hands; but there was little of value except coats of mail and horse accoutrements, which were shared out among the ill-furnished troops.

Babur was eager to get out of the Dushi country, where he then was, as quickly as possible, for the advance parties of the Uzbeks were already in touch with his men. Accordingly he advanced through Ghurbund in the direction of Kabul. He took the Arghun faction completely by surprise.<sup>2</sup> Sherak, Muqim's chief beg, was lying across Babur's path, not through hearing of his advance, but in order to keep Abd-ur-razzak from re-entering the Kabul country. Babur defeated him easily, and Sherak entered the service of his conqueror. An

<sup>1</sup> The *Shaibani Nama* states that Babur robbed Khosru of his jewels; but the calumny is not worthy of refutation.

<sup>2</sup> There is a concise account of the seizing of Kabul by Babur in the *Ahsan-ut-Tawarikh* (f. 106 b).



advance was then made upon Kabul, which was surrendered by Muqim after a mere show of resistance. The usurper was allowed to march out with his retainers, goods and effects, and retire in peace to his father and brothers in Qandahar. As was usual, the Mongol troops gave trouble during the occupation: Babur had already found it necessary to beat one of their braves to death for stealing a jar of oil by force; and now they attempted to plunder Muqim in his retreat. Jahangir Mirza and Nasir Mirza, who had been selected to escort the withdrawing chieftains, could do nothing to quell the tumult. Babur himself had to get to horse and have some half-dozen of the most unruly soldiers shot or cut down. This was, however, the only difficulty which attended his occupation of the city. "It was in the last ten days of the Second Rabi (October, 1504) that without a fight, without an effort, by Almighty God's bounty and mercy, I obtained and made subject to me Kabul and Ghazni and their dependent districts."<sup>1</sup>

The importance of Kabul was fully realised by Babur; master of that country, he could turn his eyes either west to Samarkand or east to Hindustan. "Kabul is," he says, "the intermediate point between Hindustan and Khorasan." Possessed of it, he had once more a base from which he could commence operations against his foes the Uzbeks. To make head against them was the problem which for some time engrossed him. For, as we shall see, it is not until his projects in the west have been brought finally to ruin, that he determines, after some dozen years or more, to concentrate his attention from henceforth exclusively upon the affairs of Hindustan. Babur, however, did not feel strong enough to undertake active measures against the Uzbeks until he had put his house in order. For the next year or so he was fully occupied with the affairs of his new kingdom.

The first step was to divide the spoils. To Jahangir Mirza, Ghazni and its dependencies were given, while Nasir Mirza had the district of Ningnihar with some less important places. Some of the begs in their turn received villages to be held as

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 199.





A SKIRMISH WITH THE AFGHANS.  
(*Agra Codex.*)



but Babur very carefully kept the capital, and the whole district dependent upon it, known as the *Kabul tuman*, in his own hands. Perhaps on account of this policy, perhaps because of the smallness of the country's resources, there was not enough booty to satisfy all the followers who had flocked to Babur's standard. He therefore attempted to raise money by taxation; but being ignorant of the resources of his new domain, he made the assessment intolerably heavy. Rebellions resulted, the Hazaras being particularly insubordinate. Babur determined, therefore, to make an example of them, but his expedition was not very successful. It being absolutely necessary to get supplies from some quarter, he made up his mind to lead a raid in the direction of Hindustan. He marched along the straight Peshawar-Attok road, went through the Khyber, and then, instead of crossing the River Sindh, marched on Kohat. Here he found much cattle and corn, which was seized. He then marched towards Bangash, skirmishing perpetually with the Afghans, storming their *sangurs*, and making minarets of their heads. He lost much of his spoil, however, and had to keep his forces perpetually on the alert against surprise attacks. Every night the army was drawn up in the battle array, right, left, centre and van. Babur himself, with other members of his staff, went the rounds in person. By way of emphasising the danger of the position, soldiers found absent from their posts had their noses slit, and in this plight were led through the ranks as a warning to their comrades. The whole army was divided into six corps, each of which took it in turns to form the rearguard for a day and a night. Thanks to these precautions Babur was able to make his way through very dangerous country without serious disaster. He marched into Desht, and then south along the skirts of the Mehtar Sulaiman, finally reaching the Sindh at Bilah, a dependency of Multan. Here a conspiracy was revealed, headed by Baqi Chaghaniani, to place Jahangir on the throne instead of Babur, whose masterfulness was now, as ever, displeasing to his more ambitious followers. But Jahangir, like a dutiful brother, revealed the plot, which in consequence





came to nothing, and the army returned to Kabul by way of Ghazni. But while one brother had behaved well, the other was giving Babur considerable cause for anxiety. Nasir, instead of following on after Babur, as had been his orders, thought fit to send a private raiding expedition against the people of Nur Valley. This came to utter disaster through the incompetence of the commander. Nasir, anxious to escape from the rebuke he deserved, was looking for some opportunity to avoid meeting Babur, when he suddenly received news that the country of Badakhshan was in revolt against the Uzbeks. Without delay he marched in that direction. Unfortunately, he fell in with Khosru, who, after a short exile at the court of Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara of Herat, had, like Nasir, sought to find some profit in the revolt of Badakhshan. With considerable difficulty, Nasir persuaded Khosru to withdraw, and that adventurer finally marched against Qunduz with a handful of desperate men. There he met a well-deserved fate, being taken and executed by the Uzbeks. Nasir, on the other hand, was gladly received by the Badakhshanis, and succeeded after some difficulty in making himself prince of that region.

These events took place in the summer of 1505. About the same time, Babur determined on another expedition. His project was delayed, first by the death of his mother, then by an attack of fever, and finally by a great earthquake, which did much damage to Kabul.<sup>1</sup> At last he was free to move; but at the earnest request of Jahangir and Baqi Chaghaniani, he marched against Khilat instead of Kandahar, which had been his first objective. After some trouble he captured the place, but was annoyed to find that neither of the promoters of the expedition would consent to garrison and hold an outpost so remote. There was nothing to be done but to retire.

Perhaps in consequence of this, Babur took the earliest

<sup>1</sup> Firishta says that Babur's behaviour at this time of public calamity endeared him to his new subjects; but I have not been able to find earlier authority for the statement, apart from what Babur's character would lead one to expect.



THE STORMING OF KHILAT.  
(Agra Codex.)





opportunity of ridding himself of Baqi Chaghaniani, whose insolence was becoming quite intolerable. That nobleman was in the habit of resigning his office periodically, being well aware of his power and prestige. Babur surprised him, however, by accepting his resignation the next time it was offered. The astonished minister thereupon reminded his master of a promise that until nine faults had been committed, no action should be taken against him. The prince replied, not without some enjoyment, we may suppose, by sending a list of eleven offences, all undeniably serious. Baqi then saw that the game was up, and retired with much ill-gotten wealth in the direction of Hindustan. Before he reached that country, however, he was overtaken by the consequences of his own misdeeds; for he was murdered by a private enemy, and his goods fell to the slayer. ✓

For the next month or so, Babur's attention was taken up by a punitive expedition against the Hazaras, who had done a variety of insolent things, and had made the roads unsafe. Marching with a light force, he took them by surprise, rushed a defile which guarded the approach to their winter camp, and put the camp itself to flight. Large numbers of sheep and horses were brought off. The expedition, though successful in its objects, had for Babur one very unpleasant consequence. The exposure to cold and hardship was too much even for his iron constitution; it brought on a severe attack of sciatica, which kept him to his bed for forty days. Nor were Babur's ills merely those of the body. He was much disturbed at this time by the conduct of his brother Jahangir, who, conscious that his conduct had not been blameless, suspected his brother, quite groundlessly, of plotting his ruin. The worthless young man, who was already a confirmed drunkard, suddenly resolved to quit Babur and seek his fortune elsewhere. He marched quickly to Ghazni, plundering and murdering as he went, and then drew off through the Hazara country to the Mongol clans in Yai and the summer-pastures thereabouts. This step gave Babur much cause for anxiety. He knew well how eagerly his enemies would receive Jahangir and make use of him as a



down in the game of politics. But while the prince was meditating how best to circumvent this new move on his brother's part, there came the call to action for which he had so long been preparing. Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, roused at last,<sup>1</sup> summoned the House of Timur to rally under his leadership for a joint attack upon the Uzbek foe.

The prince of Kabul was only too eager to obey. "If others went on their feet," he says, "it became me to accompany them, were it upon my head; if others went against Shaibani with sticks, it was my business to go were it only with stones."

Nor was it merely his hatred of Shaibani that urged him. Concerted action of this kind, in conjunction with other members of the house of Timur, would be the best possible counter to Jahangir's intrigues. Once more, however, his hopes were doomed to disappointment. Scarcely had Sultan Husain started to lead his army out against the Uzbeks, when death suddenly overtook him on May 5th, 1506.<sup>2</sup>

Babur had already set out to join the Sultan before the news of this fatality arrived. But before quitting the country, he desired to reduce Jahangir's power of doing mischief. Accordingly, with a band of light horsemen, he made a sudden raid, caught Jahangir unawares, and so alarmed him that his forces melted away like snow. It was just after the prince had returned from this expedition that couriers came bringing him a mixed budget of news. He learnt with dismay of the death of Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara; but the bad tidings were to some extent offset by the information that Nasir Mirza had scored a brilliant success against a strong force of Uzbeks which had attempted to invade Badakhshan. Babur determined to act in accordance with his original plans, and join the Herat forces against Shaibani; for he had heard that Badi-uz-Zaman Mirza and Muzaffar-i-Husain Mirza, who had

<sup>1</sup> Probably by Shaibani's siege and capture of Khwarizm, after a gallant defence of ten months.

<sup>2</sup> Zu'l-hijja 11th, A.H. 911. Babur gives a long account of his glories and of the culture of his court, based largely upon the *Habib-us-Siyar*.





been declared joint heirs of Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, were eager to re-embark upon the campaign which had been broken off by their father's death. By this time, they had marched out of Herat, and were now at Murghab. Here, on October 26th, 1506, Babur joined them, after Jahangir had at last been persuaded to give in his submission and receive his brother's ready forgiveness.

There was a great contrast between Babur and his cousins, the joint rulers of Herat. Babur himself, though but twenty-four years old, was a tried warrior, and a monarch of much experience. The two Mirzas, somewhat older than himself, were extremely cultured and charming people, but they possessed little notion of ruling a kingdom, and none at all of conducting a campaign. At first, perhaps from sheer indolence, they seemed inclined to treat Babur a little cavalierly; but after one vigorous protest on his part, they gave him no further grounds of complaint. He was entertained magnificently, and everyone made much of him. But he chafed against the enforced idleness, for, as he bitterly remarks, while the Mirzas were feasting, Balkh was being reduced by Shaibani. Perhaps the Mirzas, on their part, were a little jealous of their warrior cousin: despite their own apathy, they declined to allow him to beat off a party of Uzbek raiders which had appeared insultingly close to the camp; and as winter was drawing on, they pressed him to accompany them back to their capital Herat in terms which made refusal impossible. Despite the fact that he feared the political effect of a prolonged absence from Kabul, Babur allowed himself to be persuaded into visiting Herat. Here he spent a very pleasant holiday of twenty days, going out to dinner every night, seeing all the sights—which he catalogues with a conscientious thoroughness which might arouse the emulation of the modern American tourist—and falling desperately in love with his cousin Ma'suma-Sultan.

But he soon awakened once more to the sterner things of life. Anxiety as to Kabul was beginning to oppress him, and his desire to regain his own country was quickened both by the



knowledge that his ease-loving cousins were not likely to be of much service against the Uzbeks, and by the realisation that, despite their lavish offers of hospitality, they had assigned him no proper winter quarters. Accordingly he started on the perilous journey across the mountains to Kabul. The difficulties and hardships through which he passed were terrible, and he had a narrow escape from perishing altogether from cold and exposure. His own account is sufficiently spirited to be worth reproducing in full in Mrs. Beveridge's admirable rendering.

"From the Langar of Mir Ghiyas we had ourselves guided past the border-villages of Gharjistan to Chach-charan. From the almshouse to Gharjistan was an unbroken sheet of snow; it was deeper further on; near Chach-charan itself it was above the horses' knees. Chach-charan depended on Zu'n-nun Arghun; his retainer Mir Jan-airdi was in it now; from him we took, on payment, the whole of Zu'n-nun Beg's store of provisions. A march or two further on, the snow was very deep, being above the stirrup, indeed in many places the horses' feet did not touch the ground.

"We had consulted at the Langar of Mir Ghiyas which road to take for return to Kabul; most of us agreed in saying, 'It is winter, the mountain-road is difficult and dangerous; the Qandahar road, though a little longer, is safe and easy.' Qasim Beg said, 'That road is long; you will go by this one.' As he made much dispute, we took the mountain-road.

"Our guide was a Pashai named Pir Sultan (Old Sultan?). Whether it was through old age, whether from want of heart, whether because of the deep snow, he lost the road and could not guide us. As we were on this route under the insistence of Qasim Beg, he and his sons, for his name's sake, dismounted, trampled the snow down, found the road again and took the lead. One day the snow was so deep and the way so uncertain that we could not go on; there being no help for it, back we turned, dismounted where there was fuel, picked out 60 or 70 good men and sent them down the valley in our tracks to fetch anyone soever of the Hazara, wintering in the valley-bottom, who might show us the road. That place could not be left till our men returned three or four days later. They brought no guide. Once more we sent Sultan Pashai ahead, and, putting our trust in God, again took the road by which we had come back from



where it was lost. Much misery and hardship were endured in those few days, more than at any time of my life. In that stress I composed the following opening couplet :—

‘Is there one cruel turn of Fortune’s wheel unseen of me ?  
 Is there a pang, a grief my wounded heart has missed ?’

“We went on for nearly a week, trampling down the snow and not getting forward more than two or three miles a day. I was one of the snow-stampers, with 10 or 15 of my household, Qasim Beg, his sons Tingri-birdi and Qambar-i-’ali, and two or three of their retainers. These mentioned used to go forward for 7 or 8 yards, stamping the snow down, and at each step sinking to the waist or the breast. After a few steps the leading man would stand still, exhausted by the labour, and another would go forward. By the time 10, 15, 20 men on foot had stamped the snow down, it became so that a horse might be led over it. A horse would be led, would sink to the stirrups, could do no more than 10 or 12 steps, and would be drawn aside to let another go on. After we, 10, 15, 20, men had stamped down the snow and had led horses forward in this fashion, very serviceable braves and men of renowned name would enter the beaten track, hanging their heads. It was not a time to urge or compel ! the man with will and hardihood for such tasks does them by his own request ! Stamping the snow down in this way, we got out of that afflicting place in three or four days to a cave known as the Khawal-i-quti (Blessed cave), below the Zirrin-pass.

That night the snow fell in such an amazing blizzard of cutting wind that every man feared for his life. The storm had become extremely violent by the time we reached the *khawal*, as people in those parts call a mountain-cave or hollow. We dismounted at its mouth. Deep snow ! a one-man road ! and even on that stamped-down and trampled road, pitfalls for horses ! The days at their shortest ! The first arrivals reached the cave by daylight ; others kept coming in from the Evening Prayer till the Bed-time one ; later than that people dismounted wherever they happened to be ; dawn shot with many still in the saddle.

“The cave seeming to be rather small, I took a shovel and shovelled out a place near its mouth, the size of a sitting-mat, digging it out breast-high, but even then not reaching the ground. This made me a little shelter from the wind when I sat right down in it. I did not go into the cave, though people kept saying ‘Come inside,’ because this was in my mind, ‘Some of my men in snow and storm, I in the



comfort of a warm house ! the whole horde outside in misery and pain, I inside sleeping at ease ! That would be far from a man's act, quite another matter than comradeship ! Whatever hardship and wretchedness there is, I will face ; what strong men stand, I will stand ; for, as the Persian proverb says, to die with friends is a nuptial. Till the Bed-time Prayer I sat through that blizzard of snow and wind in the dug-out, the snowfall being such that my head, back, and ears were overlaid four hands thick. The cold of that night affected my ears. At the Bed-time Prayer some one, looking more carefully at the cave, shouted out, ' It is a very roomy cave, with place for everybody.' On hearing this I shook off my roofing of snow and, asking the braves near to come also, went inside. There was room for 50 or 60 ! People brought out their rations, cold meat, parched grain, whatever they had. From such cold and tumult to a place so warm, cosy and quiet !

" Next day the snow and wind having ceased, we made an early start and we got to the pass by again stamping down a road in the snow. The proper road seems to make a detour up the flank of the mountain, and to go over higher up, by what is understood to be called the Zirrin-pass. Instead of taking that road, we went straight up the valley-bottom (*qul*). It was night before we reached the further side of the (Bakkak-) pass ; we spent the night there in the mouth of the valley, a night of mighty cold, got through with great distress and suffering. Many a man had his hands and feet frost-bitten ; that night's cold took both Kipa's feet, both Siunduk Turkman's hands, both Ahi's feet. Early next morning we moved down the valley ; putting our trust in God, we went straight down, by bad slopes and sudden falls, knowing and seeing it could not be the right way. It was the Evening Prayer when we got out of that valley. No long-memored old man knew that any one had been heard of as crossing that pass with the snow so deep, or indeed that it had ever entered the heart of man to cross it at that time of year. Though for a few days we had suffered greatly through the depth of the snow, yet its depth, in the end, enabled us to reach our destination. For why ? How otherwise should we have traversed those pathless slopes and sudden falls ?

' All ill, all good in the count, is gain if looked at aright ! '

" The Yaka-aulang people at once heard of our arrival and our dismounting ; followed, warm houses, fat sheep, grass and horse-corn, water without stint, ample wood and dried dung for fires !





To escape from such snow and cold to such a village, to such warm dwellings, was comfort those will understand who have had our trials, relief known to those who have felt our hardships. We tarried one day in Yaka-aulang, happy of heart and easy of mind; marched 2 yighach (10-12 m.) next day and dismounted. The day following was the Ramzan Feast; we went on through Bamian, crossed by Shibr-tu and dismounted before reaching Janglik.<sup>1</sup>

After resting and refreshing his troops, Babur determined to attack the winter camp of the troublesome Turkman Hazaras, who, unaware of his presence, were lying across his road. He made a sudden rush upon them, scattered them, took several captives, and drove off large numbers of horses and sheep.

About the time when he was engaged in the exploit, Babur received news from Kabul which made him glad that he had pressed on despite the difficulties of the weather. It seemed that Muhammad Husain Mirza Dughlat, who had sought refuge with Babur from the Uzbek storm, had taken advantage of his host's absence to stir up rebellion in a most ungrateful manner. Sedulously spreading a report that Babur had been kidnapped by the two Mirzas of Herat, he won over the Mongol troops in Kabul to support him in the design of setting up Wais Khan, the youngest son of Sultan Mahmud Mirza, as Padshah. The town was in the hands of the insurgents, but the citadel, under the command of the trusty Mulla Baba of Pashaghar, held out for Babur.

That prince acted with his usual energy. Arranging with the loyal garrison that a sortie should be made when his men lighted a fire on the top of a neighbouring hill, he pressed forward to the attack. After a sharp but confused skirmish the rebels were completely dispersed, and Babur was once more master. The chief culprits were all kinsmen of his own, and though he acted with his usual clemency, he was bitterly disappointed at their treachery.

When this trouble was settled, Babur resumed his usual

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 308-311.



occupation of heading punitive expeditions against the rebellious tribes whose misdeeds disturbed his kingdom. About this same time his position was considerably strengthened by the misfortunes which overtook his two brothers, always possible rivals and pawns in the hands of his enemies. The elder, Jahangir, died suddenly from the effects of drink, while the younger, Nasir, was expelled from his new kingdom of Badakhshan as a result of his own foolishness, and came back, humbled and repentant, to seek service and forgiveness.

Meanwhile, in Khorasan, events were moving quickly, Shaibani, realising the calibre of his opponents, determined to make a direct attack upon the country—a thing he would never have dared to do in the time of Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara. At the court of Herat, confusion reigned supreme. The two brothers, though better friends than might have been expected, were just sufficiently jealous of one another to make effective co-operation very difficult. They were lying with their army in their summer retreat of Baba Khaki, not having decided either to engage the enemy, or to defend Herat. The strongest, though unfortunately not the wisest, man about them was Zu-n-nun Arghun, the lord of Qandahar. So jealous was he of his authority that when a knowledgeable man proposed a sound scheme of campaign, namely, to put a garrison in Herat, and retire to the hills with a powerful covering force, Zu-n-nun, putting his trust in silly prophecies,<sup>1</sup> undertook to beat the invaders by himself. He took no precautions, he issued no orders; and when Shaibani with forty or fifty thousand Uzbek veterans advanced against Herat, Zu-n-nun was so foolish as to oppose him with some hundred and fifty followers. He was, of course, swept off the field, captured, and executed. The Mirzas ran away like arrant cowards, leaving their women, children and goods to the pleasure of the invaders. The whole of the Khorasan country fell into Shaibani's hands, practically without resistance. The victory of the Uzbek chief was

<sup>1</sup> He was told that the stars were holding commerce with certain soothsayers, who announced that he was to be entitled 'Lion of God,' and was to overcome the Uzbeks.





complete; his power was at its height. He had crushed the Timurids, and had seated himself upon the thrones of all the kingdoms they had held save only the throne of Kabul. It was perhaps not surprising that he behaved in a somewhat arrogant manner. Deeming it incumbent upon himself to maintain the reputation for culture enjoyed by the Herat court of the late years, he turned his attention from the sword to the pen, correcting the handwriting of famous calligraphists and the drawing of famous artists, instructing learned divines in theology and exegesis: and—crowning offence of all in Babur's eyes!—perpetrating a large quantity of very bad verse.

Perhaps Babur may be pardoned for looking at his great rivals's literary efforts with a prejudiced eye. The triumph of Shaibani was now so complete that the position of the prince of Kabul was one of extreme danger. Not merely were his hopes of recovering his old kingdom entirely destroyed, at least for the moment: in addition, there was good reason to fear that his new possessions might be seized by the terrible Uzbek. Being so far the weaker party, Babur had good reason for thinking that his only chance of successful resistance lay in quick aggression. Accordingly, when Shah Beg Arghun and Mugim Beg Arghun, the heirs of the luckless Zu'n-nun, invited Babur to receive the submission of Qandahar and lead a joint expedition against the Uzbeqs, he did not hesitate to accept the offer. After taking counsel with his begs, he got his army to horse, and rode for Qandahar. On the way, an accident occurred which shows how far Babur's disposition contrasted with that of other warriors of his time.

"In Qalat the army came upon a mass of Hindustan traders, come there to traffic, and, as it seemed, unable to go on. The general opinion about them was that people who, at a time of such hostilities, are coming into an enemy's country must be plundered. With this, however, I did not agree; said I, 'What is the traders' offence? If we, looking to God's pleasure, leave such scrapings of gain aside, the Most High God will apportion our reward. It is now just as it was a short time back when we rode out to raid the Ghilji; many of



you then were of one mind to raid the Mahmand Afghans, their sheep and goods, their wives and families, just because they were within five miles of you! Then as now I did not agree with you. On the very next day the Most High God apportioned you more sheep belonging to Afghan enemies, than had ever before fallen to the share of the army.' Something by way of peshkash (offering) was taken from each trader when we dismounted on the other side of Qalat." <sup>1</sup>

While he was marching from Qalat to Qandahar, he was joined by two fugitives princes, who desired to experience his unvarying kindness. One was Wais Khan, who had been allowed to go to Khorasan after the failure of his attempt to usurp Babur's place at Kabul: the other was Abd-ur-razzak Mirza, son of the last ruler of that country, by many considered the rightful heir. But despite the formidableness of these refugees from the political point of view, they were very kindly received, and treated with every consideration.

The Arghuns of Qandahar, as Babur approached, began to change their attitude towards him. Probably they had not expected such an ample response to their request for alliance; they may have guessed that they had invoked a spirit too powerful for them, and may have decided that it was better to serve a distant Shaibani than a Babur close at hand. To Babur's requests for an interview that measures might be concerted against the Uzbeks, they returned unfriendly answers, addressing their letters in a manner which implied that Babur was their inferior.<sup>2</sup> He attempted several times to come to some agreement with them, but his overtures being continually repulsed, he grew angry at having been enticed upon a fool's errand, and decided to attack them. He moved along the skirt of Qandahar hill, resting and refreshing his men. Suddenly, when about half his little band of 2000 men were scattered about the country foraging, the Arghuns, with six or seven

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 331.

<sup>2</sup> Shah Beg also had the insolence to put his seal in the middle of the reverse side of the letter—a position adopted when a great beg wrote to a smaller beg.



thousand men, made a rush upon the camp. Two things saved Babur : the excellent discipline of his troops, and the fact that his left was protected by a number of tree-tangled canals, which the enemy, despite immensely superior numbers, could not force. Without any confusion Babur's men fell in under their appointed leaders, each leader knowing his exact position in van, centre, right or left. By sheer valour the right and the centre drove back the forces opposed to them, and then turned to the succour of the sorely-pressed band which was holding the difficult passages on the left. When the general advance was sounded, the enemy broke and fled. So complete was their disaster that they had not even time to secure Qandahar itself, and the city surrendered to Babur after a short parley. A vast mass of treasure fell into the hands of the victors. The country was handed over to Nasir Mirza to console him for the loss of Badakhshan, and Babur himself with the mass of the troops withdrew, laden with plunder.

The reason which had induced him to retire after his exploit may be briefly told. He was afraid of Shaibani. As he well knew, Shah Beg and Muqim, on the outbreak of hostilities, had thrown themselves into the arms of the Uzbek leader. Shaibani, at their request, came swiftly down on Qandahar by the mountain road, hoping to surprise Babur. Failing in this design, he laid siege to the town, which he took ; but the citadel held out under Nasir Mirza. As matters grew less hopeful, Nasir slipped out and retired to Ghazni, leaving a few trusty begs with instructions to resist as long as possible. Just as the place was on the point of falling, however, Shaibani suddenly raised the siege and marched away, for he had heard that his haram, which he had left in Nirah-tu, had been threatened by the movement of some rebels.

Despite the failure of Shaibani's expedition, the mere presence of the Uzbek in a place so close as Qandahar was seriously alarming to Babur. He prudently resolved to put as wide a space as possible between himself and his foe. In September, 1507, after some discussion, it was decided that he should march in the direction of Hindustan. The project was



abandoned at an early date, because soon afterwards came the news that Shaibani had retired. None the less, the fact that the expedition was planned at all is significant of the manner in which Babur's aims and ambitions were gradually being turned, by force of circumstances, from the West to the East. We shall see in the next chapter how, from his base at Kabul, he succeeds step by step, with some occasional distractions, in building up for himself a practicable pathway, by which, when the time is ripe, he will advance towards the acquisition of the Empire of Hindustan.





## CHAPTER V

## SAMARKAND ONCE MORE

*Authorities.*—*Babur-nama*; *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*; *Ahsan-us-Siyar*; *Habib-us-Siyar*; *Shaibani Nama*; *Alim arai Abassi*; *Firishta*; *Alril Faze*; *Khufi Khan*.

*Modern Works.*—*Erskine*; *Lane Poole*.

It was after the retirement of Shaibani from Qandahar had removed all immediate danger, that Babur decided to declare himself in name what he had long been in fact, the head of the descendants of Timur. "Up to that date," he says, "people had styled Timur Beg's descendants Mirza even when they were ruling; now I ordered that people should style me Padshah." The assumption of this title is very significant; it was equivalent to claiming supremacy not merely over all the Chagatai and Mongol tribesmen who had once owned the sway of his paternal and his maternal grandfather, but in addition, over all princes of the same stock. Nor can there be any doubt that Babur's achievements justified his claim. Quite apart from the prominent part he had played in all the great events of recent years, he was now stronger than he had been for some time. He had defeated the Arghuns abroad; he had put down rebellion at home, and was now firmly established in the vantage-ground of Kabul.

But he was not long destined to enjoy his new honours in peace, for while he was absent on one of his customary expeditions, a formidable rebellion was hatched in favour of Abdur-razzak, the son of the last ruler of Kabul. The immediate occasion of the outbreak was perhaps the birth of an heir to Babur—a child afterwards known to fame as the Emperor



Humayun. This seemed to deprive the house of Ulugh Beg Mirza of all chance of regaining the throne.<sup>1</sup> It was proposed to make Abd-ur-razzak ruler not only of Kabul and Ghazni, but also of Badakshan, Qunduz, and the territories formerly held by Khosru Shah. As usual the trouble began with the Mongol mercenaries. These soldiers of fortune, who had deserted Khosru Shah in his hour of need, found that their new master did not come up to their expectations. He was too strict: he put down plundering with singular severity; and he looked for implicit obedience to orders. When Babur returned in May, 1508, he received several warnings that sedition was rife among them; but the actual outbreak seems to have taken him unawares. One evening as he sat in the Audience Chamber of the Char Bagh, Mirza Khwaja came up, and told him that the Mongol troops were unquestionably disaffected, although it was not certain that Abd-ur-razzak was an accomplice, or that the outbreak would come soon. Babur dismissed the matter, feigning to treat it lightly, and went off to the haram as usual. His first warning of serious trouble was the desertion of his pages and men-at-arms. He then realised his danger, but was nearly captured before his bodyguard had rallied round him. Practically the whole of the Mongol auxiliaries must have been tampered with, for in the last resort he found himself, with his little band of five hundred devoted followers, confronted by more than three thousand rebels. With his usual dash, Babur, instead of taking to the hills, determined to stake his throne and life upon the issue of a fair fight in the open. It was one of his greatest battles, and we should give much to possess one of his own vivid descriptions of the actual struggle. Unfortunately, just previous to this time, May 1508, the *Memoirs* break off for eleven years. But from parallel sources, particularly the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* and the *Habib-us-Siyar*, we can get a very fair idea of what took place.

<sup>1</sup> For the events of this rebellion the most important source is the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. Good brief connected narratives are found in Firishtha (ii. 30) and Khwafi Khan. The *Habib-us-Siyar* is extremely useful, and with the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* forms the basis of most later accounts.





The action was most desperately contested, but was finally turned against the rebels by the personal prowess of the Padshah himself. With his own sword he encountered and defeated one after the other five champions of the rebels.<sup>1</sup> This was too much for his antagonists, who fled in dismay. He won a decisive victory, and his triumph was crowned by the capture of the graceless Abd-ur-razzak. In his hour of prosperity Babur did not forget his customary kindness; the rebel leader was generously treated and set at liberty.<sup>2</sup>

For the rest of the year 1508 and for the whole of the year 1509, we know little of Babur's doings. He seems to have occupied himself principally in regulating the internal affairs of his little kingdom, and in preparing himself for whatever new surprise Fortune might have in store. For the moment, there seemed no other outlet for his activities. So far as Hindustan was concerned, the time was not ripe; and so far as Samarkand was concerned, Shaibani was still powerful as ever. In 1509, indeed, Babur had a most unpleasant reminder of the existence of his cruel enemy; for there came to him two desolate fugitives, both cousins of his own, who had escaped by a hair's breadth from the death commanded by Shaibani. One was a young man of twenty-one, Sultan Sa'id Khan Chagatai, son of Sultan Ahmad Khan; the other was a boy of eleven, Haidar Mirza Doghlat, who was afterwards to become famous as the author of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. They were received with the kindness and courtesy which were becoming almost proverbial.

"It may be imagined," says Haidar Mirza, "how I enjoyed so sudden a transition to comfort, ease, and abundance from a state of poverty, misfortune, suffering and hardship, which had rendered the soul weary of its confinement within the cage of the body. How can I ever show sufficient thankfulness? May God reward him with good things. Thus I passed a long time in the service of the Emperor,

<sup>1</sup> Firishta gives the names as follows: Ali Shab-kur, Ali Sistani, Nazar Bahadur Uzbek, Yaqub Tez-Jang, and Uzbek Bahadur. Of these the first two only are given in the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently he rebelled again, and this time he was taken and executed.—Firishta, ii. 30.



in perfect happiness and freedom from care: and he was for ever, either by promises of kindness or by threats of severity, encouraging me to study. If ever he noticed any little virtue or new acquisition, he would praise it in the highest terms, commend it to everybody, and invite their approbation. All that time the Emperor showed me such affection and kindness as a fond father shows his son and heir. It was a hard day for me when I lost my father, but the bitterness of my desolation became scarcely perceptible, owing to the blessed favours of the Emperor." <sup>1</sup>

But Babur was soon to find occupation of a more exciting nature than succouring the distressed. Towards the end of 1509 there came to Kabul news that must have roused him like a trumpet call. Shaibani, the arrogant, the faithless, the cruel, had in the height of his power gone one step too far, and had aroused the enmity of the terrible Shah Ismael Safawi, monarch of a rejuvenated Persian empire and champion of the Shia sect.<sup>2</sup> The story of the quarrel between the two men is among the most famous tales of Eastern history. Some of Shaibani's troops had plundered the borders of Shah Ismael's dominions. To the envoys sent to demand redress, Shaibani returned an insulting answer, despatching moreover to Ismael a beggar's dish, in allusion to the sanctified poverty which had always marked the family from which the Shah claimed descent. Ismael received the taunts of the Uzbek leader with feigned humility, saying that he proposed to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the holy Imam Reza, and that he hoped to take the opportunity of waiting upon the Khan. In return for his present, he sent him a spindle and a distaff, with the message: "Lo, I have tightened my girdle for a deadly contest, and have placed the foot of determination in the stirrup of victory. If thou wilt meet me like a man, face to face in battle, our

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, Elias and Ross' translation. Despite Haidar Mirza's gratitude to Babur, he cannot condone the subsequent relations with Shah Ismael, the account of which is marked by considerable injustice to his benefactor.

<sup>2</sup> For the struggle between the two men see the *Habib-us-Siyar*, the *Alim arai Abassi* (f. 29b-33a), the *Ahsan-us-Siyar*, and the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. Cf. Erskine, i. 298-300.





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quarrel will at once be decided. But if thou would'st rather sink into a corner, then thou mayest find what I have sent thee of some use."

Shah Ismael was as good as his word. He set his armies in motion, took his foe by surprise, and drove Shaibani into Merv, a city in the north of Khorasan. He defeated a covering force, and then laid siege to the town. But finding that the Uzbek garrison, headed by Shaibani were making a spirited resistance, he resolved on a ruse. He wrote that he regretted being unable to await Shaibani's convenience at present, as circumstances necessitated his withdrawal; but that he hoped to be fortunate enough to meet him on a subsequent occasion. He then marched off, as though in full retreat. Shaibani rushed out of Merv in hot pursuit, was drawn ten or twelve miles away from safety by a series of minor successes carefully arranged for him, and suddenly found himself between a river and the whole Persian army. The bridge behind him had been seized by a body of troops in ambush, and the Uzbek was attacked in front by 17,000 of the famous veteran cavalry of Shah Ismael. To a contest under these conditions there could be but one issue. After a desperate resistance Shaibani's force was defeated; he and his entire following were driven into a *sarai*, where they were surrounded. They perished to a man. This was at the beginning of December, 1510.<sup>1</sup>

The news of the termination of the duel between Ismael and Shaibani, and of the final destruction of his dreaded rival, reached Babur before the end of the month. It was communicated to him by his cousin Wais Khan, who had been for some time established in Badakhshan.<sup>2</sup> At first, tidings were uncertain. "It is not known," wrote Wais Mirza,

<sup>1</sup> There is a good account of the battle in the *Alim arai Abassi*, f. 31a.

<sup>2</sup> After the expulsion of Nasir Mirza, Wais Mirza was persuaded to try his fortune in Badakhshan, urged thereto by his mother, Shah Begam. He found the country in great confusion, divided into three principalities, each under a few powerful and many petty chiefs. After many misfortunes, in the course of which he had lived, and his mother had died, in prison, he succeeded in asserting his claim, and in being recognised as king of the country. He seems to have died in A.H. 926 (A.D. 1520) when Badakhshan fell into the hands of Babur.—*Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.





whether Shahi Beg Khan has been killed or not. All the Uzbeks have crossed the Amu—about 20,000 Mongols, who left the Uzbek at Merv, have come to Qunduz. I have come there also.” He then invited Babur to join him in an attempt to recover their ancestral dominions.<sup>1</sup>

Babur needed no spur. Directly he received the news, he put Nasir Mirza in charge of Kabul, crossed the mountains, taking with him his two little sons, Humayun and Kamran, winter though it was, and reached Qunduz and the Mirza in January, 1511. Here he found the Mongol troops already mentioned, who, being in overwhelming force, 20,000 to 5000 of Babur's men, appear to have contemplated deposing him, and putting his guest Sultan Sa'id in his place. But Sultan Sa'id refused to take any part in injuring his benefactor.

“During the period of the hurricane of Shahi Beg Khan's conquests, when the buffetings of the waves of calamity and contention dashed in pieces the ships of the life and prosperity of the Mongol Khakhans, I saved myself upon the plank of concealment and arrived at length at the island of Kabul, which Babur Padshah had contrived to save from the violent shocks of the billows of events, and where he then was. On this island the Emperor protected me with the utmost benevolence. Now that I have attained the shore of prosperity, how ungrateful would it be for me to perform so ignoble an act.”<sup>2</sup>

At his own request he and his too-zealous adherents were dispatched to Andijan, where Mirza Haidar's uncle was busy driving out the Uzbeks, and was calling for assistance.

For his part, Babur advanced on Hisar, and passed the river Amu, but found that the Uzbeks of that quarter, despite their defeats, were still too strong for him. He therefore returned to Qunduz without fighting, on the look-out for allies. The opportunity for which he was seeking soon arrived. While he was in Qunduz there suddenly came a body of Shah Ismael's troops, honourably escorting Babur's elder sister Khanzada, who, after the death in battle of her successive husbands,

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



Shahbani and Saiyid Hadi, had fallen into the hands of the Persians. There came also at the same time an embassy from Shah Ismael, offering his friendship. Here at last were the allies for whom Babur had been looking. He promptly despatched Wais Mirza with thanks and gifts—gifts which the Persian court historians, Khwandamir, Mirza Barkwardar Turkman, and Mirza Sikandar, regard in the light of the tribute rendered from a political inferior to his suzerain.<sup>1</sup>

Ismael received the embassy kindly, and agreed to furnish the required assistance—at a price.<sup>2</sup> The price was somewhat heavy. Babur was to substitute the Shah's name for his own in the *Khutba*, was to stamp it on his coinage, and—most onerous of all—was to encourage the spread of Shia doctrines, throughout any conquests he made in the rigidly Sunni dominion of Samarkand. As we shall see, this last stipulation was to be the rock on which Babur's fortunes were to suffer shipwreck. Hard as they were, the terms were evidently accepted by Wais Mirza on behalf of his principal; for a small reinforcement was at once given to him, and a large body of Ismael's troops, under the leadership of Ahmad Beg Safawi, Ali Khan Istilju, and Shahrukh Sultan<sup>3</sup> Afshar were ordered to hold themselves in readiness to support Babur so soon as the agreement should have been ratified.

Meanwhile, that prince had been getting to work on his own behalf. He moved once more against Hisar, and encamped

<sup>1</sup> Despite the emphatically contradictory views expressed by Indian historians like Abu'l Fazl, Firishta, and Khufi Khan, there is nothing in this that need cause surprise. There was no reason why Ismael should help Babur. No tie of kinship bound them: the one was a mighty emperor, the other still a petty prince. But if Babur should admit the supremacy of the Persian king, the situation would at once be altered. Ismael would be bound in honour to assist his vassal. The story of the Persian court historians seems in its main facts eminently reasonable; and the unfortunate ending of the alliance would account fully for Babur's silence in the matter.

<sup>2</sup> The Persian historians make this very clear. The Indian historians, and even the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, slur it over as much as possible. The *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* is here so much biassed as to be unreliable.

<sup>3</sup> The *Habib-us-Siyar* and the *Ahsan-us-Siyar* agree in calling him Shahrukh Beg.



on the side of the Surkh-ab, in the vicinity of Wakhsh,<sup>1</sup> where he was watched by a powerful Uzbek force across the river. He lay there for a month awaiting reinforcements, and was then joined by Wais Mirza who had hurried up with a small body of Persian troops. Evidently the conclusion of his alliance with Ismael became known to the Uzbeks very shortly, for they decided to attack him before the arrival of the main body of Persian auxiliaries despatched to his assistance. Accordingly, the Uzbeks one morning swam the river and fell upon Babur, who promptly retired to a stronger position near Abdara. They vigorously attacked his left, which was posted on a hill, but after a brief success, failed to make any impression.<sup>2</sup> They then turned to retrace their steps, for the absence of water made camping out of the question; but, as so often happens with Eastern armies, the retreat became, under pursuit, a disorderly rout. The entire force broke up: the principal begs were captured, and executed out of hand by Babur, who then advanced in the direction of Hisar.

The Padshah now bethought himself of his new ally and overlord, Shah Ismael. Promptly ratifying the proposed agreement, he asked for speedy and effective support, expressing a hope that the whole of Transoxiana would quickly be reduced, and promising not only to stamp on his coins the images of the Twelve Imams, but even to adopt the Shia dress himself. Ismael in return despatched the powerful force which had been prepared for the purpose, and seems to have agreed that Babur should issue coins as usual in his own name throughout his "hereditary dominions"<sup>3</sup>—that is, apparently, Farghana and Kabul. This implies that Babur was to be Shah Ismael's vassal only for such territories as might be recaptured from the Uzbeks at present in occupation of them.

<sup>1</sup> *Ahsan-us-Siyar*.

<sup>2</sup> Haidar Mirza gives a lively account of the battle of Abdara, which he witnessed. He is very proud of the fact that when Babur's left, under Wais Mirza, was driven back by the Uzbeks who mounted the left-hand hill, the balance was restored by a contingent of his own troops under Jan Ahmad Ataka.—*Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.

<sup>3</sup> *Habib-us-Siyar* and *Ahsan-us-Siyar*.



With his powerful body of allies and auxiliaries, Babur pressed straight on to Bokhara, sweeping the Uzbegs before him as he advanced. But his name was worth more than many legions to him. The people of town and countryside alike welcomed him with the greatest enthusiasm. Bokhara readily submitted, and Babur felt himself strong enough to dismiss the Persian auxiliaries with thanks and presents. They must have been uncomfortable allies, rabid Shias as they were, in that land of uncompromising Sunnis: moreover they served as a perpetual reminder of his vassalage to Shah Ismael. He would not mar the glories of his long-desired "joyous entry" into Samarkand by their presence. But though they went, they left behind their master's representative, Muhammad Jan, as Babur was shortly to realise to his cost. For the moment, however, no cloud marred the sky. Nor in the hour of his triumph did Babur forget the claims of his cousin Wais Mirza, who was confirmed in the sovereignty of Hisar Shadman, Khutlan and Badakhshan.

From Bokhara Babur went straight to the city of Timur, the scene of so many of his triumphs and despairs. It was in October, 1511, that he re-entered Samarkand, after an absence of nine years. The rejoicings of the populace were heartfelt. As Mirza Haidar says:

"All the inhabitants of the towns of Mavara-un-Nahr, high and low, nobles and poor men, grandees and artisans, princes and peasants, alike testified their joy at the advent of the Emperor. He was received by the nobles, while the other classes were busy with the decoration of the town, the streets and bazaars were draped with cloth and gold brocades, and drawings and pictures were hung up on every side. The Emperor entered the city in the middle of the month of Rajab in the year 917, in the midst of such pomp and splendour as no one has ever seen or heard of, before or since. The angels cried aloud, 'Enter with peace,' and the people exclaimed, 'Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe.' The people of Mavara-un-Nahr, especially the inhabitants of Samarkand, had for years been longing for him to come, that the shadow of his protection might be cast upon them."





## SAMARKAND ONCE MORE

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None the less, the elements of disaster were already present. Mirza Haidar goes on :

"Although in the hour of necessity, the Emperor had clothed himself in the garments of the Shias, which was pure heresy, nay, almost unbelief, the people hoped that when he mounted the throne of Samarkand, and placed on his head the diadem of the holy Sunna of Muhammad, that he would remove from it the insignia of the Shah. But the hopes of the people of Samarkand were not realised. For as yet the Emperor did not feel able to dispense with the aid of Shah Ismael, nor did he feel himself sufficiently strong to cope single-handed with the Uzbek : hence he appeared to overlook the gross errors of the Shias. On this account the people of Mavara-un-Nahr ceased to feel that intense longing for the Emperor which they had entertained while he was absent—their regard for him was at an end."<sup>1</sup>

Mirza Haidar has laid his finger on the weak point of Babur's position in Samarkand. The Padshah, indeed, was placed in a most difficult situation. The Uzbeks were still strong, and his only hope of holding his ground, to say nothing of making head against them, lay in a close alliance either with his own Samarkand folk or with Shah Ismael and his Persians. But there were insuperable difficulties in the way of adopting either course. Babur was a man of his word : he was pledged to the Shah, and, what was much more serious, to the support of the Shah's religion. But he could not bring himself to incur the hatred of his own people by acting as a submissive instrument of Ismael's proselytising zeal. To assume the dress of the Shias and to stamp his coins with Shia emblems was bad enough ; <sup>2</sup> he refused to persecute, and persecution was the only course which could have won him real favour in the eyes of his overlord, whose barbarous treatment of pious and learned members of the opposing sect was horrifying the Sunni world. Had he been willing to throw over his alliance, all might perhaps have been well. It was not, we may believe, any considerations of danger which prevented him from doing so ; it was the fact that he had pledged his word. None the less, though he

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, Elias and Ross' translation.

<sup>2</sup> See R. S. Poole, *Catalogue of Persian Coins*, 1887, pp. xxiv seq.



was bound to Shah Ismael, he showed a not unnatural resentment at the humiliating position in which he was placed. In consequence, like James II. of England in a later age, Babur was compelled to bear all the odium of alliance with an unpopular power, while his pride debarred him from accepting the accompanying benefits. So while he became steadily less welcome to the Samarkandis through his relations with Persia, he offended the Shah by treating the Persian envoy, Muhammad Jan, with an independence and freedom which the affronted nobleman magnified into a series of studied insults. A report was transmitted to the Persian court that the new monarch of Samarkand was arrogant, faithless, and a harbourer of seditious designs against his overlord. Shah Ismael, in high dudgeon, despatched his famous commander, Mir Najm Sani,<sup>1</sup> to reduce the offender to obedience.

But before the Persian punitive force of 11,000 men got within striking distance, a change came over the aspect of affairs. The Uzbek chiefs, particularly 'Ubaidullah Khan, encouraged by the withdrawal of the Persian troops and the growing coolness between Babur and the Samarkandis on the one hand, and Babur and the Shah on the other, determined to renew their attacks. They gathered a powerful force, and suddenly sent on a flying squadron in the direction of Bokhara. Babur, abandoned by all but his small following of faithful companions, in his desperation determined to attack the foe.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the state maintained by this man, his lavish expenditure, his gorgeous household, see the *Habib-us-Siyar* and the *Ahsan-us-Siyar*. It was said that every day 13 kettles of pure silver were destroyed in preparing food for his household. The following story comes from the *Ahsan-us-Siyar* :—

“It came to my hearing from an honest friend of mine that when, on the other side of the Ab, a man asked Mir Najm's confectioner how he got so much spicery every day in a hostile country, the officer replied, ‘By God's favour I have goats, fowls, sugar candy, sugar, rice, and cooking implements in large quantities, but as I need every day 10 *mans* of cinnamon, saffron, ginger, cummin, fennel, coriander and other spices, I am sometimes hard pressed to get them.’”

<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that Haidar Mirza is led astray by his religious zeal when he makes Babur superior in numbers to the Uzbeks. Both the *Habib-us-Siyar* and the *Ahsan-us-Siyar* are emphatic upon the point.



In this he acted contrary to the advice of Muhammad Farid Tarkhan, who counselled delay. But the prince was too impatient to wait, and believed that the Uzbeks were in small force. He marched out in the direction of Bokhara. But when he arrived at Kul Malik in the neighbourhood of that city, he found that the advance party of the Uzbeks had been reinforced by a strong detachment under Muhammad Timur Sultan, Jani Beg, and 'Ubaidullah Khan. He was thoroughly trapped, but determined to take his chance. We have no satisfactory account of the fight of Kul Malik,<sup>1</sup> but it is clear that Babur displayed his usual valour, and from the fact that he was able to retire into Bokhara, and afterwards to make good his retreat unmolested, it may be gathered that the actual struggle, despite his inferiority in numbers, was not unequally contested. But he was compelled to fall back by rapid stages. Not merely Bokhara, but Samarkand itself slipped from his grasp, so that he collected his dependants and retired to Hisar. Here he fortified himself strongly, ordering a ditch to be dug round the town, and dividing the streets into quarters, over each of which a careful watch was set. He received a small reinforcement from Bahram Beg, who sent Amir Sultan Muhammad Shirazi with 300 men.

The Uzbeks did not attack him, but contented themselves with reoccupying Samarkand.

Accordingly, when Najm Sani reached the frontier of Khorasan, he was surprised to find that the rebellious prince whom he had come to chastise was now a fugitive. The Uzbeks were as much the enemies of Shah Ismael as of Babur, so that the punitive expeditionary force had to be converted into an army of support.<sup>2</sup> When the allies had effected their junction, they advanced towards Bokhara, and captured

<sup>1</sup> *Habib-us-Siyar*; *Ahsan-us-Siyar*. Abu'l Fazl says that Babur won Kul-Malik, but had to retreat owing to "the unpropitious influence of the planets."

<sup>2</sup> Mir Najm, with typical arrogance, declined to wait for a confirmation of his orders from headquarters. He rashly pushed ahead without even reinforcements, "counting this dangerous and highly troublesome enterprise an easy and ordinary affair."—*Ahsan-us-Siyar*.



Khizar. To Babur's grief and indignation, the Persian army inflicted severe penalties upon the unfortunate inhabitants of the regions through which they passed. Qarshi being breached and stormed they were not content with putting to the sword the Uzbek garrison: they proceeded to a general massacre of the population. Babur, practically a prisoner in Persian hands, was an unwilling spectator of the tragedy. Najm Sani then advanced another stage towards Bokhara, but was brought to a halt by the desperate resistance of the garrison of the little town of Ghaj-davan. Against the advice of Khwaja Kasnalud-din Muhammad, who was experienced in Uzbek warfare, Najm determined to press the siege, and this despite the fact that the garrison was thoroughly provisioned while his own army was running short of supplies. When, after some considerable period, perhaps as much as four months, Babur gave counsel to the same effect, the Persian general appeared convinced; but the very next day, before a move could be made, the Uzbek army appeared in great strength. 'Ubaidullah Khan had marched out from Bokhara to the assistance of his besieged garrison. There was nothing for it but to risk a battle, although the Persian army was entangled in the suburbs of the town. Najm, whose arrogance had made him hated, was not properly supported by his amirs. The Persian army was thrown into confusion, and the general killed. With great difficulty Babur, in command of the rearguard, made good his retreat.<sup>1</sup>

Persian historians<sup>2</sup> persist in ascribing the defeat of their forces to treachery on the part of Babur. It is generally admitted that he took no part in the battle; but on the one hand, he was stationed with the reserve, and on the other, he was practically a prisoner in the hands of the Persian forces. Therefore it is no matter for wonder if he should have preferred the victory of the Uzbeks, whom he respected as foes, to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ahsan-us-Siyar*; *Habib-us-Siyar*.

<sup>2</sup> *Alim arai Abassi* hints as much; and when Humayun took refuge in Persia, the taunt of his father's treachery was openly thrown in his teeth. (*Badauni*, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Bibl. Ind. f. 444.)





success of the Persians, whom he detested as friends. Legend has it that on the night before the battle he shot an arrow into the Uzbek camp bearing the following couplet :—

“I made the Shah's fortune [Najm] road-stuff for the Uzbeks,  
If fault has been mine, I have now cleansed the road.”<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, no reason to accuse Babur of anything worse than passivity. Apart from his strong sense of honour, the weakness of his position prevented him from doing anything to bring about the downfall of the Persian host.

After this battle, which took place in November, 1512, Babur retired once more to Hisar. Here he was very nearly assassinated in a conspiracy of some Mongol troops in his employ whom he had outspokenly accused of misconduct. He barely escaped with his life in the darkness of the night. This determined him to withdraw from Hisar into Qunduz, where he joined Wais Mirza.

During the whole of 1513 we know little of his movements. Mirza Haidar says that he remained most of the time in Qunduz, exposed to the greatest privation and misery. He bore all his distresses with his customary patience, but at last, despairing of his chances of recovering Hisar, he determined to withdraw to Kabul.<sup>2</sup>

So ended Babur's last attempt to recover Samarkand, the city of his ancestor, Timur. The long series of disasters which had overtaken him since he left Kabul in 1510 had not in any way diminished his cheerfulness or dulled the edge of his ambition. But the strain of these three terrible years had none the less left their mark upon him. Probably it was during his troubled occupation of Samarkand that he first sought a refuge from his cares in the wine-cup. From henceforward he became a hard though not a heavy drinker, taking a naïve delight in the pleasures of frequent wine parties. And drink, though it never clouded his faculties, almost certainly shortened his days.

With his customary wisdom, he reverted to his life as a

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 361.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.



getty prince without complaint. Domestic affairs began to assume a greater importance. Two more sons were born to him, Askari in 1516 and Hindal in 1519. Moreover, he was at peace with members of his own family. Nasir Mirza, with rare tact, gave up the government of Kabul cheerfully, warmly welcomed his brother, and asked to be allowed to retire to his own fief of Ghazni. Here shortly afterwards the younger prince died, and on his death a rebellion against Babur broke out among the local chiefs into which entered certain nobles, like Mir Shiram, who had passed their life in his service. The details of it are not known; Haidar Mirza ascribes it to the influence of Satan upon the minds of the ringleaders, which is as much as to say that he did not understand what the trouble was about.<sup>1</sup> There was a regular pitched battle, which Babur won largely by personal prowess. The Mongol troops, who were the principal factors in the disturbance, having been dispersed, nearly a year of quiet ensued. During the whole of 1516, there seems little to record of Babur's activities. There is, however, one topic which deserves mention at this point.

Perhaps it was the recent trouble with the Mongol mercenaries which directed Babur's attention to the desirability of increasing the efficiency of his army. Certain it is that about this time he became the witness of a remarkable military reform which was being prosecuted with vigour by his late ally the Shah of Persia. This reform, which consisted of nothing less than the introduction of firearms and of the tactics which firearms rendered possible, was the result of a very unpleasant experience which had befallen Shah Ismael in 1514. Hostilities having broken out between the courts of Teheran and Constantinople, Shah Ismael advanced to the borders of his territory to encounter the invading forces of Sultan Salim the Grim. The armies, approximately equal in numbers, met at Chaldiran. Shah Ismael charged at the head of his splendid cavalry, but was dismayed to find his tactics useless in face of the new artillery and small arms upon which the

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi.*





Turks relied. The Persian forces were utterly routed, and Shah Ismael was lucky to escape with his life. In consequence he determined to learn the new method himself, and he imported Turkish artillerymen and musketry experts to train his own troops.

Babur then determined on his part to imitate Shah Ismael, and some time between 1514 and 1519 he secured the services of an Ottoman Turk named Ustad Ali, who became Master of his Ordnance. It is unfortunate that we have not the *Memoirs* to guide us: for we may be sure that the arrival of Ustad Ali was a red-letter day for Babur. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that this day marked the beginning of Babur's immortal fame. If there was one single material factor which, more than any other, conduced to his ultimate triumph in Hindustan, it was his powerful artillery. Nor is it without significance that not until Babur has secured the services of Mustafa, a second Turkish expert, who came to him some time between 1520 and 1525, is the invasion of India undertaken.

The prince seems now to have made up his mind that if his fortune was to be sought anywhere outside Kabul, it must be sought in the east rather than in the west. Accordingly in 1517 we find him renewing his attacks on Qandahar. The operations were for the moment interrupted by illness, and he retired after receiving gifts from the Arghuns. The next year, in 1518, we find him again looking eastward towards the road to Hindustan, subduing isolated fortresses like Chaghan-sarai on the north-east of Kabul, and taking part in the feuds of the Afghan tribes.

At the beginning of 1519 the *Memoirs*, which have been interrupted for eleven years, are again available, unfortunately for a period of only thirteen months. The entries, scrappy and brief, are evidently intended to constitute the rough material of a more finished account. When they recommence, Babur is engaged in the siege of the fortress of Bajaur. This he stormed after a spirited struggle, in which the new artillery played a part.



(Jan. 7th) At the first dawn of light on Friday the 5th of Muharram, orders were given that when the battle-nagarets had sounded, the army should advance, each man from his place to his appointed post and should swarm up. The left and centre advanced from their ground with mantelets in place all along their lines, fixed their ladders, and swarmed up them. The whole left hand of the centre, under Khalifa, Shah Hasan Arghun and Yusuf's Ahmad, was ordered to reinforce the left wing. Dost Beg's men went forward to the foot of the north-eastern tower of the fort, and busied themselves in undermining and bringing it down. Ustad 'Ali-quli was there also; he shot very well on that day with his matchlock, and he twice fired off the firingi. Wali the Treasurer also brought down a man with his matchlock. Malik 'Ali-qutni was first up a ladder of all the men from the left hand of the centre, and there was busy with fight and blow. At the post of the centre, Muhammad 'Ali Jang-Jang and his younger brother Nau-roz got up, each by a different ladder, and made lance and sword to touch. Baba, the waiting man, getting up by another ladder, occupied himself in breaking down the fort-wall with his axe. Most of our braves went well forward, shooting off dense flights of arrows and not letting the enemy put out a head; others made themselves desperately busy in breaching and pulling down the fort, caring naught for the enemy's fight and blow, giving no eye to his arrows and stones. By breakfast time Dost Beg's men had undermined and breached the north-eastern tower, got in and put the foe to flight. The men of the centre got in up the ladders by the same time, but those others were first in. By the favour and pleasure of the High God, this strong and mighty fort was taken in two or three astronomical hours; matching the fort were the utter struggle and effort of our braves; distinguish themselves they did, and won the name and fame of heroes." <sup>1</sup>

By way of striking terror into the surrounding population, the inhabitants were put to general massacre: "The fort taken, we entered and inspected it. On the walls, in houses, streets and alleys, the dead lay in what numbers! Corners and goers to and fro were passing over the bodies." <sup>2</sup>

This cruelty was not wanton. Babur himself regarded the capture of Bajaur as the first step on the road to Hindustan,

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 369-70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.





THE SIEGE OF BAJAUR.

(Alwar Codex.)

"Perhaps 7, 8, or 10 Bajauris had fallen to the matchlock fire."—BEVERIDGE, p. 369.



and it was of the utmost importance that the Afghan tribes who lay across his path should be taught a lesson of the only kind they could appreciate. Writing in the year of Panipat Babur says :—<sup>1</sup>

“ From the year 910, when I obtained the principality of Kabul, up to the date of the events I now record (*i.e.* the defeat of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi), I had never ceased to think of the conquest of Hindustan. But I had never found a suitable opportunity for undertaking it, hindered as I was, sometimes by the apprehensions of my Beks, sometimes by disagreements between my brothers and myself. Finally all these obstacles were happily removed. Great and small, Beks and captains, no one dared say a word against the project. So in 925 I left at the head of my army, and made a start by taking Bajaur. . . . From this time to 932 I was always actively concerned in the affairs of Hindustan. I went there in person at the head of an army, five times in the course of seven or eight years.<sup>2</sup> The fifth time, by the munificence and liberality of God, there fell beneath my blows an enemy as formidable as Sultan Ibrahim, and I gained the vast empire of Hind.”

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 173-4 ; Ilminski, 348.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning these expeditions there is much confusion, and the account in the text cannot claim to be more than a *via media*. All are agreed that the campaign against Ibrahim Lodi was the fifth, but as to the other four, authorities differ. The following are the principal accounts :—

	Abu'l Fazl.	Firishta.
Expedition 1	910. March to Multan.	925. March to Bhira.
Expedition 2.	913. Expedition to Cheghangarai.	925. Expedition against Yusufzai-Peshawar-Indus.
Expedition 3.	925. Expedition to Bhira.	926. March to Bhira and Sialkot.
Expedition 4.	(Can obtain no account.)	930. Burning of Lahore and march to Sirhind.

Khufi Khan follows Firishta, except in making the second expedition that of Sirhind, which is inconsistent with the *Memoirs* themselves.





The first two of these expeditions took place in the year 1519, and both were of the nature of sudden raids. Early in February Babur determined to undertake an expedition against the Yusufzais. He had previously conciliated one clan by marrying an Afghan wife, and he now desired to reduce the remainder to an acknowledgment of his authority. He set off through the Qara Kupa pass, crossed the Sawad, and finding himself on the borders of Hindustan, determined to cross the Sind. He marched towards Bhira on the Jihlam, encountering no resistance and doing no damage. For, as he says,

“As it was always in my heart to possess Hindustan, and as these several countries . . . had once been held by the Turks, I pictured them as my own, and was resolved to get them into my own hands, whether peacefully or by force. For these reasons it being imperative to treat the hillmen well, this order was given: ‘Do no hurt or harm to the flocks and herds of these people, nor even to their cotton-ends and broken needles!’”<sup>1</sup>

Babur, in fact, regarded the Panjab as his own by right of descent from the great Timur who had conquered it. That this attitude was no pose is clearly shown by the message he sent on in advance of his forces to reassure the people of Bhira: “‘The possession of this country by a Turk has come down from of old; beware not to bring ruin on its people by giving way to fear and anxiety; our eye is on this land and on this people; raid and rapine shall not be.’”<sup>2</sup> Bhira and Khushab at once submitted, and sent their notables to make obeisance. Probably it was the ready submission of these districts that encouraged Babur to lay formal claim to them. As he remarks: “People were always saying, ‘It could do no harm to send an envoy, for peace’ sake, to countries that once depended on the Turk.’”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly he despatched one Mulla Murshid to the court of Delhi, to ask for the surrender of the countries claimed. How Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi would have received the envoy with his strange

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 380.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.



A MIDNIGHT ESCAPE.

(*Alwar Codex.*)

"I was miserably drunk, and next morning, when they told me of our having galloped into the camp with lighted torches in our hands, I had not the slightest recollection of the circumstance."—ERSKINE, p. 259.





message we can only guess; it was probably a very good thing for Mulla Murshid that Daulat Khan, the viceroy of the Panjab, detained him in Lahore.

Meanwhile Babur, leaving Bhira in charge of Hindu Beg, prepared to resume his journey. He combined a good deal of pleasure with his business, making frequent excursions to view the new country, and finishing his days with uproarious drinking parties, which he describes with great zest. The following entry in his diary is typical:—

“Having ridden out at the Mid-day Prayer for an excursion, we got on a boat, and arrack was drunk. . . . We drank in the boat until the Bed-time Prayer; then getting off it full of drink, we mounted, took torches in our hands, and went from the river-bank into camp, leaning over from our horses on this side, leaning over on that, at one loose-rein gallop! Very drunk I must have been, for, when they told me next day that we had galloped loose-rein into camp carrying torches, I could not recall it in the very least.”<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after this particular party, Babur started on his return journey to Kabul. On the way he reduced a Kakar tribe to submission; and after crossing the Sind and marching by way of Ali Masjid, reached his capital in peace. The expedition proved fruitless, however; for no sooner was his back turned, than the countries and districts which had submitted to him united to expel his lieutenant, Hindu Beg. For the moment, Babur took no action against them; but in July following he made a raid upon the Abd-ur-rahman Afghans on the Girdiz border, inflicting exemplary punishment for certain disorders. In September of that same year, 1519,<sup>2</sup> he turned his attention once again to the Yusufzai. He marched through the Khyber and passed Ali Masjid, but before he could carry out his design of victualling Peshawar fort to serve as a base for future operations, he was recalled by news of disturbances in Badakhshan. He therefore returned to Kabul, stopping by the way to punish the turbulent Khizr Khail. Apparently

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 387-388.

<sup>2</sup> This, I think, was reckoned by Babur his second expedition.



this was his second raid into Hindustan. The next two or three months were passed in diplomatic business, in frequent excursions, in wine parties, and in the composition of poetry. The *Memoirs*, before breaking off for another five years, are full of short entries, which throw much light upon the author's everyday life, occasionally varied by such an entertaining irrelevance as the following: "Half of one of my front teeth had broken off, the other half remaining; this half broke off to-day while I was eating food."<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to realise that all this apparent triviality was but the cloak of a great ambition joined to rare fixity of purpose. Beneath all his *bonhomie* and carelessness, Babur was steadily organising his resources and preparing the way for the great enterprise upon which his heart was set—the repetition of his ancestor Timur's conquest of Hindustan. That he desired to join battle with Ibrahim Lodi, there is nothing to show. The Panjab was his first objective; and it is only when he realises that he cannot conquer the Panjab without conquering Delhi, that he makes up his mind to engage in a death-struggle with the reigning dynasty.

It was in the year 1520 that Babur undertook his third expedition to Hindustan. He marched out of Kabul through the Bajaur country, which was now ruled by his own deputies. He passed the mountains, and crossed the Indus, marching straight on Bhira. Here he punished those who had rebelled against him after making submission, and expelled some Afghan freebooters who were oppressing the countryside. He then pushed on to districts which had never yet seen his standards, arriving at last at Sialkot. The town readily submitted, and received no harm at his hands. On the other hand, a place called Saiyidpur preferred to defy him. It was promptly assailed, stormed, and the inhabitants put to the sword. The women and children were led into captivity. How much further into the Panjab Babur would have penetrated we do not know: presumably his objective was Lahore itself. But his projected operations, whatever they

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 424.



may have been, were not to be undertaken at present, for he suddenly received news that Shah Beg Arghun, lord of Qandahar, was raiding his territory.

The interruption of his operations at this moment seems to have convinced Babur that it was useless to expect success in Hindustan so long as Qandahar remained as a thorn in his side. Accordingly, with the shrewdness that characterised him, Babur deliberately devoted the next two years to the task of securing himself from the attacks of the Arghuns. He began his work immediately, driving Shah Beg from the field and forcing him to take refuge in Qandahar itself. Babur then laid regular siege to the town with mines and artillery; but the threefold citadel, being extremely strong, resisted all his efforts. He had succeeded, however in reducing the garrison to great distress, when a pestilence broke out in his camp, and he was compelled to raise the siege and return to Kabul.

Shah Beg took advantage of the brief respite to mature his schemes for withdrawing from Babur's sphere of influence. He well knew that Qandahar must shortly fall into the hands of the lord of Kabul, to whom it was vitally necessary. For his own part, he contemplated occupying Sindh, a country upon which he had already begun to encroach.

In 1521 Babur again entered the territory of Qandahar, and did much damage, causing distress and misery to the population. He then laid siege to Qandahar, and put the utmost pressure upon the garrison. Once more, however, he had to retire without having accomplished his object. Shah Beg now made great efforts to induce Shah Ismael of Persia to interfere on his behalf. The scheme promised well, for the relations between Babur and the Shah were not good at the time: indeed a prominent Persian Amir, Ghias-ud-din Muhammad, son of Amir Yusuf, was put into prison when falsely accused of being a partisan of Babur.<sup>1</sup> However, fortunately for the lord of Kabul, Shah Ismael had his hands quite full, and despite the persuasions of his lieutenants in Herat, who

<sup>1</sup> *Ahsant us-Siyar: Habib-us-Siyar.*



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# BABUR'S DOMINIONS IN 1530

English Miles

0 50 100 200 300 400







strongly urged the support of the Arghuns, he did nothing more than send various letters recommending the lord of Qandahar to Babur's mercy. Babur replied with the utmost courtesy that Shah Beg Arghun's boasted submission to Shah Ismael was a ruse based on necessity, and that *he* would do himself the honour to enforce a real submission and would send the evil-doer to the Shah. The authorities in Herat again protested, but for the moment did nothing more.

Towards the end of the next year, 1522, Babur advanced to the siege of Qandahar. Before he undertook any operations, however, he received a message from Durmesh Khan, one of the officers of Prince Tahmasp, heir to the Persian throne, with the information that the Prince had formed the design of advancing on Qandahar, but had withdrawn on the understanding that Babur would do the same. Babur, accordingly, seems to have resigned himself to the situation, and to have decided to withdraw and to await a more favourable opportunity. Almost as soon as he had retired, Shah Beg, who was well aware that the fall of Qandahar could not possibly be long delayed, put the town in the hands of one Maulana Abdul Baqi, and departed to Sind with all his belongings. Maulana Abdul Baqi, treacherously betraying the trust reposed in him, sent a fast messenger to Babur at Kabul, offering to surrender the town. Babur accordingly hastened back, and received the submission of the fort, which was handed over to his younger son, Kamran Mirza,<sup>1</sup> who was a few months junior to Humayun. The Persian authorities put a good face on the matter, and graciously received the envoy which Babur sent to announce his success—a success which he shortly followed up by occupying the country of Garmsir.

Once thoroughly secure from the side of Qandahar, he turned his attention again to the affairs of Hindustan. That land was now distracted with feuds. For some years, as we have already seen, the kings of Delhi had been with difficulty holding their own against the overwhelming power of

<sup>1</sup> This account of the final reduction of Kandahar is based upon the *Ahsan-us-Siyar*, which is clear and precise in detail.



Rajputs. Now matters were made worse by the cruelty and arrogance of Ibrahim Lodi,<sup>1</sup> who was fast driving the Afghan feudatories, upon whose swords his empire rested, into open revolt. Fearing the power of Daulat Khan, viceroy of the Panjab, he summoned him to Delhi. Daulat Khan, who suspected that his life would be forfeit if he obeyed the summons, sent his son Dilawar instead. Ibrahim was enraged, and openly menaced father and son with destruction. The viceroy thereupon renounced his allegiance to Ibrahim, and sent his son to Babur at Kabul, offering fealty and inviting his help against the king of Delhi.<sup>2</sup> What Daulat Khan really wanted, as afterwards became apparent, was a free hand in the Panjab, uncontrolled by any political superior. This, however, was carefully concealed under the guise of other schemes. Apparently it was suggested that Ibrahim should be deposed, and his uncle Alam Khan set up in his stead. Babur evidently considered this a good opportunity to interfere in the politics of Hindustan, for in 1524 he embarked upon his fourth expedition, with the open intention of supporting Alam Khan against Ibrahim.

Passing through the Khyber, he crossed the Kakar country, reducing to temporary obedience the warlike tribes of that region. Forging the Jihlam and Chinab, he advanced to within a few miles of Lahore. He now discovered that there was an army of Ibrahim's in close proximity, commanded by Bihar Khan Lodi, Mubarak Khan Lodi, and some other Afghan amirs. He also learned that his ally Daulat Khan had been driven from Lahore and compelled to take refuge among the Biluchis. Babur promptly attacked and scattered the King of Delhi's army. The fugitives were driven into Lahore, and the town itself came under Babur's control. The bazaar was plundered and burned. After resting four days, the Kabul army moved south to Dibalpur, which was stormed. The garrison was put to the sword.

At Dibalpur Babur was joined by Daulat Khan and his

<sup>1</sup> Firishta, ii. 38-9; *Tarikh-i-Hakki*, ff. 275 seq.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarikh-i-Hakki*, f. 281.





sons. That nobleman was greatly angered at Babur's determination to keep Lahore in his own hands. Apparently his profession of allegiance to Babur had been nothing more than an excuse for securing the alliance of the King of Kabul. Daulat Khan seems to have expected that Babur would be a submissive tool in his hands. He evidently forgot that his own viceroyalty of the Panjab, which he desired to see independent, was precisely that portion of Hindustan to which Babur believed himself to have the best claim. Babur on his part, taking the submission of the Afghan noble to be no empty formality, assigned him Jalandhar and Sultanpur instead of Lahore. Daulat Khan thereupon treacherously advised Babur to divide his forces, sending part to Multan and keeping part with him. But Dilawar Khan, who seems to have recoiled from the deceit, warned Babur to be on his guard, with the result that Daulat Khan and his other son Ghazi Khan were arrested. Shortly afterwards they were released, and then promptly fled to the hills. Their fiefs were conferred upon Dilawar Khan. Babur, feeling that he required more adequate resources before he ventured further into such troubled waters, fell back on Lahore and then retired to Kabul. Dibalpur was given to the pretender Alam Khan with the trusty Baba Kushkeh to watch him. Lahore, with a considerable garrison, was put under Mir Abdul Aziz, while Sialkot was held by Khosru Kukultash.

No sooner was Babur out of the way, than Daulat Khan showed his hand. Gathering a strong force, he captured his own son Dilawar and seized Sultanpur. Then he advanced on Dibalpur, and drove out Alam Khan. His first check, however, was received before Sialkot. A force of 5000 men, which he had detached to attack the town, was defeated by Babur's Lahore garrison. But shortly afterwards he scored a great success. Ibrahim Lodi had sent an army to reduce him to submission: and this army Daulat Khan succeeded in dispersing, part being won over, and part being dismissed, without a blow struck.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Firishta, ii. 39.



Meanwhile Alam Khan had fled to Kabul, and informed Babur of his misfortunes. Babur then concluded a treaty with him, agreeing to seat him upon the throne of Delhi on condition that he himself should receive Lahore and the country west of it in full suzerainty. Alam Khan was then sent into Hindustan, armed with orders to Babur's generals in the Panjab. The King of Kabul himself was unable to leave, as he had to go to Balkh,<sup>1</sup> which the Uzbegs were besieging. Once in Hindustan, however, Alam Khan lost his head, and was artfully seduced by Daulat Khan, who feigned loyalty and sympathy. In consequence, Alam Khan threw over the alliance with Babur, brushed aside the remonstrances of Babur's officers, and ceded the Punjab to Daulat.<sup>2</sup> Then, in conjunction with his new ally, he marched on Delhi, only to be disgracefully routed by Ibrahim in person.<sup>3</sup> His army broke up, and he himself fled in terror.

Such was the condition of affairs in Hindustan when Babur, freed from the menace to Balkh, was able to undertake his fifth and last expedition. In the next chapter we shall examine in some detail the circumstances accompanying this momentous event, which resulted in the foundation of the Mughal Empire of India.

<sup>1</sup> Firishta says that Babur was "sunk in a dream of indolence and luxury," which is extremely unlikely. Nothing but more urgent business would have kept him from Hindustan at such a crisis.

<sup>2</sup> Firishta says that Babur's officers forced Alam Khan to cede to their master the countries north-west of the Indus; but Babur does not mention the transaction. Doubtless he felt that Alam Khan's treachery made agreement impossible.

<sup>3</sup> The allies surprised Ibrahim's camp at night, dispersed the greater part of his troops, and then scattered in search of plunder. The Sultan of Delhi remained in his tent, then, when day dawned, collected his personal followers and with great courage marched against the foe. Although Alam Khan's troops were flushed with victory, and immensely superior in numbers, they gave way to shameful panic and fled.





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## CHAPTER VI

## THE CONQUEST OF HINDUSTAN

*Authorities.*—The *Memoirs*; *Tarikh-i-Hakki*; *Firishta*; *Akbar-nama*, Gulbadan Begam.

*Modern Works.*—Erskine; Lane Poole.

BABUR, having driven off the Uzbegs from Balkh, and thereby disposed of his most immediate troubles, was able once more to turn his attention to the affairs of Hindustan. At first sight, the moment did not seem propitious. His army, at best not very formidable so far as numbers were concerned, was now further depleted by the necessity of detaching forces for the safeguarding of Qunduz and Qandahar. But he was never a man to hesitate because the odds against him were heavy. "On Friday, the first of Safar, 932,<sup>1</sup> when the sun was in Sagittarius, I set out on my march to invade Hindustan." It was not, however, until more than a fortnight later (December 3rd) that he got clear away, for he was compelled to wait for Humayun, whose dilatoriness was severely reprimanded. At length the whole force set off on the long march across the mountains.

The news of the late occurrences compelled Babur to alter his plans. He had long needed little to convince him that his original design of occupying the Panjab was impracticable unless the central power of Delhi could be conciliated. Therefore, as we have already seen, he was induced to lend his aid to the project of deposing Sultan Ibrahim, and substituting for him Alam Khan. By this means, he would kill two birds with a single stone. The Panjab was to be the price of his

<sup>1</sup> Nov. 17th, 1525.



assistance, and its guarantee was to be the control he would exercise over the aged, somewhat feeble, monarch whom he was to place upon the throne. But the intrigues of Daulat Khan and the faithlessness of Alam Khan had modified the whole situation. Henceforth there could be no further question of the Lodi claimant, who had proved himself unworthy of the sacrifice of honest men's blood. Babur was fighting for his own hand against all comers, primarily, because he conceived the Panjab to belong to him by right: next, because he was convinced that the permanent occupation of the Panjab entailed the conquest of Hindustan: finally, because the political situation seemed to offer the prospect of hard fighting and hazardous adventure, such as his soul loved.

As soon as he had passed the mountains, however, he fell sick.<sup>1</sup> The occurrence was most inopportune, and he recognised in it the judgment of God upon his irregularities in the matter of wine. He resolved to mend his ways, although as a matter of fact he did not keep his vow, and soon afterwards, the attack of dysentery passed away. This was fortunate; for having now embarked upon the most dangerous of his many perilous enterprises, he had need of all his powers of mind and body if he was to win through. When he arrived at the Kabul river, he learnt that Daulat Khan and Ghazi Khan, with a force of twenty or thirty thousand men, were fast overrunning the Panjab, and were marching straight upon Lahore. It was at all costs necessary to prevent them from scoring so important a success at this juncture; so Babur hastily despatched a messenger to his lieutenants in the town warning them that he was close at hand, ordering them to join him at all hazards, and strictly forbidding them to engage until he had come up. Meanwhile, he pressed on with speed. As he was passing the River Sind,<sup>2</sup> he took the opportunity to number the forces which accompanied him in his dangerous venture. Incredible as it may seem, the entire army with which he hoped to conquer

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 133; Ilminski, 327. "A defluxion and a fever, accompanied by a cough and much spitting of blood."

<sup>2</sup> 1st Rabi Ī (Dec. 16th). P. de Courteille, ii. 137; Ilminski, 329.





Hindustan amounted to twelve thousand men all told, including good and bad, small and great, fighting men and camp followers.

On he pushed, however, regardless of danger, to the rescue of his threatened begs. As he crossed the Jihlam, renewed rumours reached him as to the strength of the Afghans. It was further stated, that Daulat Khan, determined to rid himself of the formidable prince whom he had hoped to use as a tool, had girded himself with two swords, in token of his resolution to conquer or die. But whatever might have been the spirit of Daulat Khan, he was powerless to keep his army together when the rumour of Babur's approach was noised abroad. The King of Kabul had crossed the Bias, and was blockading Milwat, when he was joined by Dilawar Khan, who had once more deserted his father and brother for the service of the foreigner. Probably it was at this time that Babur learned of the true condition of the opposing forces ; at all events, he pushed on with a boldness that would have been foolhardy under ordinary circumstances. In this case, however, his rapid advance completed the confusion of Daulat Khan, whose army broke up in utter disorder, and fled to all quarters rather than encounter the invader. Daulat himself, with his immediate followers, could do nothing except offer a humble and undignified submission. The scene is described as follows :—

“Daulat Khan now sent a person to inform me, that Ghazi Khan had escaped and fled to the hills ; but that if I would excuse his own offences, he would come as a slave and deliver up the place. I therefore sent Khwaja Mir Miran to confirm him in his resolution, and to bring him out. His son Ali Khan accompanied that officer. In order to expose the rudeness and stupidity of the old man, I directed the Khwaja to take care that Daulat Khan should come out with the same two swords hung round his neck, which he had hung by his side to meet me in combat. When matters had come this length, he still contrived frivolous pretexts for delay, but was at length brought out. I ordered the two swords to be taken from his neck. When he came to offer me his obeisance, he affected delays in bowing ;

I directed them to push his leg and make him bow. I then made him sit down before me, and desired a man who understood the Hindustani language to explain to him what I said, sentence by sentence, in order to reassure him; and to tell him, 'I called you father: I showed you more respect and reverence than you could have desired or expected. I delivered you and your sons from the insults of the Baluchis. I delivered your tribe, your family, and women, from the bondage of Ibrahim. The countries held by Tatar Khan,<sup>1</sup> to the amount of three krors, I bestowed on you. What evil have I ever done you, that you should come in this style against me, with these two swords by your side; and, attended by an army, stir up tumult and confusion in my territories?' The man, being stupefied, stammered out a few words, not at all to the purpose; and, indeed, what could he say to such confounding truths? It was settled, that he and his family should retain their authority in their own tribes, and possession of their villages, but that all the rest of their property should be sequestered. They were directed to encamp close by Khwaja Mir Miran."<sup>2</sup>

The first stage of Babur's hazardous enterprise was thus brought to a close by the defeat of his enemies in the Panjab. There still remained the more difficult task of subduing the imperial forces of Delhi: and this even was child's play as compared with the business of reducing to submission the whole turbulent, distracted, faction-ridden kingdom of Hindustan. Babur, whether he realised the difficulties before him or not, saw clearly that his best prospect of success lay in prompt action: "Putting my foot in the stirrup of resolution, and taking in my hand the reins of faith, I marched against Sultan Ibrahim, son of Sultan Sikandar, son of Sultan Bahlol Lodi Afghan, in whose possession the city of Delhi and kingdom of Hindustan at that time were."<sup>3</sup>

As he advanced, he received various encouraging proofs

<sup>1</sup> Tatar Khan was Daulat Khan's father, and one of the two or three leading Afghan nobles in the Panjab who had been instrumental in elevating Bahlol Lodi to the throne in 1450. He had held Sirhind and the districts north of the Sutlej.

<sup>2</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 148; Ilminski, 334, 335.

<sup>3</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 153; Ilminski, 337.





that he was not friendless in the country of his antagonist. Two of the court circle, Araish Khan and Mulla Muhammad Mazhab, sent him letters protesting their devotion to his cause : Alam Khan arrived in a destitute condition to cast himself upon the protection of his late ally : and perhaps at this time also came proposals from Singram Singh the Rajput, that there should be a joint attack upon Ibrahim. Babur, however, fully realised how little confidence could be placed in such overtures as these. What reply he made to Singram Singh we do not know. It would seem that he returned a favourable answer, for he subsequently accused him of treachery in not taking any steps to carry out the terms of the proposed alliance. But he must have been well aware that the Rajput confederacy, which would spring into unequalled eminence if any disaster overtook the dynasty at Delhi, had a direct interest in the failure of his enterprise, and was by far the most formidable of all the powers antagonistic to his conquest of Hindustan. The situation was fast becoming critical. Ibrahim, with a force estimated at 100,000 men, was advancing from Delhi against the invader. Two advance-parties successively threatened to fall upon Babur's little army : one under Hamida Khan, the other under Daud Khan and Haitim Khan. The first was routed on February 26th by Prince Humayun, with the loss of 100 prisoners and eight elephants : although it is eloquent testimony to the smallness of Babur's forces that the entire right wing, stiffened from the centre, had to be detached for the purpose. The second party was similarly routed on April 2nd, and driven up to the very walls of Ibrahim's camp, for Babur had by this time reached the Jumna, opposite Sirsawah.

He then encamped, that he might make his preparations for the decisive encounter with the main body of the Afghans. When he reviewed his army, as it was drawn up in battle array, he discovered that his line did not occupy so much ground as he had anticipated. This can scarcely have been a matter of surprise, as from the 8000 or so effectives who started upon the march through the Panjab, a considerable number must have been absorbed by garrison duty, by safeguarding communications,



aid by the wastage of war. To Babur, however, the matter was of vital importance. If he were to triumph over the immensely superior forces of his adversary, it could only be by means of an effective combination between his highly-trained cavalry and his new firearms. Ustad Ali and Mustafa between them could do deadly work when they were confronted by a dense mass of enemy : but both cannoneers and matchlockmen were liable to be ridden down and overwhelmed unless carefully protected by covering forces of infantry and cavalry. So slow was the most rapid rate of fire<sup>1</sup> which could be maintained by these primitive arms, that it was idle to expect Ustad Ali and Mustafa to hold a portion of the battle line by themselves. But how were these covering forces to be supplied from the tiny army ? For unless Babur could contrive to present a front equal in length to the effective front displayed by the enemy, his cavalry would be unable to employ the flanking tactics by which he hoped to roll up the Afghan wings upon the centre. Only by carrying out this manoeuvre, and by driving the enemy's forces into a huddled mass upon which Ustad Ali and Mustafa could direct their fire, would Babur be enabled to utilise his artillery to the best advantage. The difficulty which he was called upon to face, was that of holding superior forces in play upon an unduly extended front until the decisive moment for a charge on either flank had arrived. A council of war was held to consider the matter.

The ground near Ibrahim's camp had been carefully surveyed, so that full advantage might be derived from any local peculiarities. The Sultan and his forces were lying across the main road to Delhi, just south of the important town of Panipat, which in Babur's time was large and populous. The road runs to the north of the town, and the country round about is flat, nearly treeless, and well suited to the handling of cavalry. A quick advance of two marches would bring the Mughal army level with the town, and if a battle-position were then taken up, the houses and buildings of Panipat would effectively shelter Babur's right wing. The other wing must be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leyden and Erskine, 247, 379.





strengthened by some artificial means, such as a ditch or palisade of felled trees. There remained the two problems of holding a long line against the weight of superior numbers, and of providing adequate protection for the cannoneers and matchlockmen, so deadly in attack, and so vulnerable when standing upon the defensive. To these two problems Babur was able to supply a single solution.

Influenced probably by the example of Salim the Grim at Chaldiran in 1514,<sup>1</sup> Babur determined to employ a line of waggons to stiffen his weak front. By diligent search in the country round about, as well as by pressing into service the carts of his baggage train, he was able to collect some seven hundred. These were fastened together by ropes of raw hide—a makeshift for the iron chains employed by Ottoman tacticians—and arranged in units of a convenient size. In order to give special shelter to the musketeers and artillerymen, small breastworks, sufficiently large to protect one man, were constructed in considerable numbers, and arranged six or seven between each waggon along the portion of the front which Ustad Ali and Mustafa were to occupy.

When these preparations were complete, Babur advanced two marches, and on April 12, 1526, took up his ground with the town of Panipat sheltering his right wing. On the left, he strengthened his position by digging a ditch and constructing an *abatis* of felled trees in such a manner as to render it impossible for the enemy to roll up his line from the left. Secure on both flanks, he now strengthened his centre with the line of breastworks and waggons which he had previously prepared. The line, however, was not continuous: for, at intervals of only a bowshot apart, large gaps were left, wide enough for fifty or a hundred horsemen to charge through abreast. The dispositions for the battle were complete.

It is not, perhaps, too much to say that the battle of Panipat has never been studied with the care it deserves. Many writers have completely misunderstood Babur's tactics, and have not realised the manner in which these tactics produced

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 110.



in victory their inevitable fruit. It has been the fashion to assume that Babur's waggon-line was a movable fortress,<sup>1</sup> behind which his small force might hope to escape annihilation: that it was an imitation of the methods employed by the Hussites of Bohemia when confronted by the heavy cavalry of the Empire. Neither of these suppositions will bear investigation. The waggon-line was stratagem of aggression rather than of defence: it was intended to hold the enemy along an extended front, so that his flanks might be open to attack. Certainly it provided shelter for the artillerymen and musketeers: but it was in no sense of the word a *laager* or a fortress. The proof of this is not far to seek. Men do not leave many wide gaps in a wall which is intended merely to protect them from attack: and had Babur designed to construct a "rampart" or a "movable fortress" he would surely have drawn up his waggons in a continuous line, even if he had not surrounded himself on all sides with them. Nor is it correct to compare the waggon-line of Panipat with the Hussite waggon-units which were trained to manoeuvre and combined to forming a real fortress of a movable type.<sup>2</sup> In Bohemia conditions had been essentially different: infantry were compelled to meet cavalry in the open field, and the waggon-laager was invented to shelter the infantryman. But Babur was a cavalry leader: it was in cavalry that his great strength lay: he had no need to cower behind a rampart to escape the shock of hostile horsemen. Even as his principal objective was to provoke, not to avoid, a combat, so was his waggon-line a device to destroy the enemy, not a refuge in which his own forces might shun destruction.

It will be realised that the position which Babur had occupied with such skill was one of considerable strength. So formidable did it appear, that some warriors grumbled, and said that Sultan Ibrahim would never venture against it. But Babur justly remarked that the king of the Afghans was not to be judged by the standards of the Uzbek Khans, that

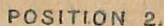
<sup>1</sup> S. Lane Poole, *Babur: Medieval India under Muhammadan Rule*.



<sup>2</sup> Oman, *History of the Art of War*.





POSITION 1.



 Babur's troops  
 Sultan Ibrahim's troops



he was young, inexperienced and rash, embarking upon a campaign without any well-defined plan of action, marching in random fashion, and prepared to risk his all upon a haphazard battle. With this, presumably, the critics had to rest content: and the event was to show that Babur was perfectly correct in his anticipations.

Well was it for the king of Kabul that his antagonist lacked all the qualities of a general save that of personal bravery, for the factor of numbers was overwhelmingly upon the side of the Afghans. Babur estimates that Ibrahim had with him 100,000 men: which, reckoning camp-followers, is not by any means an impossible figure. And even if we put the proportion of non-effectives to effectives very high<sup>1</sup>—as high as Mirza-Haidar put it at the battle of Chaunsa—we shall find it difficult to believe that Sultan Ibrahim had fewer than 40,000 fighting men. Babur remarks that he might have had 200,000 men if he had cared to spend some of his treasure in hiring them. But as over-taxation had been among the principal causes of Ibrahim's unpopularity,<sup>2</sup> so was avarice to be a factor in his downfall: for a few thousand more men must assuredly have turned the day against Babur. Babur, as we have seen, cannot have had more than 8000 effectives, and probably had considerably fewer. The odds were, therefore, no less than five to one in favour of the Afghans at a minimum estimate. In addition the Afghans possessed a force of some thousand elephants, from which they doubtless hoped to derive great advantage in the battle. Their hopes, however, were doomed to disappointment. The elephants played little part in the fighting, presumably because they could not be induced to face the fire of Babur's ordnance.

From April 12 until April 19 the two armies faced one another. The Afghans showed no signs of attacking, despite the annoyance to which they were subjected by small parties of Babur's men, who rode close to the camp, discharged showers of arrows against Ibrahim's troops, and galloped into safety before any effective reply could be made. On April 19, however,

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, 476.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarikh-i-Hakki*, i. 275.





Babur made up his mind to provoke a general action at all hazards. Further delay would imperil his whole enterprise, for he well knew that the fate of an invading army depends upon a succession of victories. Cautious tactics and indecisive engagements are equivalent to actual defeats: in victory and victory alone, lies salvation. Accordingly, on the night of April 19, by the advice of some of the begs who had stayed in Hindustan since the last expedition—presumably Hindu Beg, Abdal Aziz, Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang, and Khusru—a surprise was planned. Four or five thousand men—probably in large part auxiliaries and irregulars—were dispatched against Ibrahim's camp, under the command of Mahdi Khwaja, Muhammad Sultan Mirza, Sultan Junaid Barlas, and other tried leaders. Meanwhile Babur and Humayun stood to arms with the remainder of the troops, ready to press a victory, should the attack succeed, or to cover the retreat of the attackers should failure ensue. As it turned out, the surprise failed, perhaps on account of the indifference of the troops employed. The men lost their way in the dark, the leaders did not concert their movements properly, and when day dawned the expedition found itself close to the enemy's camp in a position of great peril without having effected anything. At the sight of the Mughal troops, however, Sultan Ibrahim beat to quarters and deployed his troops, doubtless thinking that he was to be attacked immediately. To this the little force probably owed its salvation, for while the Afghans were busy making their final dispositions, Babur's men withdrew from their dangerous situation and rejoined their master. Babur was greatly relieved, for a reverse would have been fatal to his plans. He had actually despatched Humayun's division to cover the retreat, and was advancing in person with the main body of troops under his command, when he realised that the retiring troops were not being subjected to serious molestation. The army returned to its quarters, and all was quiet. On the night of April 20, however, there was a false alarm that the camp was being attacked—sure sign that the nerves of the Mughal soldiery were already sorely tried by the



suspense—and for some time grave confusion resulted. At last order was restored, and the army sank into much-needed sleep.

At dawn on April 21, however, it was clear that the abortive night attack had precipitated a crisis. Word was brought to Babur that the Afghans, now thoroughly aroused from their long inaction, were advancing in battle array. Quickly the Kabul troops armed themselves, and sprang into the saddle. Before the advancing Afghans could be discerned in the distance against the slowly-paling sky, Babur's men were in position.

The Kabul army was drawn up in the traditional formation—that formation which, though elaborated by Timur, goes back in all essentials to the military traditions of the Chinese. Right, centre, left and van were there, just as the author of the *Sun Tzu* laid down in the sixth century B.C.; while in the presence of the large reserve, of the flanking parties on the extremity of each wing, and of the division of the centre into the right and left, we discern the improvements to which Timur owed so much of his success. Working from right to left, the position of the great begs was as follows: With the right flanking party (*tulghma*), on the extremity of the line, were Wali Kazil, Malik Kasim, and Baba Kushka, in command of a body of Mongol troops. This party was supported by the buildings of Panipat town. Next to them came the main right wing, under the command of Humayun, assisted by a body of trusted leaders, Khwaja Kilan, Sultan Muhammad Duldai, Hindu Beg, Wali Khazin, and Pir Quli Sistani. Further to the left was the right centre, where stood Chin Timur Sultan, Sultan Salim Mirza, Muhammad Kukultash, Shah Mansur Barlas, Yunis Ali, Darwish Muhammad Sarban, and Abdalla Kitabdar. In the left centre were the trusted Khalifa, Khwaja Mir Miran, Ahmadi Parwanchi, Tardi Beg, Kuch Beg, Muhibb-Ali Khalifa, and Mirza Beg Tarkhan. To the right of this division came the main body of the left wing, with the Muhammad Sultan Mirza, Mahdi Khwaja, Adil Sultan, Shah Mir-Husain, Sultan Junaid Barlas, Kutluq Kadam, Jan Beg, Muhammad Bakhshi, Shah Husain Bargi



and Mughal Ghanchi. On the extreme left of the line, resting upon the ditch and the *abatis* of trees, was the left flanking party (*tulghma*), with Kara-Kuzi, Abul Muhammad Nirza-baz, Shaikh Ali, Shaikh Jamal Barin, Mahdi, and Tangri Kuli Mughal. There then remained the van, the reserve, and, most important of all, the ordnance. The van was led by Khusru Kukultash and Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang. Although the latter nobleman was incapacitated by an arrow-wound in the foot, received during the retreat of the unsuccessful night attackers, yet his name and prestige entitled him to this post of danger. The reserve was commanded by Abdul Aziz, the Master of the Horse. Along the front of the whole line, sheltered by the breastworks and waggons, were placed the ordnance and the matchlockmen. Ustad Ali,<sup>1</sup> with the heavy pieces, was posted on the right of the centre, while Mustafa, who seems to have been in command of the matchlocks and lighter pieces, held the line to the left. (Babur himself, it would seem, was somewhere near the centre of his army, in the position which best enabled him to watch the progress of the fight, and to make such dispositions as events might require. He had no intention of allowing the enemy the advantage of the initiative, and had warned his flanking parties to hold themselves in readiness for delivering a blow directly the enemy should advance within reach.)

As the Afghans came into sight, it became obvious that they were bearing down upon the Mughal right wing. Apparently, Ibrahim was pushing his left wing forward in order to avoid the town of Panipat, upon which Babur's right rested. The necessity of attacking upon a front far shorter than had been anticipated dismayed the Afghans, and was plainly the cause of a certain confusion, of which their opponents did not fail to take advantage. The troops of Sultan Ibrahim came on, as Babur notes, at a rapid pace, and not until they perceived the way in which

<sup>1</sup> Ustad Ali is always mentioned in the later part of the *Memoirs* as managing the *firingi* and heavy ordnance. Mustafa did not join Babur until after the siege of Bajaur, in which Ustad Ali is said to have managed the musketry as well as the artillery.



Babur's carefully-chosen ground hampered the operation of their left wing, did they hesitate. Their front was badly cramped, and although they seem to have brought their left wing to bear by adopting the expedient of inclining their line, they had not proper room to employ their strength. Their superiority in numbers, so far from benefiting them, became the cause of their downfall.

Babur quickly realised that the enemy's left would come into conflict with his right at an early stage of the proceedings. Fearing lest his line should be broken by sheer weight of numbers, he had sent the whole of his reserve to support the troops holding the threatened point. As the Afghans advanced closer and closer, however, their front became more and more cramped, and at length the leading ranks hesitated, not knowing whether to attack under disadvantageous conditions, or to retire in order to readjust their line. The rear ranks, of course, pressed forward, and soon produced considerable disorder in the whole force. With the instinct of a born general, Babur seized upon the advantage given him by this moment of hesitation. He ordered the two flanking parties to sweep round the extremities of the enemy's confused line, and deliver a violent charge in rear. At the same time, the right and left wings pushed straight forward, while the ordnance and matchlocks poured in a withering fire from the centre. The fighting on both wings soon became very heavy, and Babur was obliged to weaken the centre by detaching troops from the left centre for the support of the left wing. On the right apparently the support afforded by Abdal Aziz and the reserve was sufficient. The troops on the right of the centre were therefore disengaged, and Babur ordered them to charge upon the enemy's front. The Afghans were now more crowded than ever, for the charges upon their flanks and rear had driven their wings in hopeless confusion inwards upon their centre. Taken on all sides, the army of Sultan Ibrahim could do nothing. The men had no room to use their arms, and their charges were ineffective. Ustad Ali and Mustafa rained death upon the crowded ranks, and the unfortunate Afghans fell by



thousands beneath the swords and arrows of the Mughals. Jammed together in a solid mass, Sultan Ibrahim's men could neither advance nor retreat. For some hours the slaughter continued. The engagement had begun about 6 a.m. and by noon the Afghans were hopelessly defeated, and those who could do so were fleeing for their lives. The great army of Sultan Ibrahim had been completely broken, and the losses were fearful. The battlefield was covered with corpses. Around the body of Sultan Ibrahim himself, who had died as an Afghan should, lay five or six thousand of his bravest warriors. On other parts of the field fifteen or sixteen thousand more corpses were counted, giving a total death-roll of some twenty thousand. Thus the little army of Babur had slain nearly three times its own numbers—a terrible testimony alike to the skill of the leader and to the deadliness of his scientific combination of cavalry and artillery. His own losses appear to have been quite inconsiderable.

Nor can the importance of the battle of Panipat be gauged merely from the number of men who fell. From the political point of view it was eminently decisive. The Lodi dynasty was broken, and their power passed into the hands of strangers. For the moment, it seemed that the Afghan power was broken also: in the Doab it was whispered that the real tale of losses was forty or fifty thousand men, and the plain long bore a bad name in the countryside as a haunted spot, whence ghostly shouts of "Strike!" "Seize!" "Slay!" "Smite!" mingled with groans and the clash of arms, came to terrify the belated wayfarer. Great indeed was the impression made upon the Hindus by the catastrophe. They may well have thought that the empire of the Afghans had perished along with the last scion of the brilliant line which founded it. That such was not the case, the career of Shir Shah was in the days of Babur's son to afford ample evidence.

The battle of Panipat marks the end of the second stage of Babur's project of the conquest of Hindustan. The reigning dynasty of Delhi had indeed suffered a catastrophe from which



recovery was impossible, but there yet remained to Babur the task of setting himself in the place left vacant. Fully realising this, he did not rest upon his laurels. While the army was recovering from its labours, Babur dispatched one party under Prince Humayun and Khwaja Kilan to seize Agra, the ordinary residence of the late Sultan, and another, under Muhammad Khwaja, Muhammad Sultan, and Adil Sultan to take command of the forts and treasuries of Delhi.<sup>1</sup> After three leisurely marches, the army reached the bank of the Jumna opposite Delhi, and Babur, with characteristic zest, paid a visit to the tombs of Ghias-ud-din, Ala-ud-Din Khilji, and other famous conquerors. Then after establishing a provisional government for the city, with Wali Kizil as Shekdar<sup>2</sup> and Dost as Diwan, he pushed on to Agra, where he received an affectionate welcome from Humayun. It was on this occasion that the prince presented his father with the famous diamond, valued at half the daily expenses of the world, which had been given him by the kindred of the king of Gwalior in gratitude for the courteous treatment they had received when Agra was captured. Babur, with characteristic generosity at once gave it back to his son.

Following his usual plan, Babur concludes his account of the capture of the keys of Hindustan with a description of his impressions of the new land. At first, as might be expected from his partiality to the climate and scenery of Kabul, they were the reverse of favourable. Some of his remarks are of great importance as throwing light upon the state of the country. He notes with astonishment the ease with which towns rose and decayed and the spiritless way in which land was suffered to go out of cultivation. He also comments upon the annoying habit of townsmen of abandoning their homes and retiring into the depths of the jungle, whither they could not be followed, when they were asked to pay taxes. He probably did not realise these two traits were due to the chronic condition of anarchy which had existed save for a

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 170; Ilminski, 346.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Military magistrate.



few intervals, for the last half century. In his disgust at finding how greatly the inhabitants of Hindustan differed from his own men of Kabul, he sweepingly condemned the people as being worse than the country :

“ Although Hindustan is a country naturally full of charm yet its inhabitants are devoid of grace ; and in intercourse with them there is neither friendly society, amity, nor stable relationship. They have no genius, no comprehension, no politeness, no generosity, no robustness of feeling. In their ideas, as in their methods, of production, they lack method, art, rules, and theory. There are no baths, candles, torches, schools, or even candlesticks.”

There are, however, he admits, some compensating advantages.

“ The great advantage of Hindustan, besides the vast extent of its territory, is the amount of gold, coined and uncoined, which may be found there. Also, during the rains the climate is very pleasant. Another advantage of Hindustan is the infinite number of craftsmen of all professions and industries which abound in it. This is not perhaps astonishing when one considers that industries are practised in the family, being handed on from father to son.”<sup>1</sup>

But this strange country, so full of contradictions, had yet to be conquered. Babur had already, however, come into possession of much of that gold which he talks about, and he proceeded to distribute it with the most prodigal generosity. Not merely his sons and relatives, with his principal followers, received substantial tokens of their lord's success, but in addition offerings were sent to the holy places of Mecca and Medina, and every living soul in Kabul received a silver coin.<sup>2</sup>

The distribution of the spoils must have been a pleasant interlude in a period of great anxiety. Not until the first stages of the conquest were passed could Babur have realised

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 226-230 ; Ilminski, 377, 378.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of the careful way in which Babur sent a special present for each one of his relations, see *Humayun Nama*, ff. 11-12. Babur kept so little for himself that he was called in jest *kalandar* (begging friar).—Firishta, ii. 49.



the magnitude of the task before him. Everywhere the leaders of the Afghan tribes set themselves up as independent chiefs, and fortified themselves in some convenient stronghold. Kasim Sambali set himself up in Sambal; Nizam Khan in Biana; Hasan Khan Mewati in Mewat; Muhammad Zaitun in Dholpur; Tatar Khan Sarang-Khani in Gwalior; Husain Khan Lohani in Rabiri; Kutb Khan in Etawa; Alam Khan in Kalpi. "Those miserable heretics," says Babur, "were the promoters of all the agitations and disturbances which surrounded us."<sup>1</sup> Nor was this all. Kanauj, and the whole country beyond the Ganges, was still entirely in the power of formidable enemies like Nasir Khan Lohani and Ma'aruf Farmuli. The Afghans of this quarter set up a certain Bahadur Khan, son of Deria Khan, as Padshah, under the name of Sultan Muhammad. Worse still, Babur was experiencing the greatest difficulty in provisioning his army. The villagers fled before him, and took to brigandage. The roads were dangerous: it was impossible to get food or fodder. The hot weather was coming on, and the begs began to lose their courage. Their parrot cry of "back to Kabul" annoyed Babur, and he grumbles bitterly at their unceasing repetition of it. In this difficult situation, the king exhibited all his wonted courage and resolution. Never does the real strength of his character reveal itself so clearly as in such crises as this. He summoned a council-meeting, and frankly asked his officers if they were going to throw away such a magnificent opportunity for want of a little courage.

"I told them," he says, "that empire and conquest could not exist without the material and means of war: that royalty and nobility could not exist without subjects and dependent provinces: that by the labour of many years, after undergoing great hardships, measuring many a toilsome journey, and raising various armies—after exposing myself and my troops to circumstances of great danger, to battle and bloodshed, by the Divine favour I had routed my formidable enemy, and achieved the conquest of numerous provinces and kingdoms which we at present held. And now what force compels, what

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 233; Ilminski, 381.





hardship obliges us, without visible cause, after having worn out our life in accomplishing the desired achievement, to abandon and fly from our conquests, and to retreat to Kabul with every symptom of disappointment and discomfiture? Let anyone who calls himself my friend never henceforward make such a proposal; but if there is any among you who cannot bring himself to stay, or give up his purpose of return, let him depart. Having made this fair and reasonable proposal, the discontented were of necessity compelled, however unwillingly, to renounce their seditious purpose."<sup>1</sup>

The result of this appeal was exactly what might have been expected. All his officers, save one or two whose health was seriously affected, determined to support their master.

When the determination of Babur to remain in the country became generally known, it produced a great effect upon the situation. In the first place Singram Singh, who had previously hoped that Babur, after having smashed the power of the Lodi dynasty, would retire, leaving the coast clear for the Rajputs, now began to realise that the King of Kabul was not an involuntary friend but a conscious enemy. From this moment the Rajput confederacy commences its preparations for that final bid for supremacy which had long been a cherished design, but which was destined to prove in no long time so disastrous to its power. But in the next place, many of the petty chiefs who had contemplated fighting for their own hand, so long as it seemed that the country was about to relapse into anarchy, came in and gave their submission to Babur so soon as they realised that he was no mere raider, but a conqueror in the true sense of the word. Shaikh Guren, an important chieftain of Kol in the Doab, was won over by assurances of protection. He brought some two thousand men, who all joined Babur's army. Shaikh Baiazid, the brother and successor of Mustafa Farmuli, who had been the late Sultan's lieutenant against the rebellious nobles of the East, also entered Babur's service and was given a jagir in Oudh worth a kror. Firoz Khan, Mahmud Khan Lohani, and other

<sup>1</sup> Leyden and Erskine, 336; Ilinski, 382, 383; P. de Courteille, 236, 237.



prominent nobles, came over to Babur at the same time, and received valuable revenue grants.

The tide gradually turned in his favour. Men came pouring in from all sides, and he was at length able to undertake the systematic reduction of the country. He hit upon a plan which at once satisfied his begs, and brought more and more territory under his control. He made grants of towns and fortresses yet unconquered to prominent men, and then sent them off with a small force to take possession. In this way Sambal fell at length to Humayun, Rabiri to Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang, Etawa to Mahdi Khwaja, Kanauj to Sultan Muhammad Duldai, Dholpur to Sultan Junaid Barlas. These little bands fought with the utmost zeal, conscious that they were making their own fortunes, while at the same time the territories thus acquired represented an extension of the dominions of their master. While these minor expeditions were going on, Babur, who had taken care not to weaken unduly his main striking force, held a council of war. The two main antagonists with whom he had to deal were the Afghan rebels who had set up Bahadur Khan; and Singram Singh, who had taken advantage of the confusion to besiege and capture the strong fort of Kandari, near Rantambhor. Of these the former seemed for the moment more dangerous; indeed Babur's council were distinctly inclined to underestimate the power of the Rajputs. They pointed out that Singram Singh was far away, and it was not even certain whether he had the power to come close. On the other hand, Nasir Khan Lohani and Ma'aruf Farmani having advanced at the head of forty or fifty thousand men, and having seized Kanauj, it was necessary to take immediate steps against them. Accordingly Humayun was despatched, with the expeditionary forces which had been intended for Dholpur and Etawa, to march in their direction. He advanced steadily down the Ganges, and while he was still twenty miles off Jajmau, where the rebel lords had assembled, their army took to flight without waiting for him.

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courtoille, ii. 245-6; Ilminski, 387.



Meanwhile Babur remained at Agra, strengthening himself for further efforts, organising his newly acquired resources for the ensuing campaign against contumacious strongholds, and employing his leisure in the construction of pleasure-gardens, "full," as he himself says, "of beauty and symmetry." He directed particular attention to the building of baths, which as he remarks, afford a refuge from the three curses of Hindustan, heat, dust, and wind. The natives, struck with the novelty of the style of architecture, gave the nickname of "Kabul," to the quarter where the new buildings rose.

Babur's main idea at this time was to reduce to submission all the petty independent Afghan chiefs before embarking upon the final trial of strength with Singam Singh. Accordingly he put his siege train in order, and constructed a monster gun. Eight furnaces were employed to melt the metal, and even then the great moulds were not full. The chief artilleryman, Ustad Ali Khan, was overcome with grief and shame, and was on the point of hurling himself into the molten bronze, but Babur consoled him with the utmost kindness. It was afterwards found that the barrel was all right, and that the chamber could be cast separately. At last the great piece was finished, and to Babur's delight, it was found to carry sixteen hundred paces. But just as he was preparing to take the field against Biana and other strong places, he heard that the Rajputs were already moving. It is typical of the fear inspired by the formidable confederacy that the first tidings of their intentions were sufficient to cause Biana, Gwalior,<sup>1</sup> and other citadels to offer voluntary submission to Babur. The king, realising that there was no time to be lost, declared a Holy War,<sup>2</sup> and recalled prince Humayun, who had just completed a brilliant campaign by capturing

<sup>1</sup> Tatar Khan in Gwalior changed his mind about submission, and shut the gates in the face of the officers sent to receive his surrender. But the town fell almost immediately through treachery.

<sup>2</sup> Badoni has a story that in a council of the armies it was proposed that Babur, after securing Agra, should retire to the Panjab before the overwhelming might of Singam Singh. This proposal, if ever seriously put forward, was at once rejected.



Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Kalpi. Babur himself was now at Agra again, setting all things in order for the death struggle with the Rajputs. At this particular juncture, in December, 1526, an untoward incident occurred. Babur was nearly poisoned by the mother of the late Sultan Ibrahim. Fortunately for himself, he only took the smallest possible quantity of the poisoned dish, which itself incorporated far less venom than was intended. Had he been killed, or even incapacitated for long, nothing could have saved the kingdom which he was building up, and the Rajputs would have been supreme in Hindustan.

The following is his own account of the incident, as detailed in a letter he wrote to Kabul:—

“The mother of Ibrahim, an ill-fated lady, had heard that I had eaten some things from the hands of natives of Hindustan. . . . This lady, having heard the circumstance, sent a person to Etawa to call Ahmad, the taster, and delivered into the hands of a female slave a *tola* of poison, wrapped up in a folded paper, desiring it to be given to the taster. Ahmad gave it to a Hindustani cook who was in my kitchen, seducing him with the promise of four Pergannas, and desiring him by some means or other to throw it into my food. She sent another female slave after the one whom she had desired to carry the poison to Ahmad, in order to observe if the first slave delivered the poison or not. . . He did not throw it into the pot, because I had strictly enjoined the tasters to watch the Hindus, and they had tasted the food in the pot while it was cooking. When they were dishing the meat, my graceless tasters were inattentive, and the cook threw the poison upon a plate of thin slices of bread: he did not throw above one-half the poison that was in the paper upon the bread, and then put some meat fried in butter upon the slices. If he had thrown it above the fried meat, or into the cooking pot, it would have been much worse: but in his confusion, he spilt the better half on the fireplace. On Friday, after afternoon prayers, they dished the dinner. I was very fond of hare so I ate some, as well as a good deal of fried carrot. I was not sensible of any disagreeable taste. I ate a morsel or two of smoke-dried meat, and felt nausea. I was seized with so violent a retching that I nearly vomited. At last, perceiving I could not check it, I went



the watercloset, and vomited a good deal. As I had never vomited after my food, some suspicions crossed my mind. I ordered the cooks to be taken into custody, and desired the meat to be given to a dog, which I had shut up. Next morning, about the first watch, the dog became sick, his belly swelled, and he seemed distressed. Although they threw stones at him, and shoved him about, they could not make him rise. He remained in this condition until noon, when he rose and recovered. Two young men had also eaten of this food: next morning they too vomited much, and one was extremely ill, although in the end both escaped.

"On Monday, being a court day, I directed all the grandees and chief men, the Beks and Wazirs, to attend the Diwan. The two men and the two women were brought in, who, being questioned, detailed the whole circumstance. The taster was ordered to be cut to pieces: the cook was flayed alive: one of the women was ordered to be trampled to death by an elephant, the other to be shot with a matchlock. . . Thanks be to God, there are now no remains of illness." <sup>1</sup>

It was extremely fortunate that he was able to attend to business again so soon, for matters were beginning to look serious. The garrison which had been thrown into Biana when it surrendered was now besieged by the united forces of Singram Singh and Hasan Khan Mewati—an unholy alliance whose only bond of union was a common desire to expel Babur from India. The garrison of Biana, sallying out somewhat too rashly, suffered a severe check, and was soon hard pressed.

Babur at once despatched Muhammad Sultan Mirza with a body of light troops to the relief of Biana cursing meanwhile his own undue generosity in having released with honour the son of Hasan Khan Mewati, who had been taken at Panipat. Realising that the most critical moment of his career was now approaching—the moment which was to make or mar his new dreams of empire—Babur took the field in person on February 11th, 1527.<sup>2</sup> The opening of the campaign was not propitious. The relieving force was unable to reach the

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 260-4; Ilminski, 396-398.

<sup>2</sup> 9th Jemadi, 1.



garrison of Biana, or even to get into communication with the besieged. To make matters worse, they brought back such stories of the ardour and bravery of the Rana's men that Babur's army began to be discouraged. He marched from Agra to Sikri, while the enemy advanced in his direction as far as Bhasawar. To add to the depression, another unfortunate incident occurred. The begs took it in turns to command the advance guard. On Abdul Aziz's day, he advanced to Kanua without any precaution, and his little band of 1500 men was promptly assailed by three times its own numbers. Several successive contingents had to be despatched to bring him off, and this was only done at considerable cost, with the loss of his standard.

In expectation of an immediate battle, Babur and his men buckled on their armour, assembled their waggons and gun carriages, and went out to look for the enemy. Having advanced two miles without seeing anything of their adversaries, they determined to camp, more especially as they were now within convenient distance of a large lake. Babur set about fortifying his position. Along the front of the line were placed the groups of waggons, each wagon connected with its neighbour by an iron chain sixteen or eighteen feet long, which took the place of the extemporised hide-ropes of Panipat field. Behind these waggons, as before, the artillerymen and the musketeers were to find shelter. Mustafa, the Turkish expert, won Babur's particular commendation by the skill with which he arranged his barricade, and the Emperor determined to post him on the right, where Humayun would benefit from his assistance. Ustad Ali, whose arrangements were not quite so perfect, was placed in front of the centre. The position was further strengthened by a ditch, cut to protect the army on the sides where there were no waggons, for the nature of the country is such that it was impossible to find natural protection either on the flanks or in the rear. But the most notable feature of the preparations was the construction of novel engines of wood, resembling wheeled tripods. These, when placed in line, afforded at once cover for the musketeers and a rest for





the muskets. They could be trundled forward or backward ; and, secure in their protection, a corps of musketeers could advance right out into the open field, should circumstances make such a move desirable. These tripods also were connected together by ropes of hide—a clear indication that their construction was undertaken upon the spur of the moment.

There is no doubt that in ordering the army to make these novel instruments of war, Babur and Khalifa, his right-hand man, were killing two birds with one stone. On the one hand, Panipat had shown how great would be the advantage if musketeers were so equipped as to be able to fight in the open field, to follow up a charge or to take a wavering foe in flank. But, on the other hand, the labour of constructing the tripods, which occupied between three and four weeks, gave a respite to the army, and enabled them to recover their confidence.

Unfortunately, at this moment came a small reinforcement of five hundred men, bringing with them two notable things—a supply of Babur's favourite Ghazni wine, and a prominent astrologer. Doubtless the Padshah was pleased with the former : but before he could have consumed much of it, he heard that the astrologer was turning the hearts of the army to water with his distressing predictions. Babur had in his early days suffered disaster through giving ear to astrological superstitions, and he had no mind to repeat the experience.

He endeavoured to arouse the martial spirit of his men by dispatching plundering parties in various directions : but soon found that something more startling was necessary if they were to be rescued from their depression. Accordingly, he solemnly renounced wine<sup>1</sup>—not for the first time, indeed !—poured out the new Ghazni vintage upon the ground, broke up his costly drinking-vessels, and distributed the fragments among the poor. Some three hundred of the principal begs followed his example, and the dramatic spectacle fired the army with new enthusiasm. To celebrate the occasion, Babur

<sup>1</sup> While there is no reason to question Babur's sincerity at the moment of renunciation, it cannot be maintained, as some historians assert, that he remained true to his vow for the rest of his life. See below, p. 174.



formally decreed a remission of the *tamga* or stamp-tax, as an act of piety. Before long, however, a fresh wave of depression swept over the little force. The spectacle of their master's changed manner of life may well have helped to disconcert them. In any case, Babur found it necessary to restore their courage by a direct appeal. If we may reconstruct his speech, after the manner of Thucydides, he must have said something like this :

"My lords and comrades in arms ! Do you not know that there lies a journey of some months between us and the land of our birth and our familiar city ? If our side is defeated (God preserve us from that day ! God forbid it !), where are we ? Where is our birthplace—where our city ? We have to do with strangers and foreigners. But let every man remember that whosoever enters this world is subject to destruction : for God alone is eternal and unshakeable. He who commences the banquet of life must at length drain the cup of death. Better is it to die gloriously than to live with a name disgraced. If I die with glory, all is for the best. Let me leave an honourable name, for certainly my body cannot escape death. Almighty God has ordained for us this fortune, and put before us this noble destiny, that if we are vanquished, we die martyrs : if we conquer, we have won His holy cause. Therefore let us all swear, in the name of the All Mighty, that we will never flee from a death so glorious : and that while our souls are not separated from our bodies, our bodies shall never be separated from the perils of this combat." <sup>1</sup>

He added that after this enemy had been beaten, he would give leave to go home to everyone who asked for it. The response was enthusiastic.

"They swore by the divorce of their wives, and on the Holy Book: they recited the *fatiha* and said, 'Oh King ! God willing, we will not spare ourselves in sacrifice and devotion, so long as breath and life are in our bodies.'"

The spirit of the army was entirely restored, which was fortunate, for bad news was coming in apace. Rabiri had been seized by Husain Khan Lohani : Chandwa by Kutb Khan. The

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courteille, ii. 283-4; *Humayun Nama*, ed. A. S. Beveridge, 99.



troops in Sambal and Kanauj abandoned their charges and fled to Babur. Gwalior was besieged, and, worst of all, desertion began in the ranks even of the main army.

When his preparations were complete, however, Babur pushed on undauntedly. On March 12th Ustad Ali Khan and the musketeers advanced, the waggons and the wheeled tripods rolling in front of them. The Padshah himself rode up and down the line, his eye everywhere, cheering, encouraging and exhorting. When he came within view of the enemy, he sent out a few skirmishers, who successfully attacked some stragglers and brought off a number of heads. This small exploit greatly encouraged the army.

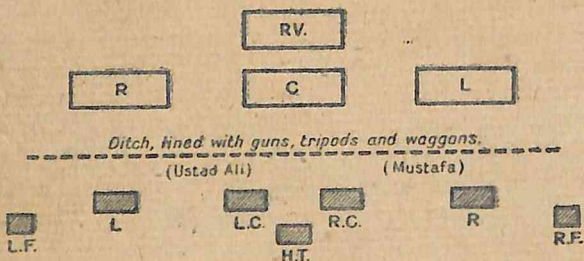
Having carefully surveyed the ground, Babur halted three days near Kanua while Khalifa and the pioneers dug trenches and raised ramparts. At last on March 16th, when all was ready, the army advanced in battle array and occupied the position prepared for it. Just as the tents were being pitched, the news was brought that the enemy was in motion. Without confusion, all fell into their appointed places.

The Mughal camp was situated on the plain, near the village of Kanua, about ten miles from Sikri. It is unfortunately impossible to determine with any accuracy the site of the position taken up by the Padshah's men. Our only evidence consists of three facts: first, that Babur advanced to meet the Rajputs, who were coming up from Bhasawar; secondly, that he was quite close to Kanua hill; thirdly, that the battle broke earlier, and was far more desperately contested, upon the right wing than upon the left. This would perhaps justify the assumption that Babur's camp faced west and south, with its left resting upon, or partially flanked by, the hill above mentioned.

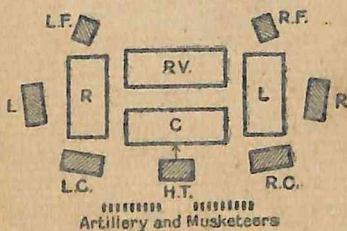
Along the front of the line were the artillerymen and the musketeers, secure in the shelter of the chained waggons and of the tripod-like breastworks. Mustafa, with the matchlocks and culverins, was posted in advance of the right wing, while Ustad Ali, with the heavy ordnance, held the ground in front of the centre. As at Panipat, the line was not

# BATTLE OF KANUA.

## POSITION 1.



## POSITION 2.



L = Left Wing

R = Right Wing

RV = Reserve

L.C. = Left Centre


R.C. = Right Centre


C = Centre

H.T. = Household troops in Reserve

L.F. = Left Flanking Party

R.F. = Right Flanking Party

 Babur's troops

 Singram Singh's troops





## THE CONQUEST OF HINDUSTAN

CSL  
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continuous; there was a series of gaps through which charges were delivered upon the foe. In the rear, and upon both flanks, apparently, were the entrenchments thrown up by the pioneers. The disposition of the troops was as follows. On the extreme left was a picked body of household troops detached to constitute the *tulghma*, under the command of Mumin Atkah and Rustam Turkman. To the right of this body was the left wing, divided, we may assume, into the customary three divisions, left, centre, and right, under the general direction of Khalifa. With him were a number of highly distinguished Turki nobles, Saiyid Mahdi Khwaja, Muhammad Sultan Mirza, Adil Sultan, Abdul Aziz, Master of the Horse, Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang and others: as well as a contingent of Afghan leaders, Jalal Khan, Kamal Khan, Ali Khan Farmuli, and Nizam Khan of Biana. We are not informed of their relative positions: indeed, owing to the fact that all existing accounts of the battle are inspired by Babur and Humayun, who were posted upon the centre and right respectively, much of what took place upon the left wing is far from clear.<sup>1</sup> On the immediate right of the left wing, came the left division of the centre, where were posted Ala-ud-Din Lodi, now once more an adherent of Babur, Shaikh Zain, to whose elaborate but bombastic description we owe so much, Muhibb Ali, Shir Afkan, Khwaja Husain, and others. Next, in the very centre of the battle line, stood the main body of the household guard, commanded by the Padshah himself, who was surrounded by his *aides-de-camp* under Sultan Muhammad, the adjutant-general. On the right of the centre was posted a body of Babur's most trusty army begs, Chin Timur Sultan, Sulaiman Shah, Yunus Ali, Shah Mansur Barlas, Abdullah Kitabdar, Dost Ishaq Agha, and others. On their right again was the left division of the right wing, under Mir Hamah, Muhammad Kukuldash and Khwajagi Asad. The

<sup>1</sup> The sources for the battle of Kanua are, upon the Mughal side, Shaikh Zain's official Persian dispatch, *Babur Nama*, 316 seq.: Leyden and Erskine, 359 seq.: P. de Courteille, 287 seq.: Ilminski, 410 seq. For the Rajput side, see Tod, *Annals of Mewar*, chapter ix.



central body of the right wing was commanded by Humayun, and included, like the left wing, a number of highborn Afghans who had for the moment thrown in their lot with the Mughals—Khan Khanan Dilawar Khan, Malik-Dad Kurram, and Shaikh Guren. In the right division of the right wing were Kasim Husain Sultan, Ahmad Yusuf Aglanchi, Hindu Beg, Khusru Kukultash, and Kawan Beg Urdu-Shah, as well as a couple of ambassadors, who had been brought, apparently, to see the fighting—Sultan Aghur, the ambassador of Iraq, and Husain, the ambassador of Sistān. The end of the line was held by the right *tulghma*, a strong body of Mongol troops, under the command of Tardika, Malik Kasim, and Baba Kishka.

It seems that the number of troops under Babur's command was greater than at Panipat, but the depression and vacillation which the Padshah was at such pains to overcome proves that the average *morale* was not so good. To the sturdy Turki and Mongol troops who had won him the throne of Delhi, Babur had by this time added contingents of Afghan troops of poorer quality. That these had swelled the total force to any considerable extent is unlikely, in view of the wastage which must have occurred in the original army from the ravages of climate and warfare, as well as from the exigencies of garrison duty. In the absence of precise information, no sound conclusion can be arrived at: but from the general character of the fighting as well as from the number of individual leaders mentioned by name in the official account, we may perhaps hazard a guess that Babur's army numbered eight or ten thousand effectives. That the numerical odds were prodigiously unfavourable to him is beyond question. According to the Mughal official estimate, Singram Singh's immediate adherents numbered 100,000, and the followers of the confederated chieftains who marched with him, another 100,000. These numbers are plainly exaggerated so far as fighting men are concerned, although if camp followers were reckoned in, it is conceivable that so great a total might be approached. In the Turki account it is stated that only one-third of Rana Singram Singh's personal feudatories had





already given proof of their fidelity in previous battles<sup>1</sup>; but even so, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that in effectives the Rajput chieftain outnumbered his antagonist by seven or eight to one.

It was about three hours after sunrise when the battle began, a fact which fixes the first Rajput attack somewhere between 9 and 9.30 a.m. Apparently Singram Singh's idea was to roll up the Mughal line from the extreme right, for his first desperate charge was delivered against the *tulghma* troops under Malik Kasim and the right division of the right wing under Khusru Kukultash. For some time, the centre, the left, and even the main body of the right, were out of action, and the men upon each side contented themselves with watching the movements of their adversaries. Very soon, however, it became necessary for the Mughals to reinforce the troops on the extreme right, who were suffering severely. The moment was one of great danger. A *tulghma* was accustomed to attack, not to resist, and signs of weakening began to show themselves. If the end divisions of the right wing gave way, the whole line would be rolled up, and defeat would be immediate and irreparable. Babur instantly determined to dispatch his trustiest leader to the threatened point. The assistance came just in time. Chin Timur Sultan, with a body of picked men, charged the Rajput left wing, smashed into their midst, and so relieved the pressure upon the Mughal right. The attack was well pushed home, and a gap was apparently opened between the Rajput left and centre. Of this the Mughal leaders were quick to take advantage. Mustafa, the artilleryman, trundled his culverins and his tripods into the open field, and from this position of advantage commenced a destructive fire with small-calibre ordnance and matchlocks. So great was the effect that the morale of the discomfited Mughals was restored. Fresh troops were hurried up, and little by little the fighting involved all the men of the right wing, as Kasim Husain Sultan, Kawan Beg, Urdu-Shah, Hindu Beg, Muhammad Kukultash, and

<sup>1</sup> Ilminski, 495; P. de Courteille, ii. 444.

Khwajaji Asad were successively drawn into action. Before long, as Rajput reinforcements brought ever-increasing pressure to bear upon the Mughal right, contingents from the nearest division of the centre were hurled into the fray: first Yunus Ali, Shah Mansur Barlas and Abdulla Kitabdar. An instant later came Dost-Ishaq Agha. Thus supported, and aided in addition by Mustafa's deadly firearms, the Mughal right beat off all attacks and inflicted severe losses upon the enemy.)

Rana Singram Singh now turned his energies elsewhere. Avoiding for a moment the centre, where Ustad Ali and the heavy ordnance were making themselves unpleasantly active, the Rajputs delivered a series of fierce charges upon the left. But while the main body of the left wing, manned by Muhammad Sultan Mirza, Adil Sultan, Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang, and other stout warriors, stood fast and declined to yield a foot, the *tulghma* under Rustam Turkman and Mumin Atkah swept round and fell upon the rear of the enemy. A *tulghma* attacking, the Rajputs soon found, was a very different thing from a *tulghma* attacked: and when Mullah Mahmud, Ali Atkah, and at last Khalifa himself, hurried up, the effect produced by the charge in rear was serious. None the less, by sheer weight the Rajputs maintained a formidable pressure upon the left wing, and Babur found it necessary to dispatch Khwaja Husain with a picked body of household troops as a reinforcement.

The battle now raged all along the line, and remained for some time indecisive. On the one hand the Mughal artillery caused fearful carnage in the crowded Rajput ranks, and on the other, the unceasing pressure of superior numbers reduced Babur's men almost to their last gasp. Realising the necessity for a supreme effort, if the scales of victory were not to incline against him, the Padshah ordered the household cavalry in the centre to charge in two compact bodies, one on each side of the artillery, leaving a clear passage down the middle for Ustad Ali's "great balls." Simultaneously, it would appear, a strong body of matchlockmen was brought from the right





BABUR DIRECTING A CHARGE AT KANUA.

(*Alwar Codex.*)



wing, whose fire supplemented the efforts of Ustad Ali. This clever manœuvre was crowned with success. The charge of the household troops forced back the Rajput centre, and the firearms blasted a lane of death into the thick of the foe. The matchlockmen then advanced from behind the artillery, trundling their tripods in front of them, and the ground gained was quickly occupied by the Mughal infantry. The Padshah in person now ordered a general advance in the centre. The guns were moved forward, and Ustad Ali redoubled his activities. At the spectacle of Babur's advance with the victorious centre, the Mughal right and left wings struggled desperately to straighten the line. So fierce were their charges that they forced the Rajput right and left wings back in confusion, and drove them inwards upon the centre. Once more was the fight evenly contested for some time. Although the Rajputs were plainly outmanœuvred, their superiority in numbers was still a terrible strain upon the wearied Mughals. Rousing themselves for a last effort, Rana Singram Singh's men hurled themselves upon the right and left wings of their opponents, who were now threatening to surround them. Desperate indeed was that final charge; the Mughal wings were driven from their enveloping position, and forced back almost in a line with their centre, nearly it seems to the place where Babur himself was standing. On the left, where the pressure was greatest, the Rajputs came within an ace of breaking through. But the advantage gained by their antagonists was too marked, and the toll taken by the artillery was too severe. Sullenly the Rajput chivalry ebbed back; the Mughal wings in their turn charged once more, this time with decisive effect. Their opponents broke and fled. As Babur was gallantly forcing his way forward in the centre, his lieutenants on each wing came to tell him that the day was won. The hosts of Singram Singh melted away like snow at noonday, and the battle of Kanua was over.

The Rajput historians state that only treachery could have caused the defeat of the Rana,<sup>1</sup> although such an assumption

<sup>1</sup> Tod, *Annals of Mewar*, chapter ix.





is not necessary to account for a reverse suffered at the hands of a skilful general supported by good artillery and well-disciplined troops. There is no stamp of truth upon the story told in *Annals of Mewar*, that Babur tried to make peace before fighting, and succeeded only in corrupting the intermediary, Siladi of Raisin, who joined him at the decisive moment of the struggle. The cry of treachery is a common solace to the pride of a beaten army.<sup>1</sup> The Rajputs, indeed, suffered a terrible shock. Hardly a clan was there which did not lose the flower of its princely blood. Singram Singh himself escaped, badly wounded: but his power was broken, and the decline of his prestige fatally weakened the only bond which could hold together the great Rajput confederacy.

The consequences of the battle of Kanua were most momentous. In the first place, the menace of Rajput supremacy, which had loomed large before the eyes of Muhammadans in India for the last ten years was removed once for all. The powerful confederacy, which depended so largely for its unity upon the strength and reputation of Mewar, was shattered by a single great defeat, and ceased henceforth to be a dominant factor in the politics of Hindustan. Secondly, the Mughal empire of India was now firmly established. Babur had definitely seated himself upon the throne of Sultan Ibrahim, and the sign and seal of his achievement had been the annihilation of Sultan Ibrahim's most formidable antagonists. Hitherto, the occupation of Hindustan might have been looked upon as a mere episode in Babur's career of adventure: but from henceforth it becomes the keynote of his activities for the remainder of his life. His days of wandering in search of a fortune are now passed away: the fortune is his, and he has but to show himself worthy of it. And it is significant of the

<sup>1</sup> Rajput annalists display considerable dislike for Siladi, who was subsequently converted to Islam under the name of Salah-ud-Din by Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. See *Mirat-i-Sikandari*. That the story of his treachery is without foundation seems clear from the fact that he never received any reward from the Mughals and never came into contact with them subsequently. After the defeat he retired southwards, and concerned himself as before with the politics of Malwa.



11/ new stage in his career which this battle marks that never afterwards does he have to stake his throne and life upon the issue of a stricken field. Fighting there is, and fighting in plenty, to be done: but it is fighting for the extension of his power, for the reduction of rebels, for the ordering of his kingdom. It is never fighting for his throne. (And it is also significant of Babur's grasp of vital issues that from henceforth the centre of gravity of his power is shifted from Kabul to Hindustan.) He recognised clearly that the greater must rule the less, and that from the little kingdom of former days he could never hope to control the destinies of his new empire. Often as his heart sighed for the streams and meadows of his mountain home, he resolutely remained in India for the rest of his life, fighting, governing, administering, striving to put all things upon a sound basis ere death called him away.

After the battle of Kanua, Babur, having for the moment no open enemy in the field, was able to proceed unhindered to the reduction of his dominions. After constructing the usual tower of skulls as a trophy of victory, he pushed on to Biana. He contemplated a regular invasion of Rajputana to set the seal upon his triumph, but as the hot weather was coming on, he reluctantly yielded to the counsel of his amirs, and abandoned the project. He determined, however, to undertake the reduction of Mewat, and marched into Alwar, receiving the submission of the local chieftains. He then returned to Agra via Kotila and Biana.

While he was on the march, he allowed Humayun,<sup>1</sup> Mahd Khwaja, and all who needed rest and refreshment, to return to Kabul. Many seem to have availed themselves of the promise which had been given before the battle. Probably the Padshah was not sorry to see them go. The condition of Kabul, denuded of troops as it was, was the cause of some anxiety to him, for he well knew that if a sudden reverse of fortune should drive him from India, it would be of the greatest

<sup>1</sup> The Prince exposed himself to grave censure by plundering some treasure-houses at Delhi on the way home.





importance to possess a strong and stable base from which to conduct future operations.

For himself, there was no rest. The first thing to be done was to reduce to submission the districts which had thrown off their allegiance before the battle of Kanua. An expedition dispatched against Chandwa and Rabiri, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang and Tardi Beg, proved completely successful. The fortresses were recaptured without difficulty, and the principal rebel, Husain Khan Lohani, was drowned in attempting to escape across the Jumna. Etawa promptly surrendered when this news reached Kutb Khan. Another strong force was despatched against Biban, a powerful Afghan chief, who had taken advantage of the recent confusion to besiege and take Lucknow. Biban fled without fighting, and his conquests fell into Babur's hands.



## CHAPTER VII

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EMPIRE

*Authorities.*—*Babur nama*; The *Tarikh-i-Daudi*; The *Tarikh-i-Shir Shahi*.

*Modern Works.*—Erskine; Elliot and Dowson, volumes iv and v.

Now for the first time Babur was able to complete the distribution of the different provinces and districts among his followers. Hitherto he had been compelled to keep his whole force mobilised; but the triumph of Kanua and the consequent disappearance of open resistance, made it possible for him at the beginning of the rains to direct each of his nobles to repair to his own *pargana*, to set his necessary affairs in order, and to prepare his arms and accoutrements in readiness for the season when military operations would again become possible. Such was the first step taken by Babur in founding the administration of the Mughal Empire.

A word must here be said as to the difficulties with which he was confronted. Such executive machinery as had been in use during the fourteenth century, had not survived the troubles of the fifteenth. The monarchy of the Lodi dynasty had been a kind of hegemony, exercised by one chief over others who were almost his equals in power if not in prestige. Local administration seems to have been entirely in the hands of local magnates, who in their turn depended not upon the central authority, but upon the great nobles in whose provinces they lay. The control of the king over the local authorities seems to have been confined to the right to demand a certain fixed quota of armed men, and the right to exact certain





loosely-defined dues, the amount of which could be increased if the sovereign was strong enough or rash enough to ignore the resulting discontent.<sup>1</sup> The administration of justice seems to have been the work of the civil and religious officers appointed by, and responsible to, the great chiefs. Justice was not a royal prerogative, although cases of importance were brought to the king for decision; rather, it would seem, as an act of courtesy upon the part of the litigants than as the consequence of any prescriptive right on the part of the king. In war the sovereign was indeed the leader, although how far he was able to impose his will upon the powerful chiefs whose followings composed the bulk of his army depended rather upon his personality than upon his position. A king like Bahlol, who frankly recognised the limitations of his prerogatives, found this loose system of administration not difficult to work. It seems to have been easy, generally speaking, to gather an army which would help to impose the royal will upon some flagrant offender: although it behoved the king to be sure that the royal will did not differ essentially from the will of the powerful feudatories.

Now it was just because of his failure to recognise the limitations imposed by circumstances upon the power of the sovereign, that Ibrahim Lodi had come to such utter disaster—disaster of which his defeat by Babur was the consequence rather than the occasion. He had attempted to restore to the Sultanate of Delhi that absolute authority which it had possessed in the days of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. But times had changed: the monarchy of the Lodis was not a divine inheritance, but a human compromise, and the power and prestige of the monarch were alike diminished.

These considerations must be borne in mind when the position of Babur is to be determined. On the one hand, he had displaced the Lodis, a dynasty whose success, such as it was, had resulted from a frank recognition of the position of the sovereign as *primus inter pares*; on the other hand, he

<sup>1</sup> That this could be very formidable was shown by the recent example of Ibrahim Lodi.



was himself the very embodiment of absolute kingship, the kingship not only of conquest, but also the kingship of right divine : being first a great conqueror surrounded by the glamour of success ; and, secondly, the representative of Amir Timur, entitled to all the superstitious reverence with which his ancestor had been invested.

It will thus be seen that Babur had not merely to conquer a kingdom : he had to recreate a theory of kingship. He was determined to be no sultan, hampered by all the limitations which had beset the Lodi dynasty, but a padshah, looking down upon even his highest amirs from the towering eminence upon which the divine right of Timur's blood had placed him. Now, as we have already noticed, there was no administrative machinery adequate to the task of bringing Hindustan under the effectual dominance of the centralised, absolute monarchy which represented Babur's ideal of kingship. Something entirely new, something to bridge the gulf between central and local authorities, something such as afterwards came into being under Akbar, was required. Unfortunately Babur, being no administrative genius, but a plain warrior with statesmanlike instincts, found it necessary to carry on the administrative plan which he found already in existence, namely, that of parcelling the dominions subject to him among the great amirs, with the understanding that each was responsible for the good order of the districts under his control. The consequences of this plan had always been the same : the monarchy, having erected an artificial barrier between itself and the local administration, lost little by little all its authority, until last of all its prestige departed, and the throne became the prey of contending factions. The great amirs, on the other hand, gained what the crown lost. During the reign of Babur, this does not become apparent, partly because he was invested with the prestige of a conqueror : partly because the time was too short for the consequences of his policy to make themselves felt. Even before he died, however, symptoms of radical unsoundness in the administration are not far to seek. The old haphazard financial system entirely failed to provide means for the





## AN EMPIRE BUILDER OF THE 16TH CENTURY

up-keep of the "professional" soldiers, like the gunners and matchlockmen, who were paid directly from the royal revenue. Having distributed with lavish generosity the royal hoards in Delhi and Agra, Babur suddenly found himself with an empty treasury. For the moment the deficit was met by a levy of 30 per cent. on the revenues of all great offices. But in the time of Humayun there is a repetition of the old story of financial breakdown, accompanied by revolution, intrigue, and the dethronement of a dynasty. It was the rare good fortune of the house of Timur that they were able at last to regain their heritage of conquest, strengthened by the work of the Afghan Shir Shah, an administrator of marked originality, who, all unwittingly, built up for the Mughals that structure of administrative machinery which, while it was necessary for securing the triumph of the new ideal of kingship they represented, they had been entirely unable to construct for themselves. Had Babur been as successful in administration as he was in fighting, the troubles of Humayun's reign would never have occurred. As it was, he bequeathed to his son a monarchy which could be held together only by the continuance of war conditions; which in times of peace was weak, structureless and invertebrate. One of the most illuminating criticisms upon the monarchy founded by Babur was made by Shir Shah himself :—

"Since I have been amongst the Mughals, and know their conduct in action, I see that they have no order or discipline, and that their kings, from pride of birth and station, do not personally superintend the government, but leave all the affairs of the state to their nobles and ministers, in whose sayings and doings they put perfect confidence. These grandees act on corrupt motives in every case, whether it be that of a soldier's, or a cultivator's or a rebellious zemindar's. Whoever has money, whether loyal or disloyal, can get his business settled as he likes by paying for it : but if a man has no money, although he may have displayed his loyalty on a hundred occasions, or be a veteran soldier, he will never gain his end. From this lust of gold they make no distinction between friend and foe." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Shir Shahi* ; Elliot and Dowson, iv. 330-1.



It is, then, as a conqueror and not as an administrator that Babur must be considered to have laid the foundations of the Mongol Empire. It is his conquests which are of importance, not his administrative achievements: for while the former remained the nucleus of the power of his descendants, the latter became the cause of much disaster before their final abandonment.

During all the three years which elapsed between the battle of Kanua and the day of his death in 1530, Babur was engaged in an almost continuous series of military operations for the safeguarding and extension of his dominions. In the intervals of campaigns, he amused himself by touring the country, seeing it with his own eyes, and recording his impressions for the benefit of his readers. He also spent much time in superintending building operations, constructing for himself palaces, baths, and gardens designed as refuges against the burning summer heats.

The first military operation of any importance after the subjugation of the eastern rebels detailed in the last chapter occurred in December, 1527. Babur decided that though the power of the Rajput confederacy had been broken, yet there were individual leaders who needed a lesson. One of the most famous of these was Medni Rao, the kingmaker of Malwa, who at present possessed the great fortress of Chanderi. A *jihad* was declared, and on December 9th Babur set out from Sikri on the arduous march to Malwa. But before he went, he had to make plans for the frustration of the hostility of the Afghans. Being well aware that the goodwill of the noblemen in the east was more than doubtful, Babur directed the loyalists of that quarter to assemble at Kanauj. The redoubtable Shaikh Baiazid, who was then supposed to be at peace, was invited to join in the projected campaign against the hostile Afghans, but in the event of his refusing, Babur gave orders that he was to be attacked first of all.

Having thus made provision for eastern affairs, Babur crossed the river at the ford of Kinar, near the junction of the Ganges and the Chambal, and proceeded to Kalpi. From





Kalpi he marched to Kechran<sup>1</sup> *via* Irich and Bhandar. From Kechran to Chanderi the road ran through rough country, and pioneers had to be sent ahead to level the way and cut down the jungle for the passage of the army. He then crossed what he calls the "Berhanpur River"—presumably a stream which then ran in one of the sandy beds which still exist between Banpur and Lalatpur—and encamped opposite Chanderi on January 21st, 1528.<sup>2</sup> A favourable position was chosen for the battering cannon; breastworks and scaling ladders were prepared. Babur, who only wished to ensure the submission of the rebel leader, offered very favourable terms; but Medni Rao rejected them scornfully. On January 28th Babur marched from his camp, determined to deliver an assault. Just as the final preparations had been completed, a messenger came in bearing bad news. The suspicions formed of Baiiazid had been well founded, for the forces which had been gathered for the protection of the east had been defeated and driven back by the Afghans. Lucknow had been abandoned. In this crisis Babur displayed his usual steadfast courage, declining to be turned back from the enterprise on which he was then engaged. On the morrow the assault was delivered, and after desperate fighting the fort was taken amidst the scenes of horror and carnage which always accompanied the fall of a Rajput stronghold.

By February 2nd Babur was on the move again, bound for the threatened point in his eastern dominions. He arrived at Kanauj on February 27th, not a moment too soon, for on the way he heard that the town had been abandoned, and

<sup>1</sup> For particulars of this march, which are much confused both in the Turkish and Persian texts owing to the corruption of proper names, I am much indebted to Kazi Jalal Uddin, Lecturer in Historical Geography at the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, and to Shaikh Abdul Qadir, Professor of History at St. John's College, Agra, who have brought much local knowledge to bear upon the questions under dispute. I am not entirely convinced by the identification of the modern Kechran with the Kechweh of the text, through the Kechrawa of ibn Batuta: but I must admit that the ancient site near the modern village of that name agrees exactly with Babur's description.

<sup>2</sup> N.W.P. Gazetteer, i. 515.



that Shamsabad had been stormed by the enemy. On the news of Babur's approach, however, the rebel leaders, Baiazid, Biban, and Ma'aruf, fell back, seized the east bank of the Ganges opposite Kanauj, and prepared to dispute his passage.

Covered by his artillery, Babur determined to force a crossing. Despite the execution caused in their ranks by his ordnance, the enemy mocked at the enterprise, which they regarded as hopeless. But the bridge which his pioneers constructed grew steadily, and at length on March 12th and 13th advance parties crossed and engaged the enemy. There was some sharp fighting, but no general engagement: and on the night of March 15th, finding that they had no longer any prospect of preventing Babur's passage, the Afghan rebels decamped. As the Padshah himself desired to go to Oudh, the pursuit of the flying enemy was entrusted to Chin Timur Sultan, but was carried on in such dilatory fashion that there seemed some danger of the enemy rallying. Babur thereupon dispatched reinforcements to the pursuers, and the fugitives were followed with greater energy. Much baggage was captured, and the families of several nobles were taken prisoners.

For the remainder of the year 934 the *Memoirs* are defective, so we can only conjecture how Babur spent his time until September, 1528. The season would prevent any extensive military operations, and it seems probable that the Padshah occupied himself in his building projects, and in compiling the book to which we owe so much of our knowledge of him. When the *Memoirs* are resumed, Babur is found at Agra, planning to start on a tour to Gwalior. Just before he started, he received in audience, among other distinguished men, Khwandamir, the author of the *Habib-us-Siyar* and other works, who had come from the court of Herat to be introduced to the conqueror of Hindustan.<sup>1</sup> It was the first recognition by the outside world of the epoch-making character of Babur's achievement. Babur, after this interview, went on the tour he had planned, visited Gwalior, and spent some time examining the palaces of Man Singh and Vikramadit.

<sup>1</sup> P. de Courtaillé, ii. 342; Elliot and Dowson, iv. 143, 155.





He was impressed by their size and splendour although he grumbles a little at their want of taste and elegance.

Towards the end of 1528 Humayun, from his distant province of Badakhshan, announced with pride the birth of his first son, whom he called by the somewhat ill-chosen name of Al-Aman. The letter which Babur wrote in reply to this intelligence has been well described as "frank, fault-finding and affectionate." The Emperor begins, after warm congratulations and loving messages, by commenting upon the name of his newly-arrived grandson. Al-Aman means "protection," but unfortunately the common people pronounce it Alaman and Ilaman, words which signify in Turki "a robber," and "I do not feel" respectively—to put it mildly, an unfortunate ambiguity. He further blames Humayun for his carelessness in despatching business: it was only a month's journey from Hindustan to Badakhshan, and yet the messengers sent by the Emperor to his son sometimes took a year to return! Again he chides him for repeating so often in his letters "I wish to be alone"—an ill thing indeed for a king: as well as for his habit of using such far-fetched expressions in his writings that they are difficult to understand. After this paternal admonition, Babur proceeds to deal with business of greater importance. Having just heard of the recent successes gained by Shah Tahmasp of Persia over the Uzbegs, the Emperor had determined to make another attack upon his old enemies. Accordingly he draws up in his letter a plan of campaign for Humayun. He informs him that his brother Kamran and the Kabul begs have been put under his orders, and commands him to undertake an expedition against the Uzbeg chiefs in Hisar, Samarkand, or Merv, as may seem most fitting. He counsels him to show greater energy, "for indolence and laziness accord not at all with the exercise of sovereignty. If you desire to please me, you must put aside your taste for solitude, and that uncouth disposition which makes you fly from the society of others. . . . Instead of allowing your younger brothers and the begs to assert their independence, you must make them wait upon you twice a day, so that you can take counsel with

them on whatever happens." Finally, Humayun is adjured to act handsomely towards Kamran, that "correct and worthy young man"—a command which Humayun loyally obeyed, to his abiding sorrow—to work hand in hand with Khwaja Kilan, and to try by all the means in his power to win the heart of Sultan Wais.<sup>1</sup>

Soon afterwards an event occurred which must have filled Babur with pride. Vikramadit, the second son of Singram Singh, offered to surrender the great fortress of Rantambhor in exchange for Shamsabad and seventy lakhs. Such an offer must have made Babur feel that the work of subduing Hindustan was nearly done : indeed, in October he announced his intention of making an effort to return to Kabul for a short while in the following spring, in order to watch over his interests in Balkh and Badakhshan, which the Uzbegs were once more threatening. As, however, the Uzbegs were shortly defeated with great loss by Shah Tahmasp, who had occupied the throne of his father Ismael since 1523, the Kabul expedition did not take place : but the mere fact that it was ever contemplated shows that Babur regarded Hindustan as secure. And in truth the work had been well done : it hardly seemed likely that the Padshah would have to take the field there in person again. As a matter of fact, this proved to be necessary in the following year.

In the beginning of December, 1528, Babur sent his third son Askari,<sup>2</sup> with a strong force, into the eastern provinces, where there seemed some likelihood of further trouble. Babur's own dominions were, indeed, nominally clear of rebels, but the fragments of the army which had been led by Baiazid, Biban, and Ma'aruf had taken refuge across the frontier of Bengal. Babur had no desire to molest that kingdom, which lay somewhat apart from the general course of Hindustani politics, if only he could be sure that his rebels would not receive countenance and support from the authorities. Accordingly, Askari was given orders to watch the Bengalis, but to manage things by himself unless they showed signs of giving

<sup>1</sup> *T.R.*, 409.

<sup>2</sup> Born in 1516.





trouble. In that case he was to communicate with his father at once.

Meanwhile, Babur was enjoying a brief rest at Agra. He occupied some of his time in planning the great strategic road which was to safeguard the communications between Agra and Kabul, and in giving orders for watchtowers, changing stations, and rest-houses along its course. He also took this opportunity to arrange a grand entertainment at which were present ambassadors from Persia, from the Uzbeks, from the various Hindu kingdoms, as well as venerable Khwajas from Transoxiana. There was a great presentation of gifts and honorary robes to the ambassadors: nor did Babur in his hour of prosperity, forget the friends who had stuck so closely to him in the days of adversity:—

“As for those who had followed me from Andijan,” he says, “without hearth or home, who had accompanied me everywhere, had come with me from Sukh and Hushyar, I presented them with honorary robes, with costly dresses, with gold and silver and apparel of every kind.”

By way of completing Babur's triumph, an envoy arrived from Bengal, bringing a message of submission which, to the straightforward Padshah, seemed to leave no doubt whatever as to the pacific intentions of the Bengalis. This was on January 1st, 1529.

The submission, however, proved to be a mere blind. A few weeks afterwards, when Babur was arranging a punitive expedition against the Biluchis, who had been raiding his territories, news was brought that Mahmud, son of Sikandar Lodi, had seized Bihar. Abandoning his projected expedition to the western provinces, Babur moved slowly eastward to the threatened districts, interviewing ambassadors, corresponding with his deputies in Kabul, and transacting a great deal of business as he went. His leisurely journey occupied just three months, from January 10th to April 10th, and on the latter date his advance guard got into touch with the rebels at Chunar. Mahmud and his army fled before him, finally crossing the



border, and opening negotiations with the authorities in Bengal. Despite the renewed protestations of the Bengali ambassador, the attitude of his principals seemed to Babur unsatisfactory. The Padshah therefore continued his march eastward. Whether the Bengalis suspected him of a design to invade their territories, or whether they had been acting from the first in concert with the rebellious Afghans, is uncertain: at all events twenty-four divisions of the army of Bengal crossed the Gunduk, and took up a fortified position on its banks. Babur was not anxious to fight, and when the Bengalis took their stand right in his path, at the junction of the Ganges and Gogra, he made one last effort to avert hostilities, by courteously requesting the King of Bengal to order his army to retire into its own territories, guaranteeing that no harm was intended either to Bengal or the Bengalis. When no answer was returned, he determined to force his way across the river.

The fight of the Gogra was not unlike that of the Ganges, save that the enemy was far more determined and far better equipped with artillery. Babur brilliantly forced the passage under a heavy fire, and the Bengali army was taken in flank by a party under Askari which had crossed in a different place. On May 6th, 1529, the enemy broke and fled after a fierce struggle. In addition to disposing of the danger from Bengal, this victory had one important consequence. Muhammad Ma'aruf, who had been forced by the Bengalis to join them, promptly came over to Babur, who was thus freed from the opposition of one of the most formidable of his antagonists.

Baiazid and Biban, however, were of sterner metal. They crossed the Siru, and besieged Lucknow. Owing to an outbreak of fire in the fort, the place fell. After this success, the rebels crossed the Ganges, and moved in the direction of Chunar and Jaunpur. On the news of Babur's approach, however, their army broke up in confusion. Babur thereupon marched back to Agra. It was his last campaign: all was now quiet.

Babur seems to have been disappointed at the failure of Humayun's campaign against the Uzbeks, and was dissatisfied





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with the way it had been managed. He recalled the boy Hindal, his youngest son, the favourite of his old age, from Kabul: he was growing old, he said, and desired to have a son by his side. But in the same message he announced his intention of visiting his northern dominions in person, and suggested that peace should not be made until he arrived. It appears, however, that the suggestion arrived too late to be acted upon. The Emperor managed to get as far north as Lahore, where Kamran met him, but his intentions of marching to Kabul and Transoxiana were interrupted, not merely by the threatening aspect of affairs in Bengal, but also by his rapidly failing health. He seems at this time to have suffered from occasional fits of deep depression, which led him to announce to his family his intention of abandoning the world and retiring to pass the remaining years of his life in hermitical solitude. He who had formerly been so strong and so determined, now became vacillating and irresolute: and in striking contrast to his former purity of life, he now began to display an inordinate longing for the daughters of the Philistines, as represented by two Circassian girls who had been sent him as a present by Shah Tahmasp. To these girls, if Shaikh Zain<sup>1</sup> is to be believed, he became greatly attached. Indeed, during these the last two years of Babur's life his mental vigour unquestionably became seriously affected.

It is probable that to this moment should be ascribed the beginning of a remarkable palace conspiracy, which had for its object the setting aside of Babur's heirs, and their replacement on the throne by one Mir Muhammad Mahdi Khwaja, at this time *Jagirdar* of Etawah. About this individual, remarkable as it may appear, very little is known with certainty. He was a high noble, who had been in Babur's service for some ten years, belonging by birth to that aristocracy of religion which so often intermarried with the bluest blood in the State. He was the husband of Babur's full sister, Khanzada Begam, and is often mentioned in the later portion of the *Memoirs*, always in connection with nobles of the most exalted

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Baburi* (Rampur codex).

rank. It appears that Khalifa,<sup>1</sup> Babur's lifelong friend and counsellor, now possessed of absolute power through the Emperor's growing feebleness of mind and body, designed to set this man on the throne, to the exclusion of Babur's sons.

In connection with this intrigue, the reality of which is unquestioned, some fascinating problems present themselves. Nowhere are we told of Khalifa's exact motive: and we are left to conjecture what is meant by Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad's phrase that the old counsellor "dreaded and suspected" the succession of Humayun, "in consequence of some things which had taken place in the course of worldly affairs." So intimate had always been the connection between Khalifa and his master, that we are at first tempted to think that Babur himself may have encouraged the scheme, in view of the fact that many of Humayun's actions, particularly the looting of the Delhi treasure-houses and the indolent administration of Badakhshan, had in late years given him great offence. But from his death-bed pronouncement, it seems plain that he had never contemplated any successor except his eldest son: and it was probably his incapacity for business, due to failing health in body and mind, that induced the intriguers to hope for success. Khalifa may have been convinced that Muhammad Khwaja would make a better emperor than Humayun—indeed, Humayun's bearing and conduct must have caused grave anxiety to all who had the welfare of the kingdom at heart. But that the scheme should have been considered feasible at all is eloquent testimony of Babur's feebleness in body and mind.

It was in the summer of 1529 that Humayun, far removed in Badakhshan from the politics of the court, received news which caused him the gravest anxiety. There is strong presumptive evidence that it was his mother Maham, now journeying in leisurely fashion from Kabul to join her husband in Agra,

<sup>1</sup> Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din 'Ali Barlas, brother of Sultan Junaid Barlas, and, like Babur, a member of the family to which Timur had belonged. See Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie, Turcs et Mongols*, 44 seq.





who bade him return; and it is natural to suppose that she did so because she had somehow obtained intelligence of the plot to set him aside.<sup>1</sup> But from whatever source it may have been derived, the news which Humayun received was of sufficient weight to cause that prince, who was not much addicted to sudden decisions and quick action, to resolve upon a drastic course—nothing less than the abandonment of his government and the presentation of himself at headquarters without waiting for orders.<sup>2</sup> Another indication of the gravity of his intelligence is afforded by the way in which he ignored the protests of his subjects. The Badakhshanis implored him to continue governing them, lest the Uzbeks should seize the whole country. Humayun merely put forward the pretext that he had received urgent orders of recall from the Emperor, nominated in reckless haste a lieutenant who was quite incapable of filling his place, and hurried towards Kabul. In Kabul, where he seems to have arrived on June 8th,<sup>3</sup> he

<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that Maham, who cannot have been in very close touch with Agra politics during her residence at Kabul, received her first intelligence of the conspiracy to set aside her son as she passed through the Etawah district held by the rival candidate?

<sup>2</sup> Mirza Haidar (*T.R.*, 387) writes that Humayun had actually been recalled by Babur. But this cannot be anything more than an excuse put forward by the prince himself, for (i) the appearance of Humayun at Agra surprised everyone; (ii) Babur was expecting Hindal, and would never have recalled both boys at the same time; (iii) no successor had been settled upon to occupy the governorship of Badakhshan; (iv) Humayun was asked by his father to return to his charge.

<sup>3</sup> There is doubt about this date. My reasons for deciding upon June 8th are as follows. In the fragment given by Pavet de Courteille, ii. 457, it is stated the Bairam festivities were in progress when the princes met in Kabul. This may be either 1st Shawwal (June 8th) or 10th Zulhijja (August 15th). In favour of the earlier date may be alleged this evidence: Starting to work back from December, 1530, we know that Babur kept his bed for two or three months before he died (Gulbadan Begam, 105), and that the weather was extremely hot when Humayun's illness was critical. This points to the "circumambulation" having taken place in August or September. Humayun, we know, had been ill for some time before Babur heard of it (Pavet de Courteille, ii. 459), and the slow journey from Sambal and Muttra to Agra via Delhi must have taken no short while. It seems probable that Humayun's illness began in the spring of 1530, and the six months which he spent on his *jagir* cannot have begun before the late autumn of 1529.



encountered Kamran and Hindal. The latter had returned from visiting his father some months previously, but was at the moment again under orders to present himself at Agra. The three brothers had a consultation, and were apparently agreed upon the seriousness of the aspect of affairs. They must have seen that the future position of all three depended upon the ability of Humayun and his mother to checkmate the schemes of Khalifa. Finally they hit upon a plan of action. It was determined that Humayun should proceed post haste to Agra, while Hindal was to take his place in Badakhshan. Kamran, meanwhile, was to keep tight hold of Kabul. This plan was duly carried out.

Humayun's mother Maham arrived at Agra, after a leisurely journey from Kabul, on June 27th, and her son, travelling fast, seems to have come only a few hours after. Humayun presented himself at court just at the very time when Maham had been leading Babur to talk of him with affection, and it was undoubtedly the influence of the adroit lady which saved the prince from disgrace. The Emperor was much annoyed at his son's dereliction, but made the best of a bad job. The retention of Badakhshan was a matter of considerable moment, for he still hoped, if health and strength could be regained, to use that kingdom as a base for another attempt to win his ancestor Timur's possessions in Central Asia. Accordingly, he asked Khalifa to go and take over charge. The old minister, who probably thought he saw the hand of Maham in the suggestion, strongly objected to leaving court at a time when his absence would have meant the victory of Humayun's party. As Abu'l Fazl says, he "delayed to obey." Babur then asked Humayun to go. The prince said that if an order were given, he would, of course, obey it: but that he would never exile himself voluntarily. In the last resort, Sulaiman Mirza,

The fact that he spent some time at court before he departed, must incline us to favour the earlier of the two possible dates.

Independent confirmation of the strength of this chain of evidence is afforded by the *Memoirs* themselves. It is stated (Pavet de Courteille, ii. 439) that on 1st Zulqada, 935 (July 8th, 1529), Humayun as well as Maham received presents in the audience hall of Agra.



the heir apparent, was sent to take possession of his father's kingdom.

Babur seems to have been worn out by all this worry, and announced that he intended to retire to a hermitage in the Gold-scattering Garden, and resign the kingdom to Humayun, now evidently restored to favour again. The Emperor was persuaded to desist from his purpose, and the importance of the episode lies merely in two things : first, it shows that Babur was now in a very feeble state of health, and secondly, it proves that Humayun, by his timely appearance, had checkmated the attempt to set him aside. His personal charm of manner, as well as his dutiful behaviour towards the father whose mental and bodily vigour were rapidly decaying, had completely secured his hold upon Babur's affections. Ahmad Yadgar has a story which, if it be true, as is more than likely, illustrates both the Emperor's condition at the time<sup>1</sup> and the anxieties as to his father's intentions which must have tormented the mind of the prince.

"One evening the king was in his cups and summoned Muhammad Humayun. When that offspring of the royal tree came into the presence, His Majesty, overpowered by the wine, had fallen asleep on his pillow. The Shahzada remained there standing, motionless, with his hands joined. When the king awoke from sleep at midnight, he beheld him standing and said, 'When did you come?' He replied, 'When I received your commands.' The king then remembered having sent for him, and was much gratified and said, 'If God should grant you the throne and crown, do not put your brothers to death, but look sharply after them.' The Shahzada bowed down to the ground, and acquiesced in all that his Majesty said."

Immediately after this incident, Humayun, with his mind

<sup>1</sup> It has another point of interest, being, so far as I know, the only evidence that Babur broke the vow he had taken to abstain from wine on the eve of the battle of Kanua. Ahmad Yadgar's authority upon matters of this sort is considerable : his own father was in the service of Mirza Askari, and he gives several particulars of events occurring during the last few years of Babur's reign which are found in no other writer. See Elliot and Dowson, vol. v. H. Beveridge in *J.A.S.B.*, 1916.



more at ease, went to Sambal with a large force to complete the settlement of his jagir. Here he remained for six months, apparently in great content, but at the end of that period, when the hot weather of 1530 was beginning, he fell dangerously ill. After some time his father received news of this, and in some alarm gave orders that the prince should be brought to Delhi, and thence by water to Agra. But when Humayun arrived in Delhi, his condition was so critical that his boon companion, the dissolute Maulana Muhammad Parghari, sent an urgent message to Maham, then pleasure-seeking with her husband at Dholpur: "Humayun Mirza is ill and in an extraordinary state. Her Highness the Begam should come at once to Delhi, for the Mirza is much prostrated."<sup>1</sup> Maham set out to meet her son, and found him at Muttra. By the time he arrived in Agra his mind was wandering, and when Gulbadan Begam and her sisters visited him, they found he was delirious. Babur was terribly distressed when he saw his son's condition. Not long before he had lost a younger boy, Alwar, and doubtless his apprehensions were of the worst. Maham made a pathetic attempt to comfort him: "Do not be troubled about my son. You are a king: what griefs have you? You have other sons. I sorrow because I have only this one." Babur's reply shows plainly how much his mind was set upon Humayun's succession to the throne: "Maham, although I have other sons, I love none as I love your Humayun. I crave that this cherished child may have his heart's desire and live long, and I desire the kingdom for him and for the others, because he has not his equal in distinction."<sup>2</sup>

The story of Babur's sacrifice for his son is famous.

After taking counsel with the wise, the Emperor determined to sacrifice the most valuable thing in the possession of the sufferer, in order to ransom his life. Some suggested that the great diamond should be given in alms; but Babur, deeming that he himself was the most valuable thing possessed by Humayun, determined to make offering of his own life. After

<sup>1</sup> Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun Nama*, A. S. Beveridge, 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 104, 105.





the appropriate ceremonies, he walked three times round the sick-bed, and then exclaimed that he had borne away Humayun's sickness. From that moment, the story runs, Humayun rallied while Babur sank.

By this rite, in which faith prevails even to-day among Asiatics, Babur believed that he had ransomed his son from death. Humayun did recover, and the Emperor, long ailing as we have seen, looked upon his own life as forfeit.

Some of those who recount this incident, make it appear that Babur died at once. This is contrary to fact. Humayun left Agra, and went back, apparently to his jagir. Evidently he found no grave cause for anxiety in his father's health, and saw no necessity for remaining. The Emperor continued sickly for two or three months, but there seemed no immediate danger of his death. Suddenly, however, he took a turn for the worse, and Humayun, who had gone with an army in the Kalinjar direction, was hastily summoned. He was shocked at the change which had come over his father in the course of a few months, saying to the doctors: "I left him well: what has happened all at once?"

Between the time when Humayun recovered from his serious illness, and the time when he was recalled to his father's death-bed, the last scenes of the palace conspiracy to which Khalifa lent his aid had been performed. The old minister must now have been convinced that his plot could scarcely succeed: Humayun was too secure in his father's favour, and may perhaps have already been recognised, in some sort of way, as the next occupant of the throne.<sup>1</sup> None the less, so obstinate was the feeling nourished by Khalifa against Humayun, and so feeble was the condition of the Emperor's health, that had it not been for a single obstacle, the succession of Babur's sons might yet have been imperilled. That obstacle was the personality of the rival candidate. Mahdi Khwaja, imagining himself secure in Khalifa's favour, and knowing well the influence of the all-powerful minister over his dying master, began to assume the airs of a king, and thus offended many who

<sup>1</sup> *A.N.*, trs. H. Beveridge, 276-77.



might otherwise have proved valuable partisans. But this was not all: the final abandonment of the intrigue was directly due to Mahdi Khwaja's rashness, and came about in a dramatic manner. The story is well told by the author of the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*.

"It happened one day that Mir Khalifa went to see Mahdi Khwaja, who was in his pavilion. Mir Khalifa and Muhammad Moqim Harawi, Diwan of the household, father of the author, were the only persons present with the Khwaja. When Mir Khalifa had sat for a moment, the Emperor Babur, in the pangs of his disease, sent for him. After he had gone, Mahdi Khwaja continued standing in the pavilion, and the author's father stood with respect behind him. The Mahdi, being unaware of my father's presence, stroked his beard when Khalifa had gone, and said, 'Please God, I will slay thee, old man.' Turning round he perceived my father, and being greatly moved said, 'O Tajik! Ofttimes the red tongue has given the green head to the winds.'<sup>1</sup> My father took his leave and departed. He went with all haste to Mir Khalifa and said, 'Notwithstanding the existence of such intelligent princes as Muhammad Humayun Mirza and his brothers, you have shut your eyes against loyalty, and desire to transfer the sovereignty to another house. Now see what will come of it.'"

And he told Khalifa what he had heard. Mir Khalifa at once sent off to find Prince Humayun, and sent an officer to Mahdi Khwaja with an order in the Emperor's name, directing him to retire to his house. Thus came to an end the attempt to set Humayun aside. From henceforward, Khalifa never seems to have questioned the choice of his master. But it is not without significance that on the accession of Humayun, the old minister, for so long dominant in the politics of Hindustan, vanishes entirely from history. He finds no mention, so far as I am aware, in any of the chronicles of the reign of Humayun.

The old Emperor became rapidly worse. There was a sudden acute disorder of the bowels which the doctors were quite unable to remedy, and they said that they had discovered symptoms

<sup>1</sup> I.e. freedom of speech has brought venerable, green-turbaned followers of the Prophet to the penalty of decapitation.





of the same poison with which Buwa Begam, Sultan Ibrahim's mother, had before attempted to take Babur's life.

The dying man was in great pain, longing restlessly for the return of Hindal, his dearly-loved, but his mind remained clear to the last. The day after Humayun's arrival Babur felt death draw near. He called the amirs together, and spoke his last words to them :—

“For years it has been in my heart to surrender my throne to Humayun, and retire to the Gold-scattering Garden. By the Divine grace, I have obtained in health of body all things but the fulfilment of this wish. Now, when I am laid low by illness, I charge you to acknowledge Humayun as my successor, and to remain loyal to him. Be of one heart and mind towards him, and I hope to God that Humayun will also bear himself well towards men.”

He then turned to Humayun, and delivered him a message intended for his private ear.

“Humayun, I commit to God's keeping you and your brothers and all my kinsfolk and your people and my people; and all of these I confide to you.<sup>1</sup> . . . The cream of my testamentary directions is this, Do naught against your brothers, even though they may deserve it.”<sup>2</sup>

Right loyally, to his own sore despite, was Humayun to obey his father's dying charge.

Three days later, on Monday, December 26th, 1530,<sup>3</sup> Babur passed away. The death was kept secret, lest riots should break out in the interregnum. But after a time one of the Hindustani nobles, Araish Khan, remarked that this course

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Beveridge, 108-9.

<sup>2</sup> A.N., tra. H. Beveridge, i. 277.

<sup>3</sup> There is some confusion about this date, due in the first instance, I believe, to Erskine, who makes 5 Jumada 1, correspond with December 26, when, as a matter of fact, it is December 25. Gulbadan gives 5 Jumada 1, but says the day was a Monday. She would very likely have forgotten the day of the month, while remembering the day of the week clearly. Firishhta follows her in giving the day as Monday, as well as in making it correspond to 5 Jumada 1. On the other hand, Abu'l Fazl gives it correctly as 6 Jumada 1, and is supported by the Ilinski fragment (Pavet de Courteille, ii. 461).



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might produce the very consequences it was designed to obviate. As he said, "It is not well to keep the death secret, because when such misfortunes befall kings in Hindustan, it is the custom of the bazar people to rob and steal; God forbid that the Mughals not knowing, they should come and loot the houses and dwelling-places. It would be best to dress some one in red, and to set him on an elephant, and let him proclaim that the Emperor Babur has become a dervish, and has given his throne to the Emperor Humayun."

Babur's epitaph may fitly be taken from the words of an old writer.<sup>1</sup>

"In the year 937, on the 6th of the 1st Jemadi (December 26th, 1530), as the Emperor was in the Char Bagh<sup>2</sup> which he had made, he was seized with a serious illness and bade farewell to this transitory world. Let it suffice to say that he possessed eight fundamental qualities: lofty judgment, noble ambition, the art of victory, the art of government, the art of conferring prosperity upon his people, the talent of ruling mildly the people of God, ability to win the hearts of his soldiers, love of justice."

So died a very gallant gentleman. By his own request he was buried upon the hillside of Kabul, looking upon the prospect of meadow and stream that he loved so well. The work that he did endured long, and even to-day the influence of the imperial idea which possessed him so strongly is a living force in the land which he subdued.

<sup>1</sup> Ilminski fragment.

<sup>2</sup> The garden now known as the Ram Bagh, near Agra.



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*Note.*—Persons are generally indexed under their family or tribal names when mentioned; e.g., Babur's kindred will be found under Mirza, Sultan Ibrahim under Lodi. In some cases, as Farmulis, Tarkhans several individuals are grouped under one heading. Some names of minor importance are grouped as Jagidars and Chieftains. The spelling is not always uniform.

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