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and his son Jaya Singh betook themselves to the fortress of Rawar, where the last extremity of peril called forth the shining qualities of those hapless men and women whom death and dishonour started in the face. After the manner of her tribe, this brave lady resolved to fight the enemies of her husband. She reviewed the remnant of her garrison, 15 thousand in number in the fort, and forthwith stones from mangonels and balistas, as well as arrows and javelins, began to be rained down thickly upon the Arabs, who were encamped under the walls of the fort. But the Arabs proved too strong for the forlorn hope of Rawar and conducted the siege with great vigour and intrepidity. When the Rani saw her doom inevitable, she assembled all the women in the fort and addressed them thus: "God forbid that we should owe our liberty to those outcaste cow-eaters. Our honour would be lost. Our respite is at an end, and there is nowhere any hope of escape; let us collect wood, cotton and oil. for I think we should burn ourselves and go to meet our husbands. If any wish to save herself, she may."¹⁰ They entered into a house, where they burnt themselves, and by means of this ghastly holocaust vindicated the honour of their race.

Muhammad took the fort, massacred the 6,000 men whom he found there, and seized all the wealth and treasure that belonged to Dahir. Flushed with success, he proceeded to Brahmanabad¹¹ where the people at once submitted to him. A settlement of the country followed immediately; those who embraced Islam were exempted from slavery, tribute and the Jeziya, while

¹⁰ Chachnama, Elliot, I, p. 172.

¹¹ It is a ruined city in the Sinjhora Ta'uka of Thar and Parkar, district Sindh, Bombay, situated in 25° 52' N. and 68° 52' E., about 11 miles south-east of Shahadadpur in Haidraabad, and 21 miles from Hala. Imperial Gazetteer, IX, p. 8.

Elliot's note on Brahmanabad (Appendix, Vol. I, pp. 369—74) is worthy of perusal.



those who adhered to the faith of their fathers had to pay the *Jeziya*, and were allowed to retain possession of their lands and property. The *Jeziya* was levied according to three grades. The first grade was to pay silver equal to forty-eight *dirhams*, the second grade twenty-four *dirhams*, and the lowest grade twelve *dirhams*.¹² When the people of Brahmanabad implored Muhammad bin Qasim to grant them freedom of worship, he referred the matter to Hajjaj, who sent the following reply:

"As they have made submission and have agreed to pay taxes to the Khalifa, nothing more can be properly required from them. They have been taken under our protection and we cannot, in any way, stretch out our hands upon their lives or property. Permission is given them to worship their gods. Nobody must be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion. They may live in their houses in whatever manner they like."¹³ Muhammad bin Qasim then devoted himself to the settlement of the country. The whole population was divided into four classes and twelve *dirhams* weight of silver was allotted to each man because their property had been confiscated. The Brahmanas were treated well and their dignity was maintained. They were entrusted with offices in the administration and the country was placed under their charge. To the revenue officers Muhammad said: "Deal honestly between the people and the Sultan, and if distribution is required, make it with equity, and fix the revenue according to the ability to pay. Be in concord among yourselves and oppose not each other, so that the country may not be distressed."¹⁴ Religious freedom was granted and in the matter of worship the wishes of the Brahmanas were respected.

The victory of Brahmanabad was followed by the capture of the fort of Aror (Alor). The governor of

¹² Chachnama, Elliot, I, 184.

¹³ Chachnama, Elliot, I, pp. 185-86.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 184.



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the fort was Fufi, one of the sons of Dahir, who still maintained that his father was alive and had gone into the country to collect forces. Muhammad sent Ladi to convince the men of Aror that Dahir was dead but she had to return in disappointment under a shower of abusive epithets. At last Fufi was convinced of his father's death by a sorceress whereupon he came out of the fort with his relatives and dependents and went in the direction of Chitor. Muhammad on hearing the news of Fufi's fight attacked the fort and captured it. The merchants and artisans offered submission to the conquerors and the cowardly garrison surrendered the key of the fort without even a show of resistance.

Having settled the affairs of Aror, Muhammad marched towards Multan and on his way received the submission of Kaksa, a cousin of Dahir, who had fled from Aror. Then he came to a fortress which cannot be identified but which was bravely defended for seven days. The governor, a nephew of the ruler of Multan, betook himself to Sikka, a fortress on the bank of the Ravi. The siege of Sikka lasted seventeen days and cost Muhammad the lives of 25 of his best generals and 215 soldiers.

After this victory Muhammad marched towards Multan, the chief city of the Upper Indus. The author of the *Chachnama* writes that the contest between the infidels and the faithful was fierce and bitter and lasted for seven days. At last the nephew of the Multan chief, in spite of the tremendous attack he delivered upon the Muslims, was overpowered and defeated. The garrison in the fort was put to the sword, and the families of the chiefs and warriors of Multan numbering six thousand in all were enslaved. Amir Daud Nasar was appointed governor of the city and Arab officers were placed in charge of the important forts. The people of Multan, merchants, traders, and artisans, together with the Jats and Meds of the surrounding country, whom the native government had persecuted, waited upon the conqueror and paid him homage. The usual settlement of territory followed, and Muhammad bin Qasim granted



toleration to all unbelievers, and spared their lives on payment of a poll-tax. "The temples," said he "shall be inviolate like the churches of the Christians, the synods of the Jews, and the altars of the Magians." Yet the amount of wealth that flowed into the coffers of the Arabs was considerable. The author of the *Chachnama* writes that from one temple two hundred and thirty *mans* of gold were obtained and forty jars filled with gold-dust. These were weighed and were found to contain thirteen thousand and two hundred *mans* of gold.¹⁵ The Arabs accomplished their task with comparative ease with the help of the natives themselves. Now and then Muslim ferocity vented forth itself in dealing with the Hindus, but acts of wanton desecration were few and far between, and the Arabs doubtless displayed greater generosity than the Turks who followed them. Having conquered Multan Muhammad bin Qasim sent one of his generals, Abu Hakim, at the head of ten thousand horse towards Kanauj, with instructions to ask the chief of that place to embrace Islam, but before he could open a fresh campaign, he received from the Khalifa the ominous decree of his doom.

Muhammad had a career of uninterrupted success in Sindh but all these glorious conquests spelled disaster for him, and nothing availed to save him from the tragic fate that awaited him. His fall was as sudden as his meteoric rise. The author of the *Chachnama* and Mir Masum,¹⁶ both, with slight variations, have related the gruesome story of Muhammad's death. They write that when the captive daughters of Raja Dahir, Parmal Devi and Susaj Devi, were presented to the Khalifa to be introduced into his seraglio, the princesses, in order to avenge their father's death, invented the story, that before sending them to the Khalifa Muhammad bin Qasim had dishonoured them

The death of
Muhammad bin
Qasim.

¹⁵ *Chachnama*, Elliot, I, p. 206.

¹⁶ *Chachnama*, Elliot, I, p. 209. Jarrett, *Ain-i-Akbari*, II, p. 345. Elliot, I, pp. 437-38.



both, suggesting thereby that they were unfit for the commander of the faithful. The Khalifa lost his temper and peremptorily issued an order that Muhammad bin Qasim should be sewn in the raw hide of an ox and be sent to the capital.¹⁷ So great was the might and majesty of the Khalifa that Muhammad, on receipt of this order, voluntarily sewed himself in raw hide, and Mir Masum writes that "three days afterwards, the bird of life left his body and flew to heaven." His dead body, enclosed in a box, was sent to the Khalifa, who ordered it to be opened in the presence of the daughters of Dahir. The princesses expressed unalloyed satisfaction at the death of their father's murderer, but told the Khalifa that he was innocent, and that they had invented the story out of vindictive motives. The climax was reached when they admonished him to be more considerable in administering justice. The Khalifa was struck with remorse; but how could he make amends for his mistake? He ordered the princesses to be tied to the tails of horses and be dragged until they were dead.¹⁸ Thus perished the great hero, who had, in the short space of three years, conquered Sindh and established the Khalifa's sway on Indian soil. This story partakes of the nature of a myth. There is a great disagreement among our authorities on the point of Muhammad bin Qasim's death, but the account of *Futuhu-i-Buldan*, which says that Muhammad was seized, put in chains and tortured to death by the order of the Khalifa, seems to be more probable than the rest.

¹⁷ The Khalifa's name was Walid ibn-Abdul Malik. He became Khalifa in 86 A.H. (705 A.D.) and died in 96 A.H. 715 A.D.).

¹⁸ Mir Masum, following the *Chachnama*, writes that after two months, the princesses were presented to the Khalifa and an interpreter was called in. When the veil was removed from their faces, the Khalifa fell in love with them. They told him that Muhammad had kept them for three days in his harem. *Tarikh-i-Masumi*, Khudabakhsha, MS. F. (5).



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As a matter of necessity rather than of choice, the administration was left in the hands of the natives.

The Arab occupation of Sindh. The conquest placed plenty of land in the hands of the Arabs. The *iqtas*

were held by grantees on the condition of military service and were exempt from all taxes except the alms (*Sadqah*). The Muslim soldiers were not allowed to cultivate lands and therefore the main burden of agricultural labour fell upon the natives who were reduced to the condition of villeins and serfs. Some soldiers held grants of land while others received fixed salaries. As laid down in the sacred law, four-fifths of the spoils was given to the troops and one-fifth was kept for the Khalifa and it appears that the Khalifas observed this rule, because they were afraid of the opposition of these military men. Religious endowments were made, and land was given in *waqf* (free-gift) to holy men and heads of monasteries. The Arab soldiers settled in the country, married Indian women and thus slowly a number of small military colonies came into existence, where in the enjoyment of domestic happiness these men forgot the pain of exile. These colonies were called *Junud* and *Amsar* which mean 'armies' and 'cities.' In some places these colonies grew into flourishing cities and became centres of learning and culture. The most important colonies in Sindh were Mansura, Kuzdar, Kandabel, Baiza, Mahfuz, and Multan. Of the local troops some were disbanded and some retained in service. The leisure and luxury which the cessation of war rendered possible cooled the fanatical zeal of these adventurers to such an extent that it became necessary to enlist foreign mercenaries to conduct military campaigns. The desire for the profits of commerce further told upon their martial spirit. A busy trade grew up and the Arabs in Sindh kept up a regular communication with the rest of the Muslim world both by land and sea. Merchants of different nationalities carried Indian goods through Sindh to Turkistan and Khorasan and thence to Constantinople. Arab horses were imported into Sindh and arms and ammuni-



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tions were sent up the mouth of the Indus for carrying on military operations in the country. The Arab settlements of the Azdis who were enterprising merchants occupied the whole coast of Kirman and Mekran and controlled much of the lucrative trade with foreign countries.

The Arabs granted toleration to the Hindus. They did so not because they felt respect for other faiths but because they were convinced of the impossibility of suppressing the faiths of the conquered peoples. At first there was a fearful out-break of religious bigotry in several places, and temples were wantonly desecrated. At Debal, Nairun and Aror temples were demolished and converted into mosques. In some places those who had offered resistance were put to death and women and children were made captives. The temple of the Sun at Multan was ravaged and its treasures were rifled by Muhammad bin Qasim. The principal sources of revenue were the land-tax and the *Jeziya*. The land tax (*Khiraj*) was rated at $2/5$ ths of the produce of wheat and barley, if the fields were watered by public canals, and $1/4$ th if unirrigated. Of dates, grapes and garden produce $1/3$ rd was taken, either in kind or cash, and $1/5$ th of the yield of wines, fishing, pearls and of other produce, not derived from cultivation. Besides these, there were several other taxes, which were generally farmed out to the highest bidder. The *Chachnama* speaks of other taxes levied upon the cultivators such as the *baj* and the *ushori*. Some of the tribes had to comply with demands which carried much humiliation with them. At one time the Jats living beyond the river Aral had to bring a dog when they came to pay their respects to the governor and were branded on the hand. Sump-tuary laws were rigorously enforced and certain tribes were forbidden to wear fine apparels, to ride on horses and to cover their heads and feet. Theft by the subject race was held to be a serious crime and it was punished by burning to death the women and children of the thief. The native population had to feed every Muslim traveller for three days and nights and had to submit



to many other humiliations which are mentioned by the Muslim historians. The *Jesiyā* was always exacted "with vigour and punctuality, and frequently with insult." The collection of the *Jeziya* was considered a religious as well as a political duty, and so great was the importance attached to it that Hajjaj sent another man to collect it even during Muhammad bin Qasim's time. The unbelievers, technically called *Zimmis* had to pay according to their means, and exemption was granted to those who embraced Islam. When the administration lost its old vigour and the Khalifa claimed a larger share of the public revenues, the Muslims were also subjected to new taxes and tithes with the result that riots and rebellions frequently occurred in the country. Ibn Khaldun, the most philosophical of all Arab writers on history, thus writes of the evil effects of this policy: "With the progress of luxury the wants of government and its servants increased, and their zeal diminished; so that it became requisite to employ more people, and to give them higher pay. Consequently, the taxes were gradually increased, till the proprietors and working classes were unable to pay them, which led to continual changes in the government."¹⁹ There were no tribunals for deciding cases between the Hindus and the Muslims. The amirs and chiefs, who still maintained their independence, exercised the right of inflicting capital punishment upon offenders within their jurisdiction. The Qazi decided cases according to the principles of the Quran, and the same practice was followed in cases between the Hindus and the Muslims, which, of course, resulted in great injustice to the former. In the matter of public and political offences, the law made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims, but all suits relating to debts, contracts, adultery, inheritance, property and the like, were decided by the Hindus in their *panchayats* or arbitration boards which worked with great efficiency. The public tribunals were to the Hindus "only the

¹⁹ Elliot, I, pp. 477-78.



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means of extortion and forcible conversion." They always fretted and chafed under the foreign tutelage, but their own disunion was responsible for it. The absence of that bond of sympathy between the conqueror and the conquered, which arises from mutual confidence, was a conspicuous feature of the Arab administration in Sindh.

The conquest was accomplished by tribes who were so different in their habits and sentiments that they could never act in unison. When religious fanaticism had subsided, they "showed themselves as utterly incapable, as the shifting sands of their own desert, of coalescing into a system of concord and subordination." The hereditary feuds among the various clans further weakened their position, which was rendered worse by the persecution of the Shias and several other heretical sects. The spirit of schism was fostered and despite the severity with which the government dealt with the schismatics, such heterodox sects as the Kharijis, Zindiks, Khwajas, Shariites, Mulahidas and Karmatians flourished and propagated their doctrines. The Arab conquest, as Stanley Lane-Poole rightly observes, was only "an episode in the history of India and of Islam, a triumph without results." The province of Sindh was well-known for the infertility of its soil, and the Arabs soon discovered that it was an unremunerative appanage of the Khilafat. The Hindu world, deeply conservative and philosophical, treated with supreme disdain the wealth and greatness of its physical conquerors, so that the even tenor of Hindu life was not at all affected by this "barbarian inroad." It was impossible for the Arabs to found a permanent power in India, for the Rajputs still held important kingdoms in the north and east, and were ever ready to contest every inch of ground with any foreign intruder, who ventured to invade their territory. Muhammad bin Qasim's work of conquest was left uncompleted, and after his death the stability of the Arab position was seriously shaken owing to the ineffectual aid, which



the Khalifas sent to their representatives in that inhospitable region. The decline in the power of the Khilafat seriously affected its possessions abroad and the distant provinces gradually ceased to respect the authority of the imperial government. Sindh was divided into several petty states which, though politically independent, acknowledged for the sake of convenience the spiritual supremacy of the Khalifa. From the year 871 A. D. when the Khalifa Muatmad gave the charge of Sindh to Yaqub in Lais, who had already been entrusted with the government of Balkh, Turkistan, Sijistan and Kirman, the province became free from the control of the Khilafat. The Arabs, who settled in Sindh, established their own dynasties at Multan and Mansura, and the chiefs of the Saiyyad families exercised authority over the upper and the lower Indus. Only a few settlements and a few families constituted the memorial of Arab conquest in India. The Arabs have left no legacy behind in the shape of buildings, camps, and roads. Language, architecture, art, tradition, customs, and manners were little affected by them, and all that remained was the *debris* of ancient buildings, which proclaimed to the world the vandalism of their destroyers. Out of the materials of the buildings which they demolished they built castles, cities and fortresses which have been destroyed by the cruel ravages of time.²⁰

It may be conceded at once, that the Arab conquest of Sindh, from the political point of view, was an insignificant event in the history of Islam. But the effects of this conquest upon Muslim culture were profound and far-reaching. When the Arabs came to India, they were astonished at the superiority of the civilization which they found in the country. The

The cultural effects
of the Arab
conquest.

²⁰ The reader will do well to peruse Sir Henry Elliot's note on the Arab occupation of Sindh in his *History of India*. Vol. I, Appendix, pp. 460—83.



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sublimity of Hindu philosophical ideas and the richness and versatility of Hindu intellect were a strange revelation to them. The cardinal doctrine of Muslim theology, that there is one God, was already known to the Hindu saints and philosophers, and they found that in the nobler arts, which enhance the dignity of man, the Hindus far excelled them. The Indian musician, the mason, and the painter were as much admired by the Arabs as the philosopher and the man of learning. Tabari writes that Khalifa Harun once sent for an Indian physician to cure him of an obstinate and painful disease. The physician succeeded in restoring his patient to health and was allowed to return to India in safety. The Arabs learnt from the Hindus a great deal in the practical art of administration, and the employment of Brahmana officials on a large scale was due to their better knowledge, experience, and fitness for discharging efficiently the duties of administration. Muslim historians are apt to forget or minimise the debt which the Saracenic civilisation owed to Indo-Aryan culture. A great many of the elements of Arabian culture, which afterwards had such a marvellous effect upon European civilisation, were borrowed from India. India, then, stood on a much higher intellectual plane, and the Arab scholars sat at the feet of Buddhist monks and Brahmana pandits to learn philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry and other subjects of study. The court at Baghdad extended its patronage to Indian scholarship and during the Khilafat of Mansur (753—774 A. D.) Arab scholars went from India to Baghdad, who carried with them two books, the *Brahma Siddhanta* of Brahmagupta and his *Khanda-khadyaka*. These works were translated by Alfazari into Arabic with the help of Indian scholars. It was from them that the Arabs learnt the first principles of scientific astronomy.²¹ Religious bigotry did not stand in the way of adopting

²¹ Al Biruni, *India*, translated by Sachau, Introduction, p. xxxi.



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Hindu culture and the Arabs freely borrowed what they found useful for themselves. They learnt from the Hindus the numerical figures and for this reason called them *Hindāsas*. The cause of Hindu learning received much encouragement from the ministerial family of the Baramakas during the Khilafat of Harun (786—808 A.D.). Though the Baramakas had been converted to Islam, they never felt enthusiastic about it, and prompted by their Hindu inclinations, they sent scholars to India to study medicine, astrology pharmacology, and other sciences.²² They invited Hindu scholars to Baghdad and appointed them as the chief physicians of their hospitals and asked them to translate from Sanskrit into Arabic works on medicine, philosophy, toxicology, astrology and other subjects. But it must be admitted that the Muslims soon secularised the learning they borrowed from India, and presented it to the European world in a new garb, which was perhaps more acceptable to the European mind. When the Khilafat of Baghdad lost its importance after the extinction of the Abbasid dynasty at the hands of Halagu, the Arab governors of Sindh became practically independent. The cultural connection was broken, and the Arabian scholars, no longer in contact with Indian *savants*, turned to the study of Hellenic art, literature, philosophy and science. There is ample reason to endorse Havell's view that "it was India not Greece, the taught Islam in the impressionable years of its youth, formed its philosophy and esoteric religious ideals, and inspired its most characteristic expression in literature, art, and architecture."²³

²² Al Biruni, *India*, translated by Sachau, Introduction, p. xxxi.

²³ Havell, *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 256.



CHAPTER III

THE RISE OF THE GHAZNAVIDES

THE Arab conquest left few traces behind. It was only the occupation of a single province, which was by no means fertile or prosperous. But the work of conquest was, three centuries later, taken up by the Turks, who poured into India from beyond the Afghan hills in ever-increasing numbers. The government of the Khalifas lost its former strength after the fall of the Omayyad line, when Merwan II, the reigning Khalifa, was defeated and slain in 750 A.D. The Abbasids succeeded the Omayyads in the Khilafat, the fall of the latter having been brought about by their too much reliance upon the temporal power, and neglect of the spiritual function that pertained to their august office. The capital was transferred from Damascus to Al-Kufa, and all distinctions between the Arabs and the non-Arabs were obliterated. The Khilafat now bore an altered character. It was no longer the sole spiritual guide of the Islamic world, and the sphere of its authority was narrowed by the independent dynasties that had come into existence. The Arabs had lost their old vigour and military zeal, and had now sunk into more voluptuaries, frittering away their time in frivolous pursuits in their *harams*, or quarrelling among themselves, always placing personal or tribal interests above the interests of Islam. The Abbasids accelerated the process of decadence further by systematically excluding the Arabs from office. The old Arab aristocracy was replaced by a new class of officials, and the entire administration was Persianised.¹ Persian officials carried on the work,

¹ Dozy's Hist., de Islamism translated by Victor Chauvin, pp. 228-29, "The ascendancy of the Persians over the Arabs, that is to say, of the conquered over the victors, had



and as the central government became weaker and weaker, the provincial governors showed a tendency towards independence. The Turkish guards, whom the Khalifas employed to protect their person, were a barbarian race, who soon relegated the Arab chiefs to the background, and dominated their masters. So great became their power that the Khalifa became a mere tool in their hands, and the Arabs, who had once been a fine and gallant race, fell from their high estate and lost their old virtues. The Khalifa's forces also consisted of Turks, a fact which greatly increased the strength and insolence of these praetorians. The decline in political power marched *pari passu* with moral degradation, and the court of the Khalifa became notorious for its laxity and luxury. Party feuds between the Shias and Sunnis poisoned the springs of national life. Plots even against the leading statesmen of the empire were common enough, and no official felt himself entirely secure. Espionage of a most revolting character demoralised the people; every Amir kept his spies who reported to him what his fellows said and did in public or private. The Khalifa had become so

already, for a long while, been in course of preparation; it became complete when the Abbasids who owed their elevation to the Persians, ascended the throne. These princes made it a rule to be on their guard against the Arabs, and to put their trust only in foreigners, Persians, especially those of Khorasan, with whom, therefore, they had to make friends. The most distinguished personages at court were consequently Persians. The democratic point of view of the Arabs was, indeed, replaced by the despotic ideas of the Persian."

Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, p. 252.

See Al-Fakhri's description of the Abbasids. Browne, pp. 252-53; "A treacherous, wily and faithless dynasty, wherein intrigue and guile played a greater part than strength and energy, particularly in its later days. Indeed the later rulers of the House lost all faculty of energy and courage, and relied solely on tricks and stratagems."

Von Kremer writes in a similar strain. See Browne, pp. 259, 260, 261.



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powerless that he could not prevent libels even against himself and mischievous persons lampooned him with impunity. The weakness of the central government had a serious effect in the provinces where the local governors turned into despots and carved out small principalities for themselves. The empire was split into a group of states governed by Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Arab and other rulers who posited by the confusion that prevailed at Baghdad. Mavar-un-nahr or Transoxiana became independent under its governor Ismail, the Samanid.² The Samanids showed great favour to their Turkish slaves and Abdul Malik (954—61 A.D.) placed Khorasan in charge of his slave Alaptagin, who was a man of great ability and courage. Deprived of his office on the death of his patron, he betook himself to Ghazni where his father had been governor under the Samanids. Here in this sheltered region he acted more or less as an independent chief and defied the authority of his sovereign. After his death his son Abu Ishaq Ibrahim and his slave Bilaktagin failed to enlarge the dominion inherited from him, but when power passed into the hands of another slave, Subuktagin, who mounted the throne on the 20th April, 977 A.D., fresh conquests were made and the small chieftaincy of Ghazni was turned into a large and prosperous kingdom.

Subuktagin³ was originally a slave. Alaptagin

² The founder of the Samanid dynasty was Saman-i-Khudat, a Zoroastrian nobleman from Balkh, who embraced Islam at the hands of al-Ma'mun, son of the Khalifa Harun-al-Rashid who at that time held the charge of Khorasan. It was during Abdul Malik's reign that Ghazna and Bust became independent under Alaptagin.

³ The author of the *Tarikh-i-Majdul* writes that Amir Subuktagin was descended from Yazdijurd-i-Shahayar, the last king of Persia. During the Khilafat of Osman his family and dependents fled to Turkistan, where they settled and intermarried with the people. After two or three generations they became Turks. Another authority says that Alaptagin purchased him at Nishapur.

Raverty, *Tabqat-i-Nasiri*, I, p. 70.



had purchased him from a certain merchant, Nasr the Hajji, who had brought him from Turkistan to Bokhara. As he seemed to be a man of promise, Alaptagin gradually raised him to posts of honour and conferred upon him, in course of time, the title of Amir-ul-Umra to signify his recognition of his great talents. After his master's death he was raised to the throne by the nobles. Subuktagin was an able and ambitious ruler. Not satisfied with the small kingdom he had inherited from his master, he coalesced the Afghans together into a compact body, and with their help conquered Lamghan and Sistan, and extended the sphere of his influence. The Turkish attacks upon the Samanid power at Bokhara gave him the long-desired opportunity of establishing his own influence, and after years of continued fighting he succeeded in securing the province of Khorasan for his son Mahmud in 994 A.D.

Having secured his position in the Afghan hills, Subuktagin, like an orthodox Muslim, eager to acquire religious merit, turned to the conquest of India, a country of idolators and infidels. The first Indian ruler likely to check his advance was Jayapala, of the Shahi dynasty, whose kingdom extended from Sarhind to Lamghan and from Kashmir to Multan.⁴

In 986-87 Subuktagin made his first raid into Indian territory and inflicted great misery upon the people. He conquered forts and captured cities "which had up to that time been tenanted only by infidels, and not trodden by the camels and horses of Musalmans." Jayapala was filled with grief when he heard of the heavy losses and cruel sufferings of his subjects and resolved to wreak vengeance upon the Muslims. He collected his forces, passed Lamghan and marched into the Amir's territory, for in the words of the official chronicler, "Satan had laid an egg in Jayapala's brain

⁴ Briggs, I, p. 15.



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and hatched it; so that he waxed proud, entertaining absurd thoughts and anticipating an immediate accomplishment of his wishes, impracticable as they were."⁵

The Amir's forces marched from their northern homes, and encamped on the border of the Lamghan territory where Jayapala had also collected a large army. When Jayapala saw the heavy odds arrayed against him, he was frightened beyond measure, for his own troops were no match for the hardy and intrepid Turks, who thirsted for conquest as well as plunder. He sued for peace, and offered to pay tribute in acknowledgment of the conqueror's sovereignty. Subuktagin was inclined to accept these terms of peace, but his son Mahmud dissuaded him from acceding to them, and urged battle for "the honour of Islam and of Musalmans." He said to Subuktagin: "Cry not for place nor demand it, for you are the highest and God is with you, and will not suffer your affairs to fail." Jayapala's envoys returned in despair, but he renewed his overtures and sent the following message to Subuktagin: "You have seen the impetuosity of the Hindus and their indifference to death, whenever any calamity befalls them, as at this moment. If, therefore you refuse to grant peace in the hope of obtaining plunder, tribute, elephants, and prisoners, then there is no alternative for us but to mount the horse of stern determination, destroy our property, take out the eyes of our elephants, cast our children into the fire, and rush on each other with sword and spear, so that all that will be left to you, is stones and dirt, dead bodies, and scattered bones."⁷

⁵ Utbi, Elliot, II, p. 19.

⁶ *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, translated into English by Rev. James Reynolds, p. 37.

⁷ Utbi, *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, Elliot, II, p. 21.

Firishta includes Delhi among the kingdoms that sent help, but he is incorrect.

We do not hear of Delhi during the early Muslim raids. Utbi, the author of the *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, mentions the capture of Mathura and the conquest of Kanauj, but he says nothing about Delhi.



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At this, the father and son both agreed to make peace with Jayapala. The latter bound himself to pay a tribute of one million *dirhams*, 50 elephants, and some cities and fortresses situated in his dominions. As a guarantee for fulfilling these stipulations Jayapala was asked to send hostages to the Amir and two trusted officers were despatched to see that Jayapala remained true to his word. But as soon as he found himself out of danger, he changed his mind and cast into prison the officers of Subuktagin, who had accompanied him.

When the Amir heard of this breach of faith, he was deeply incensed, and to use Firishta's words, like a "Foaming torrent", he hastened with his army towards Hindustan to punish Jayapala for his "wickedness and infidelity." His border lands were ravaged and the town of Lamghen was captured after which the Amir returned to Ghazni. When Jayapala calculated his losses and found that "his chiefs had become the food of vultures and hyenas, and that weakness had fallen on his arm, he resolved to fight once more against the Muslims." In or about 991 A.D. he organised a confederacy of his fellow-princes of Ajmer, Kalinjar, and Kanauj, who helped him with men and money, and at the head of a large army, which according to 'Utbi contained more than a hundred thousand men he advanced to meet the enemy on the same field of battle.

The issue of the battle was a foregone conclusion. Subuktagin urged his fiery and fanatical followers to fight as well as they could for the honour of the faith.

Al Biruni, who lived for several years in India, makes mention of Kanauj, Mathura and Thanesar and several other places beyond Kanauj, but he says nothing about Delhi. From this historical neglect we may conclude that Delhi was still an obscure town.

Sachau. Al Biruni's India (Trubner's Oriental Series). Vol. I, pp. 198-99.



He divided his troops into squadrons of 500 men each, who attacked the enemy with their maces in hand and relieved each other when one of them was exhausted, so that this concentrated attack gave no respite to the opposing Hindus. When the strength of the latter was thus exhausted, the combined units fell upon them and defeated them in a sharp engagement. The Muslim historian writes with characteristic grandiloquence that the Hindus "turned their tails towards their heads like frightened dogs, and the Raja was contented to offer the best things in his most distant provinces to the conqueror, on condition that the hair on the crowns of their heads should not be shaven off."⁸ Subuktagin levied a heavy tribute and obtained an immense booty which included 200 elephants of war. His sovereignty was acknowledged, and he appointed one of his officers with ten thousand horse to the government of Peshawar. India was not conquered, but the Muslims discovered the way which led into her fertile plains. Exhausted by the stress of perpetual war and conquest, Subuktagin at last breathed his last in the month of Shaban, 387 A.H. (August, 997 A.D.) leaving a large and well-established kingdom for his son and successor, Mahmud.⁹ He was a brave and virtuous king who ruled his subjects with prudence, equity, and moderation for 20 years.

After the death of Subuktagin, the sceptre of Ghazni passed into the hands of his son Mahmud, whom his father had always looked upon as a man of promise. It is related that a little before his birth, Subuktagin saw in a dream that a tree sprang up from the fire-place in

Mahmud's early
ambitions.

⁸ Utbi, *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, Elliot, II, p. 13.

⁹ Subuktagin had many sons of whom two died young, while Mahmud, Ismail, Nasar and Yusuf survived him. Mahmud was born in the night of Nov. 1 and 2, 971 A.D. His mother was the daughter of a noble of Zabulistan, a district round Ghazni. Subuktagin had nominated, for reasons not known, his second son Ismail as heir to the throne and it was not without a struggle that Mahmud secured the throne of Ghazni.



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the midst of his house, and grew so high that it covered the whole world with its shadow. Just at that moment he received the tidings of the birth of a son. The dream turned out to be a reality, and Mahmud attained to the position of one of the mightiest rulers of Asia, famed in far-off lands for his riches, valour, and justice. Brave and warlike, he shared in full his father's audacity and ambition; and to the qualities of a born soldier, he added boundless religious fanaticism, which ranked him among the great leaders of Islam. The cultured Arabs and Persians had nothing of the ferocity of temper and iconoclastic zeal, which was a predominant characteristic of the Turks, who were utterly devoid of those higher qualities which make up the dignity of man. The toleration of the Arabs—though it was not much—was foreign to these nomad tribes, whose passions could be easily worked up to fever heat by a capable and fanatical leader, who held out before them the prospect of plunder and proselytism. Mahmud was a fierce and fanatical Muslim with an insatiable thirst for wealth and power. Early in life he formed the grim resolve of spreading the faith of the Prophet at the point of the sword, carrying destruction into heathen lands. His investiture by the Khalifa Al-Qadir-billah further sharpened his zeal, and he openly began to profess himself as a champion of Islam and a declared enemy of idolatry and unbelief. To such a greedy iconoclast, India with her myriad faiths and fabulous wealth presented a favourable field for the exercise of his religious and political ambitions. Again and again he ravaged her plains and advanced far into the interior, bringing back with him vast booty obtained from the plunder of the numerous temples of Hindustan. Every expedition against the Hindus amounted to a jihad, and Mahmud was always backed up by the irresistible vigour and unquenchable ardour of the Turkish hordes who followed him into Hindustan.

Soon after his accession Mahmud secured the recognition of his titles and dignities from the Samanid



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emperor Nuh, who confirmed him in the government of Balkh, Herat, Bost and Sarmadh. The Samanid power was fast declining and the imperial crown was tossed to and fro like a shuttlecock between the contending factions. When one of these factions put out the eyes of Mansur, the young and handsome Samanid emperor, Mahmud was moved with indignation and advanced against those self-seeking officers who had committed the atrocious crime. He refused to pay homage to the puppet king whom they had placed upon the throne and declared himself independent ruler of Khorasan and Ghazni. The Khalifa Al-Qadir-billah sent him the diploma of investiture and conferred upon him the titles of *Yamin-ud-dowlah* (the right hand of the Empire) and *Amin-ul Millat* (custodian of the faith). He abandoned the title of Amir and called himself Sultan—an appellation which literally signifies 'power' or 'authority'. Mahmud was the first Muslim sovereign to assume the title of Sultan and Professor Browne observes that it appears from 'Utbi's history that he styled himself like the Ottoman Sultans, "the shadow of God upon His Earth." Mahmud recognised no political suzerain and though he bowed to the Khalifa's authority as the spiritual head of the Muslim world he was to all intents and purposes an independent ruler.

Having settled the affairs of his kingdom, Mahmud turned his attention towards Hindustan. This country, with its vast wealth and ubiquitous idolatry, spurred his ambitions, and he led as many as seventeen invasions against her during the years 1000—1026 A.D.¹⁰ The first expedition was directed against the frontier towns in 1000 A.D., which resulted in the capture of several fortresses and districts. Mahmud entrusted the conquered places to his own

¹⁰ Sir Henry Elliot enumerates seventeen expeditions which may be accepted. Several historians give their number as twelve which seems to be incorrect, (Vol. II, Appendix, Note D, pp. 434—78).



Governor and having seized immense booty returned to Ghazni.

But his ambitious and ardent nature allowed him no rest, and in the month of Shawwal, 391 A.H. (1000 A.D.), he again set out from Ghazni at the head of ten thousand picked horsemen for the purpose "of exalting the standard of religion, of widening the plain of right, of illuminating the words of truth, and of strengthening the power of justice." Jayapala, his father's inveterate enemy, mustered all his available forces, which consisted of twelve thousand horsemen, thirty thousand foot, and three hundred elephants. On the 8th Muharram, 392 A.H. (November 28, 1001 A.D.), a severe action was fought at Pashawar in which the Musalmans defeated the Hindus, "killing 15,000 of them, spreading them like a carpet over the ground, and making them food for beasts and birds of prey." Jayapala, with 15 of his kinsmen and a host of other dependents, was captured, and an immense booty in the shape of pearls, jewels, and rubies fell into the hands of the conqueror.¹¹ A treaty was made, by which he agreed to pay 250,000 *dinars* as ransom and to give fifty elephants, and his son and grandson as hostages for fulfilling the conditions of peace. But Jayapala never forgot the disgrace that had been inflicted upon him, and like a brave man he preferred death to dishonour. He caused a funeral pyre to be erected, and after the manner of his race perished in the flames in order to save himself from humiliation.¹²

¹¹ The Muhammadan historian 'Utbi', the author of *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, states that the booty which came into the hands of Mahmud was worth 600 thousand *dinars*. In addition to this, the conqueror obtained 500 thousand slaves, men and women. (Elliot, II, p. 26).

There is no doubt that this is an exaggerated account.

Firishta writes that only one necklace belonging to Jayapala was worth 180,000 *dinars*. (Briggs, I, p. 38).

¹² Firishta writes that a custom prevailed among the Hindus that when a Raja was overpowered twice by strangers, he became



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The third expedition was aimed against the city of Bhira¹³ (1004-05 A.D.) on the left bank of the Jhelum,

Against Bhira
and other towns.

below the Salt range, which was soon annexed to the kingdom of Ghazni.

This was followed by the invasion of Multan. The ruler of Multan was Abdul Fatah Daud who belonged to the sect of Qarmatian heretics.¹⁴ Mahmud started from Ghazni, but as the route was difficult and troublesome he requested Anandapala, the king of the Punjab, to allow him to pass through his

became disqualified to reign. (Briggs, I, p. 38) 'Utbi also refers to this custom though with a slight variation. (Elliot, II, p. 27).

¹³ Elphinstone wrongly describes it as a dependency of Lahore at the southern side of Multan. The *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* has Bhira. See Elliot, II, Appendix, pp. 439-40. It is on the left bank of the Jhelum below Pindadadankhan. It is often mentioned by Babur. General A. Cunningham remarks that until it was supplanted by Pindadadankhan, Bhira was the principal town in that part of the country. (Elliot, II, p. 392. Cunningham, *Anc. Geog. India*, p. 155).

¹⁴ The Qarmatians derive their name from Hamdan Qarmat. They did not conform to orthodox Islam. Gradually the sphere of their influence widened, and in January, 930 A.D., they performed their greatest exploit when they invaded Mecca, and carried off the Black Stone and other sacred relics. They had a contempt for the ritual of Islam and deprecated the worship of shrines and visits to holy places and had no objection to taking forbidden meat. (Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, pp. 401, 403, 404).

Broadly speaking the name Qarmatian stands for the great movement for social reform and justice based on equality, which swept through the Muslim world from the ninth to the twelfth centuries of the Christian era. The movement was controlled by the Ismaili dynasty, who founded the Fatimid anti-caliphate in 297-910.

It was based on reason, tolerance and equality, with a system of graduated initiation and the ritual of a gild which—encouraging the rise of the trade gild movement and universities—seems to have reached the West and to have influenced the formation of European gilds and free-masonry. (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, No. 29, p. 267; Elliot, II, pp. 571—75).



territory. Anandapala, who was an ally of the chief of Multan, refused permission and Mahmud directed his wrath against him. The Raja offered resistance, but he was overpowered and 'Utbi writes that the Sultan pursued the Rai over hill and dale, over the soft and hard ground of his territory, and his followers either became a feast to the rapacious wild beasts of the passes and plains or fled in distraction to the neighbourhood of Kashmir. Mahmud advanced upon Multan, captured it by assault and "levied upon the people twenty thousand *dirhams* with which to respite their sins."¹⁵

Just at this time Mahmud was disconcerted by the news that the king of Kashgar had invaded his territory. Forthwith he entrusted his Indian possessions to Sewakapala,¹⁶ (Nawasa Shah) a Hindu convert, and returned to Ghazni. But as soon as Mahmud turned his back, Sewakapala abjured Islam and withheld allegiance to Ghazni. This drew down upon him the wrath of the conqueror who marched against him and defeated him. He was deprived of his liberty and was compelled to pay 400 thousand *dirhams* as a penalty for his disloyalty and bad faith.

The sixth expedition (1008-09 A.D.) was aimed

¹⁵ This is 'Utbi's account. Firishta says, an annual tribute of twenty thousand gold *dinars* was levied upon him. (Briggs, I, p. 41).

¹⁶ The *Tabqat-i-Akbari* writes him as Sukhapala, the grand-son of the Raja of Hind. Firishta has various readings. 'Utbi calls him Nawasa Shah and his opinion we cannot summarily reject. Shah might have been a title conferred upon him by Mahmud as a mark of favour. He was probably the grand-son of Jayapala by a daughter, and this is the meaning of Nawasa because 'Utbi in his account of the Kanauj expedition makes Bhimapala, the great-grandson of Jayapala, complain that his uncle had been forcibly converted to Islam. Sir Henry Elliot is of opinion that he was probably given as a hostage to Mahmud, and it was during his stay at Ghazni that he was converted.

See Elliot, II, Appendix, p. 444.



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against the Raja of Lahore for having assisted Daud of Multan in his treasonable designs. Anandapala like the gallant Rana Sanga who contested the sovereignty of Hindustan with Babur on the plain of Khanua in 1527 A.D., organised a confederacy of the Rajas of Ujjain, Gawalior, Kalinjar, Kanauj, Delhi and Ajmer, and marched at the head of an invincible host to give battle to the foreigner. This is Firishta's account and does not represent a correct state of affairs. There is epigraphic evidence to prove that Anandapala invited his fellow-princes to join the confederacy, but it seems improbable that the states which Firishta mentions did actually take part in the campaign. Delhi and Ajmer were not yet powerful enough to lend support to the coalition formed by Anandapala. Whoever the actual participants in this war may have been, there is no doubt that Anandapala collected a large army to defend his country and his liberty against the Turks. The Hindus rapidly increased in numbers, and so great was the enthusiasm that wealthy Hindu ladies sold their jewellery and melted down their golden ornaments to furnish succour to their husbands, while the poor exhibited a remarkable spirit of sacrifice by contributing what little they had earned by manual labour. The Khokhars¹⁷ also threw in their lot with the Hindus.

Mahmud was deeply impressed by the earnestness of the Hindus. The forces of race, religion and patriotism were arrayed against him for the preservation of Hindu culture and civilization, the Hindu hearth and the home from the "barbarian inroad". Mahmud's six thousand archers at once began the attack, but they were repulsed by the 30,000 Khokhars who, bareheaded and barefooted

¹⁷ The Khokhars are a totally distinct tribe from the Ghakkars. The Khokhars are to be found in the Multan district and districts further to the north-west, towards the Indus, in the Sindsagar Doab.

The Ghakkars are still further northwards. Firishta always confounds the Khokhars with the Ghakkars.



with their daggers and spears in their hands, rushed fearlessly into the thick of the fight and slew and smote three or four thousand Muslims. Mahmud dismayed by this furious charge, withdrew and wished to stop the fight, but all of a sudden, the elephant, on which Anandapala was seated, took fright and fled from the field of battle. This was taken as a signal for flight, and the panic-stricken Hindus dispersed pell-mell in utter confusion in all directions. Abdulla Tai and Arslan Jazib, the generals of the Sultan, pursued the enemy for two days and nights. Their chase resulted in the capture of many Hindus, who were all put to death. An enormous booty, including a large number of elephants, fell into the hands of the victors.

Emboldened by success, Mahmud marched against the fort of Kangra, also known as Nagarkot or Bhimanagar.¹⁸ The fortress stood on the top

The conquest of
Nagarkot (1008-9
A.D.)

of a hill, where the Hindus had deposited untold treasures, all dedicated to their idols. The Muslims besieged the fortress and when the Hindus saw the enemy coming like a swarm of locusts, they opened the gate out of fear and 'fell on the earth, like sparrows before a hawk, or rain before lightning.' The defenders outside found their task a hopeless one, while those who were inside were mostly priests averse to bloodshed and war. Mahmud easily became master of the fortress, and seized immense booty, an estimate of which can be formed from the somewhat exaggerated account of it given by

¹⁸ The *Habib-us-Siyar* and the *Tabqat-i-Akbari* say that this expedition was undertaken in 400 A.H. (1009 A.D.). The *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, which is certainly a better authority, says that in pursuit of the enemy, Mahmud went as far as the fort called Bhimanagar. This shows that the campaign must have been continuous.

Nagarkot or Kangra is situated in the Kangra district in the Punjab. From very ancient times it has been a stronghold of Katoch Rajas. The temple plundered by Mahmud was probably situated within the fort and was not the temple of Devi in Bhawan, as has been supposed. (Imp. Gaz., XIV, p. 397).



Utbi. He writes: "The treasures were laden on the backs of as many camels as they could procure, and the officers carried away the rest. The stamped coin amounted to seventy thousand royal *dirhams*, and the gold and silver ingots amounted to seven hundred thousand four hundred *mans* in weight, besides wearing apparel and fine cloths of Sus, respecting which old men said they never remembered to have seen any so fine, soft, and embroidered. Among the booty was a house of white silver, like to the houses of rich men, the length of which was thirty yards and the breadth fifteen. It could be broken to pieces and put together again. And there was a canopy, made of the fine linen of Rum, forty yards long and twenty broad, supported on two golden and two silver poles which had been cast in moulds."¹⁰

Firishta writes that Mahmud carried off an enormous booty including 700,000 gold *dinars*, 700 *mans* of gold and silver plates, 200 *mans* of pure gold in ingots, 2,000 *mans* of unwrought silver and 20 *mans* of jewels, pearls, diamonds, rubies and other precious stones. It is difficult to accept the actual figures furnished by 'Utbi and Firishta, but there is no doubt that Mahmud acquired immense wealth by plunder during this expedition.

The Sultan returned in triumph to Ghazni where he displayed the "jewels and unbored pearls and rubies, shining like sparks, or like wine, congealed with ice, and emeralds like fresh springs of myrtle, and diamonds in size and weight like pomegranates." Envoys from foreign countries, his own nobles, and subjects gathered at Ghazni to behold the wealth, which far exceeded the treasures of the mightiest kings of the world.

The acquisition of vast treasures whetted the rapacity of these adventures, and they repeated their raids with astonishing frequency. The dissensions of the Rajput chiefs made their task easy, and though numerically the

Causes of his
rapid success.

¹⁰ 'Utbi, *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, Elliot, II p. 35.



Hindus were superior to their invaders, their inability to make common cause against their enemies frustrated their designs and rendered all resistance ineffectual. There was no feeling of national patriotism, not even an approach to it. Each prince had to fight for his own safety, and whenever a confederacy was organised, its members often fell out among themselves and disregarded all rules of discipline. The pride of the clan or the tribe interfered with the discipline of the coalition, and this lack of obedience, so fatal to the success of a military campaign, paralysed the plans of leaders. The need of defending their hearths and homes drew them together, but self-interest predominated over the interests of Hindustan. The Muslims eager to obtain wealth and destroy idolatory never experienced dearth of recruits on account of the religious passions which they could excite. After the conquest of Ghor, Mahmud marched towards Multan in 1010 A.D. to punish the rebellious chief Daud whom he defeated and imprisoned in the fort of Gurak. Three years later, he proceeded against Bhimapala of Nardin or Nandanath,²⁰ whom 'Utbi calls "Nidar Bhima,"

²⁰ Firishta places this expedition after the expedition to Thanesar. According to him the reigning chief was the grandson of Jayapala. He makes no attempt to identify Nindunah. He simply says the fortress of Nindunah was situated on the mountains of Balnat. Balnat is a mountain overhanging the Jhelum. The *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, which is more reliable, places this expedition after the Balnat expedition. Nizamuddin Ahmad says (Biblioth. Ind., p. 8): "In the year 404 A.H., the Sultan marched against the fort of Nandanah which is situated among the Balnat hills. Naro Jayapala left tried warriors for the protection of the fort and went himself into the valley of Kashmir. The Sultan, on arrival, surrounded the fort and began to run mines and to take all other measures necessary for its capture. The people in the fort surrendered it on receiving assurances of safety."

Mr. De in a foot-note to his translation of the *Tabqat* says, Naro Jayapala is probably Trilochanapala, the grandson of Jayapala. Sir Henry Elliot calls him Bhimapala. 'Utbi in his *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, gives an account of this expedition. It is difficult to fix the site of Nandanah or Nindunah. There is



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captured his fortress and seized vast booty. The Raja fled to the mountain valleys of Kashmir, whither he was pursued by the Muslims. Mahmud appointed his own governor, and after plundering Kashmir and compelling a great many people to embrace Islam he returned to Ghazni.

But far more important than these raids was his expedition against Thanesar in the year 1014 A.D.

Against Thane-
sar.

The object of the expedition is thus described by 'Utbi: "The Sultan learnt that in the country of Thanesar there were large elephants of the Sailaman (Ceylon) breed, celebrated for military purposes. The chief of Thanesar was on this account obstinate in his infidelity and denial of God. So the Sultan marched against him with his valiant warriors, for the purpose of planting the standards of Islam and extirpating idolatory." On the banks of the river which flowed below the town the Hindus fought desperately against the invaders, but they were defeated, and so terrible was the carnage that the water of the stream became red with the blood of the slain. The fort of Thanesar was captured and the city and its temples were plundered.²¹

a great divergence of views with regard to its location among scholars.

It is probably the same place as is mentioned in Wassaf as a noted town in the Jud hills.

²¹ The river mentioned is probably Sarāswatī which flows near Thanesar.

Firishta's account (Briggs, I pp. 50—53) of this expedition is inaccurate both in date and details. He places it in the year 1011 A.D. and writes that Anandapala on being informed of Mahmud's projected invasion of Thanesar addressed to him a letter of remonstrance to which he replied that the duty of the Muslims was to engage in *jihad* against the idolaters. The Raja of Delhi, on receipt of this threatening message, appealed to his brother-princes to check Mahmud's advance against Thanesar. But Mahmud forestalled the Hindus and captured the place. Then he wished to proceed against Delhi but he was dissuaded from doing so by his nobles. All this is apocryphal, for

The Conquest
of Kanauj.

These splendid victories spread Mahmud's fame all over the Muslim world, and the Ghazni of the faith found no difficulty in attracting to his banner zealous recruits from Transoxiana, Khorasan, and Turkistan. Ardent spirits offered themselves as volunteers to fight in the crusades against infidelity, and the armies of Mahmud soon swelled to enormous dimensions. With large forces at his beck and call, he now determined to invade Kanauj, renowned in the East as the imperial capital of Hindustan. In 1018 A.D. he started from Ghazni, crossed all the rivers of the Punjab, and after traversing impervious forests crossed the Jumna on the 2nd December, 1018 A.D. He captured all the forts that blocked his way. When he reached Baran (modern Bulandshahr),²² the local Raja, Hara Datta, tendered his submission and with ten thousand men embraced Islam. A copperplate belonging to this line of kings has been discovered here which makes mention of Hara Datta's submission to Mahmud. The Sultan then marched against Kulchand, the chief of Mahawan²³ on

Anandapala could not possibly be living at this time. Delhi was at this time an obscure town.

Al-Beruni makes no mention of it and 'Utbi says nothing about it. For Mahmud's Indian plans and campaigns Al-Beruni and 'Utbi are certainly better authorities than Firishta. See Carr Stephen's *Archæology of Delhi*, pp. 10-11.

²² Nizamuddin and Firishta both have reversed the order of this march. Firishta says, the Sultan first went to Kanauj and from there to Meerut, then to Mahawan and then to Mathura and then against Chand Rai. This order is wrong. The *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, the *Rauzat-us-Safa* and the *Habib-us-Siyar* give the correct order which has been followed in this work.

Firishta is wrong in calling Hara Datta Raja of Meerut. (Briggs I, p. 57.)

Stanley Lane-Poole (*Mediaeval India*, pp. 24-25) has indistinctly followed the order of this march. He states in a summary fashion that Mahmud crossed the Jumna, plundered Mathura and reached Kanauj.

²³ Mahawan is now the headquarters of a tahsil in the Muttra district.



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the Jumma. The Hindus put forth a gallant fight, but they were defeated and nearly 50 thousand men were killed and drowned in the river. In a fit of despair Kulchand slew his wife with a dagger, and then thrust it into his own body to escape humiliation. A vast booty including 185 elephants fell into the hands of Sultan, who after this victory proceeded against Mathura, the sacred city of the Hindus. 'Utbi describes Mathura as a city full of temples, solidly built, and of exquisite design, but neither massiveness nor exquisiteness availed to save them from Muslim iconoclasm. They were razed to the ground by the orders of the conqueror who captured immense booty. From the following description of Mathura recorded by 'Utbi the reader will form an idea of the grandeur of that ancient city in those times.

"In that place, in the city, there was a place of worship of the Indian people; and when he came to that place he saw a city, of wonderful fabric and conception, so that one might say this is a building of paradise, but its accidents or qualities could only come by the aid of the infernals an intelligent man would hardly receive favourably the account of it. They had brought immense stones, and had laid a level foundation upon high stairs (or steps). Around it and at its sides they had placed one thousand castles, built of stone, which they had made idol temples, and had (cemented) fastened them well. And in the midst of the city they had built a temple higher than all, to delineate the beauty and decoration of which the pens of all writers and the pencils of all painters would be powerless and would not be able to attain to the power of fixing their minds upon it and considering it. In the memoir which the Sultan wrote of this journey he thus declares, that if any one should undertake to build a fabric like that, he would expend thereon one hundred thousand packets of a thousand *dinars*, and would not complete it in two hundred years, with the assistance of the most ingenious masters (architects).



And amongst the mass of idols there were five idols made of pure gold, of the height of five cubits in the air; and of this collection of idols there were (especially) two, on one of which a jacinth was arranged, such a one that if the Sultan had seen it exposed in the *bazar*, he would have considered as underpriced at fifty thousand *dinars*, and would have bought it with great eagerness. And upon the other idol there was a sapphire (hyacinth) of one solid piece, of azure water, of the value of four hundred weights of fine *miskals* (five weights of a dram and a half) each, and from the two feet of an idol they obtained the weight of 4,00,000 *miskals* of gold. And the idols of silver were a hundred times more, so that it occupied those who estimated their standard weight a long time in weighing them. They devastated (all that city), and passed therefrom towards Kanauj....²⁴

Mahmud's appreciation of Hindu architecture did not make him pause in his devastating march through the fertile plains of the Doab. The "cowardly Hindus" of Mathura fled to save their lives, leaving their holy shrines at the mercy of their ruthless enemy. Mahmud seized immense booty which consisted of 98,300 *miskals* of gold from idols, the silver idols 200 in number, two rubies valued at 5,000 *dinars*, a sapphire weighing 450 *miskals* and other valuable things which a magnificent and historic city could yield. After the sack of Mathura the soldiers of Ghazni marched to Brindaban, a town fortified by a number of forts. The chief of the place fled at the approach of the invading army, leaving the forts and temples to be sacked by Mahmud who seized enormous booty.

Mahmud, then proceeded towards Kanauj and appeared before its gates in January, 1019 A.D. According to the Muslim chronicler, Kanauj contained seven forts and ten thousand temples, which had

²⁴ *Kitab-i-Yamini*, translated by Rev. Reynolds, pp. 455-56.



existed, so the belief ran, from times immemorial. Rajyapala, the Parihar Raja of Kanauj, submitted without offering any resistance. The Sultan captured the seven forts in a single day and sacked the whole town. 'Utbi writes that there were in Kanauj nearly ten thousand temples in which the idolators performed their worship. They were destroyed; the inhabitants were slain and their wealth was seized. Passing through the country of Bundelkhand, Mahmud returned to Ghazni. On his way back he captured the forts²⁵ of Munj, Asni and Sharwa and effectively overcame the resistance that was offered to him. The booty which he carried with him to Ghazni amounted to 3,000,000 *dirhams*, 55,000 slaves and 350 elephants.

This abject surrender of the Parihar chieftain gave umbrage to his fellow-Rajput princes, who regarded it as highly derogatory to their honour. Ganda, the Chandela Raja of Kalinjar, was the first to give expression to his disapproval of this pusillanimous conduct.²⁶ His son Vidyadhara, with the help of

²⁵ Munj is 14 miles north-east of Etawah; Asni is 6 miles west of Etawah; Sharwa is probably Shishwagarh in Bundelkhand.

²⁶ *Tabqat-i-Akbari* (Biblioth. Ind.) p. 12.
Briggs, I. p. 63.

'Utbi does not mention the name of the Raja, but he says (Elliot, II, p. 47) that the Chandela Raja was always engaged in a career of victory, and at one time he fought against the Raja of Kanauj, who was in the end compelled to retreat. For an account of the war between Ganda and Mahmud we have to rely upon later historians, for 'Utbi's narrative abruptly breaks off here.

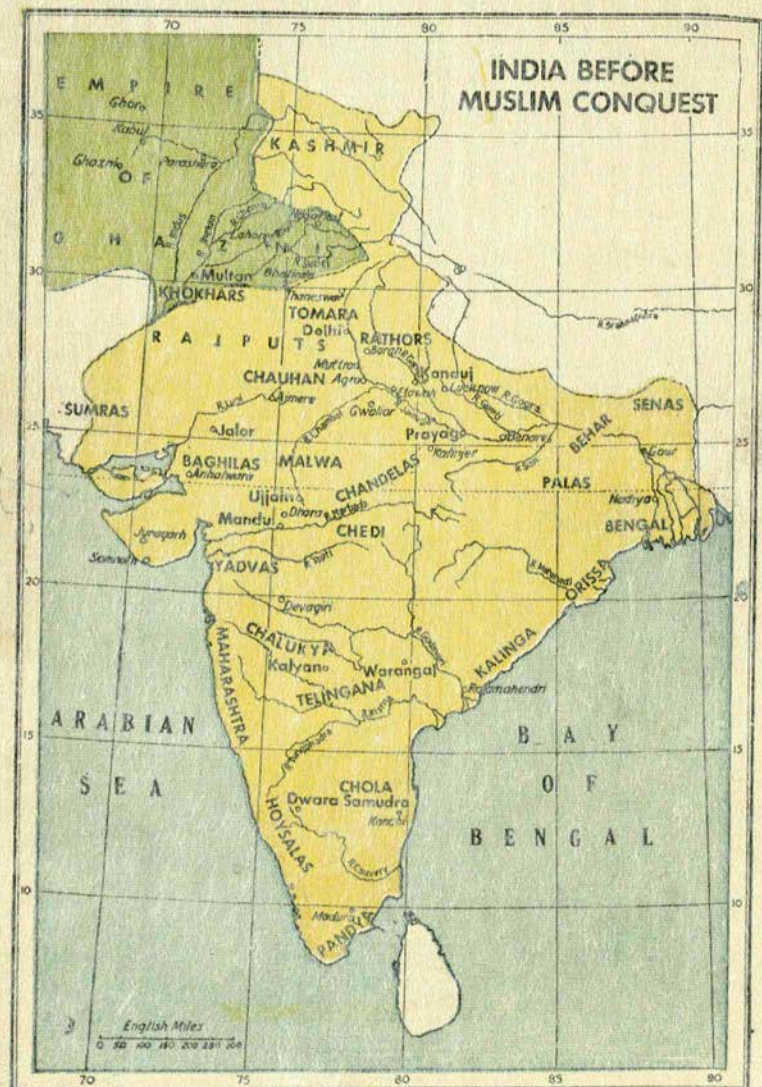
There is serious disagreement among historians regarding this expedition. Vincent Smith takes the view stated above. But some Indian scholars have severely criticised Nizamuddin's version on the ground that he is a later writer. To assert anything dogmatically on this ground would be absurd, for Nizamuddin's sources were sometimes excellent. 'Utbi, who is a contemporary writer, is very brief and does not give us much



the prince of Gwalior, attacked Rajyapala, and slew him in battle. When Mahmud received intelligence of the murder of his vassal, his anger knew no bounds, and he resolved to chastise the Chandela prince. He left Ghazni in the autumn of 1019 A.D. and crossed the Jumna, where, to his utter astonishment, he found the Parihar chieftain Trilochanapala encamped to assist Ganda, the leader of the confederacy against Rajyapala. The Sultan advanced into the Chndela country in the teeth of opposition, and found Ganda ready for battle with a large army, which according to Firishta, consisted of 36,000 horse, 45,000 foot and 640 elephants, and according to Nizamuddin Ahmad, 36,000 horse

help. Dr. Majumdar's account of Rajyapala materially differs from that usually accepted. He says there is no mention of Rajyapala being killed by the Indian chiefs for his pusillanimity in Al-Utbi's account. Dr. Majumdar thinks that according to Dubkund inscription Rajyapala was killed by the Kachhapaghata chief Arjuna, an ally or feudatory of the Chandela chief Vidyadhara, son of Ganda. He doubts the story related by Nizamuddin Ahmad and expresses the opinion that the Chandela chief had no justification in finding fault with Rajyapala when he had himself fled before Mahmud's army both before and after this event. Mr. C. Vaidya has expressed a similar view in his 'History of Mediaeval India.' (Vol. III, pp. 81—86). He writes: "The course of events was this, in the 12th expedition against Kanauj (1019) Rajyapala did not submit but fled to Bari. In the 13th expedition Mahmud led an army against Rajyapala and Bari and conquering him in the battle of the Rahib accepted his submission on condition of payment of tribute. In May, Rajyapala was attacked and killed by Nanda (Ganda) assisted by Gwalior which Mahmud learnt at Lahore in March 1022 and he led an expedition in December 1022 against Gwalior and Kalinjar and exacted submission from both in January, 1023. In this view Ganda does not appear to be craven-hearted as he is made to appear." Mr. Vaidya's patriotic assumption is not supported by evidence. Dr. Majumdar rejects Nizamuddin's version, because it is not supported by 'Utbi who is not a detailed chronicler. He does not himself adduce any evidence to prove conclusively the correctness of this view.

See Dr. Majumdar's article on 'The Gurjara Pratiharas' in the Journal of the Department of Letters, Volume X (1923, pp. 1—76), published by the Calcutta University.



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145,000 foot and 390 elephants.²⁷ When Mahmud saw the huge army, he regretted his hasty decision, and characteristically like a zealot of the faith, knelt down upon a mound and prayed to God to grant victory to the banner of Islam. But luckily for him during the night Ganda became hopeless of success, and fled from the field of battle at night, leaving behind his entire baggage and other materials of war.²⁸ The Chandela camp was plundered by the soldiery of Mahmud, and a large booty was captured, which included 580 elephants. In 1021-22 A.D. Mahmud again returned to India. He laid siege to Gwalior and having compelled the submission of its chief proceeded towards Kalinjar, the famous fortress of the Chandela Raja Ganda. Ganda fully understood the strength of his enemy. He elected to conclude a peace with the Sultan.²⁹ Having accepted immense riches and jewels, the victorious Sultan returned to Ghazni.

But the most important expedition was directed against Somnath in the year 416 A.H. (1025 A.D.).

Expedition against Somnath. Having heard of the fabulous wealth which this temple was supposed to contain, Mahmud resolved to proceed against it. He left Ghazni with 30,000 horse and volunteers and marching through difficult country by way of Multan reached the town of Ajmer, which was

²⁷ Tabqat, Biblioth. Ind., p. 12.

²⁸ Mr. Vaidya (History of Mediaeval India, Volume III, p. 86) doubts Ganda's running away at night when he had such a large army at his command. 'Utbi, whose authority Mr. Vaidya recognizes, says that Chand Rai (Ganda) departed secretly with his property, elephants and treasure to the hill country which was exceedingly lofty and concealed himself in impenetrable forests. (Elliot, II, pp. 48-49).

²⁹ Nizamuddin and Firishta both say that in order to please Mahmud by means of flattery, Ganda sent some panegyrical verses in Hindi, which were very much liked by him. In return, Mahmud conferred upon him the government of 15 forts. (Briggs, I, p. 67. Tabqat, p. 14).



thoroughly sacked, and the whole country was laid waste.³⁰ From Ajmer the Sultan marched towards Nehrwala, which he captured without much opposition from the chief of the place, Raja Bhima, and in a few days stood before the gates of Somnath. Al-Qazwini³¹ who borrowed his account from *Kamil-ut-Tawarikh* of Ibn Asir, describes the temple in these words: "Among the wonders of that place was the temple in which was placed the idol called Somnath. This idol was in the middle of the temple without anything to support it from below, or to suspend it from above. It was held in the highest honour among the Hindus, and whoever beheld it floating in the air was struck with amazement, whether he was a Musalman or an infidel. The Hindus used to go on pilgrimage to it, whenever there was an eclipse of the moon, and would then assemble there to the number of more than a hundred thousand. They believed that the souls of men used to meet there after separation from the body, and that the idol used to incorporate them at its pleasure in other bodies, in accordance with the doctrine of transmigration. The ebb and flow of the tide was considered to be the worship paid to the idol by the sea. Everything of the most precious was brought there as offering, and the temple was endowed with more than 10,000 villages. There is a river (the Ganges) which is called sacred, between which and Somnath the distance is 200 *parasangas*. They used to bring water of this river to Somnath every day, and wash the temple with it. A thousand Brahmans were employed

³⁰ It is not clear on whose authority Mr. H. B. Sarda says that Mahmud was wounded, and raising the siege he retired to Anhilwad in 1024 A.D.

³¹ Asar-ul-Bilaud, Elliot, I, pp. 97-98. Also Elliot, II, pp. 468-69.

For further descriptions of the temple see Elliot, II, pp. 471, 472, 476.

For the legend to which the name of the idol is traceable see Al-Beruni's India, II, p. 103.



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in worshipping the idol and attending on the visitors, and 500 damsels sung and danced at the door—all these were maintained upon the endowments of the temple. The edifice was built upon fifty-six pillars of teak, covered with lead. The shrine of the idol was dark, but was lighted by jewelled chandeliers of great value. Near it was a chain of gold weighing 200 maunds. When a portion of the night closed, this chain used to be shaken like bells to rouse a fresh lot of Brahmans to perform worship.”³²

Mahmud invested the fortress, which stood on the seashore and was washed by the waves. The Rajput princes, from far and wide, gathered to save their cherished idol. The garrison scoffed at the besiegers in the fond hope that their deity would completely annihilate the invaders. The Muslims began the attack with the usual battle cry of *Allah-u-Akbar* and scaled the walls of the fortress. The Hindus repelled the assault with such stubborn courage that the assailants had to recede from the position they had occupied. Next morning, the besiegers tried to scale the walls again, but they were hurled down with irresistible force by the defenders who had now resolved to fight to the last man. Meanwhile reinforcements came under Bhima Deva, king of Gujarat, which inspired the Hindus with fresh courage.³³ Seeing these heavy odds arrayed against him, Mahmud was filled with dismay. He jumped down from his horse and again addressed a fervent appeal to the Most High for assistance. This dramatic display of his devotion to the cause touched

³² Somnath Patan or the town of Somnath is situated on the west coast of Kathiawad and is at present included in the Junagarh territory. The old temple is in ruins and a new temple has been built by Ahalyabai near the site of the old but the grandeur of the temple is still indicated by its ruins. The temple destroyed by Mahmud was probably built by Bhoja Parmar of Malwa as is evidenced by an inscription.

³³ The Muslim chroniclers write Bhima as Dabshilim India, Vol. II, p. 103.



the hearts of the ignorant zealots of Islam who followed in his wake, and with one voice they declared their resolve to fight and die for him. The battle raged loud and fierce and a scene of terrible carnage followed, and about 5,000 Hindus lost their lives. Mahmud then entered the temple which was a superb structure, whose lofty roof was supported by 56 pillars, all beautifully worked and studded with precious stones. Approaching the idol, he ordered two fragments to be broken off which were sent to Ghazni, where they were thrown down at the threshold of the great mosque to give satisfaction to the true believers. It is related that when Mahmud was thus breaking the idol, the Brahmans offered him immense wealth, only if he spared what remained of their god, but the champion of Islam replied with callous indifference that he did not want his name to go down to posterity as Mahmud the idol-seller, instead of Mahmud the breaker of idols.³⁴ All appeals for pity, all offers of wealth by the pious votaries of a faith that gave solace to millions of people all over India, were made in vain to this relentless fanatic, whose next blow smashed the sacred *lingam* into pieces. The Muslim soldiery rifled the treasures of the temple and Mahmud easily acquired possession

³⁴ Modern writers both Mr. Habib and Dr. Nazim refute this story related by Firishta.

Mr. Habib (*Mahmud of Ghazni*, p. 53) says that the story is impossible. Besides the fact that it finds no mention in contemporary writings, the idol of Somnath was a solid *lingam* and not a hollow statue. Dr. Nazim (*Mahmud of Ghazna*, p. 221) whose researches are more minute and detailed, writes that the hollowness of the *lingam* suggested by the story is a fiction. There is no mention of this story in early authorities. He says if it had actually happened Farrukhi of all others could not have failed to utilize such a theme in the Qasida in which he gives a lengthy account of this expedition. From Al-Beruni's statement it is clear that parts of the idol were broken off and there is nothing improbable in the rejection by Mahmud of the offer made by the Brahmanas, who were anxious that he should not touch their god. In an age swayed by religious fanaticism such things are not impossible.



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of a large heap of diamonds, rubies and pearls of incalculable value. Firishta conveys the impression that the idol was hollow inside, and as soon as Mahmud struck it with his club, jewels and precious stones came out. This statement is open to doubt for Al-Beruni, who knew better than Firishta, writes that the *lingam* was made of solid stone, the upper part of which was broken by the Sultan and the lower part was sent to Ghazni. He writes: "The image was destroyed by Prince Mahmud in 416 A.H. He ordered the upper part to be broken and the remainder to be transported to his residence, Ghaznin, with all its coverings and trappings of gold, jewels and embroidered garments. Part of it has been thrown into the hippodrome of the town, together with the *Chakraswamin*, an idol of bronze, that had been brought from Thaneshwar. Another part of the idol of Somnath lies before the door of the mosque of Ghaznin, on which people rub their feet to clean them from dirt and wet."³⁵ Forbes in his *Rasmala* makes no mention of the hollowness of the idol and simply says that it was broken into pieces and the 'work of spoliation continued and was rewarded by the discovery, in the vaults below the adytum of untold treasure.'³⁶

Thus did Mahmud satisfy to the utmost the Muslim sentiment of glory, and in the eyes of his followers, he figured as a devoted champion of the faith. They followed him without a murmur wherever he led them. The Raja of Anhilwara was attacked next for taking part in the defence of Somnath.³⁷ He sought refuge in the fort of Khandah, forty *farsakhs* from Somnath, which was encircled by the sea. Mahmud forded the

³⁵ Mr. Habib, Mahmud of Ghaznin, p. 53; Dr. Nazim, Mahmud of Ghazna, p. 221.

³⁶ Forbes, *Rasmala*, Vol. I, p. 77.

³⁷ The author of the *Habib-us-Siyar*. (Elliot IV, pp. 184-85) writes that the Sultan entrusted Somnath to Dabshilim or Devashilam, a Hindu prince who agreed to pay tribute. See Khondamir's account of the siege of Somnath in the same work. (Elliot, IV, pp. 180-83.)



sea at low tide in spite of the warnings of his guides. The Raja, on hearing of his approach, fled and the country was easily subdued. The invaders entered the town, massacred the males and seized the women who were reduced to slavery. It is stated by some chroniclers that Mahmud was so captivated by the climate of Gujarat and the wealth and beauty of its inhabitants that he wished to transfer his court from Ghazni to Anhilwara, but his warriors protested against such a course. They told him that the project was fraught with dire consequences to the empire which he had founded in Western Asia with so much sacrifice of Muslim blood. It is difficult to accept the story, for Mahmud must have known that his vast dominion could not have been managed from such a distant base as Gujarat. The country was entrusted to Bhimadeva and Mahmud made preparations for the homeward march. Fearing the power of the Rajputs, Mahmud adopted a more westerly route and proceeded to Ghazni by way of Sindh. Even this route proved dangerous, for Mahmud was misled by his guide who was one of the priests of the temple of Somnath. After wandering in the desert and suffering great privations, the army at last reached Ghazni in the spring of 1026 A.D.

The victory of Somnath added fresh laurels to Mahmud's brow. To him and his followers it was a triumph of the cause to which they were so intensely devoted. The Khalifa who rejoiced in the success of Muslim arms in an infidel land sent letters and robes of honour for him and his sons. The Muslim world rang with the praises of Mahmud and he appeared to many as a great hero who had appeared upon the earth to extirpate infidelity and establish the true faith. This accounts for the legends and stories which have clustered round his name.

The last expedition was undertaken in 417 A.H. (102 A.D.)³⁸ against the Jats of the Salt range. After

³⁸ Some writers say Mahmud set out on this expedition in the beginning of 418 H. (March 1027).



the break up of the kingdom of Lahore the Jats had grown very powerful, and begun to make devastating raids into the neighbouring districts. They had molested Mahmud's army on its return journey from Somnath, and it was to punish them for their audacious act that he undertook this expedition. Nizamuddin and Firishta both agree that the Sultan ordered 1,400 boats to be built each of which was furnished with arms and guarded by 20 archers with bows and arrows, grenades and naphtha. The Jats also had a flotilla of eight thousand boats to meet the Turks, but they were defeated and many of them were put to the sword.³⁹ Some writers have estimated the number of boats at 4,000 but both figures seem to be exaggerated.

Mahmud was a great king. It was no mean achievement to develop a small mountain principality into a large and prosperous kingdom by sheer force of arms. It is true, circumstances favoured his rise, and the peculiar condition of the neighbouring powers in the north, which had lost their capacity to hold down aspiring chieftains, afforded ample scope for the exercise of his political and military genius. The fall of the Samanids, the ever-present mutual bickerings and dissensions of the Hindu princes, their notorious inability to combine against a common enemy, the waning power of Persia, and the extraordinary zeal of the Turks—callow converts to Islam—all these were factors which contributed to his success, and made every expedition a triumph for him and the faith which he espoused. It

³⁹ Briggs, I, pp. 81-82.

Tabqat-i-Akbari (Biblioth. Ind., pp. 16-17).

This account is not supported by any other historian. As Sir Henry Elliot says (II, Appendix, p. 477), its chief improbability consists in Mahmud's being able to organise a fleet of 1,400 boats at Multan and its being opposed by 8,000 boats constructed by the predatory Jats. Again, it is doubtful why Mahmud, who was so strong on land, should choose to fight a naval engagement.



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was impossible to occupy Hindustan permanently—indeed it was not the objective on which Mahmud had set his heart. Besides, the Turks still fondly looked back to their verdant fields and meadows in the Afghan hills and found the sultry climate of India unbearable. All that Mahmud wanted was to compel the custodians of temples and occupants of thrones to disgorge to him the vast wealth which they possessed, and when this was done, he returned to his native land, unmindful of annexation or permanent conquest. But still the task was a formidable one. The difficulties presented by man and nature were almost insurmountable, but Mahmud was made of the stuff of which martyrs are made. He recked nothing of personal comfort, and his march through the sandy deserts of Rajputana to the temple of Somnath in far-off Gujarat, testifies to the boldness of conception, vigour of mind, and undaunted courage against heavy odds. His first expedition to India had revealed to him the weakness of the Hindu political system. The great Napoleon, used to say, "In war all is mental," and Mahmud's whole military career proves how consistently he acted according to the spirit that underlies this dictum.

The fear of a Central Asian invasion often haunted his mind, and the problem of safeguarding his northern frontier, which was always exposed to attack, gave him not a little trouble, but he maintained his position with success, and was ever ready to try conclusions with any one who challenged his authority, or encroached upon his domain. A born military leader, he never shrank from war, rather he took delight in it and was always sustained in his endeavours by the thought that he was doing it all for the glory of Islam. When the Turks invaded the province of Baward, Mahmud's generals, whom they had defeated over and over again, entreated him to captain the expedition himself. Forthwith he marched against them and inflicted a crushing defeat upon them in 1027 A.D. A few other conquests crowned the career of this extraordinary man, and at



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last he died on Rabi-us-Sani 23, 421 A.H. (30th April, 1030 A.D.), at Ghazni at the age of sixty, leaving untold treasures and vast possessions behind.⁴⁰ At his death his kingdom extended from Bokhara and Samargand to Gujarat and Kanauj in the Doab and included Afghanistan, Transoxiana, Khorasan, Tabaristan, Sistan, Kashmir and a large portion of North-Western India. But it did not last long. Within seven years of the conqueror's death his work was completely undone by the Saljuq Turks who advanced towards the Afghan regions with irresistible force.

Although a great conqueror, Mahmud was no barbarian. Himself illiterate, he appreciated the works of art and freely extended his patronage to men of letters. He listened to the creations of poets and the conversations

Estimate of Mahmud.

of divines with great interest and drew around himself, by means of his lavish generosity, a galaxy of eminent poets and scholars. From all parts of Asia, learned men resorted to his court and sang the praises of the conqueror, who even in the midst of an arduous campaign, snatched a brief interval to listen to a song or an enthralling quatrain. Among these men were some leading figures of the eastern world of letters, such as the versatile Al Beruni, the mathematician, philosopher, astronomer and Sanskrit scholar; 'Utbi, the historian, Farabi, the philosopher, and Baihaki, the author of the *Tarikh-i-Subuktagin*, whom Stanley Lane Poole aptly describes as the "Oriental Pepys." It was an age of poetry, and some of the poets who lived at Mahmud's court were well-known all over Asia. The most celebrated among them were Uzari, a native of Raye in Persia, who received from Mahmud 14,000 *dirhams* for writing a short panegyric; Asadi Tusi, a native of Khorasan, Unsuri, the greatest genius of the age, whom, as Firishta says, 400 poets and learned men, besides the students of the University of Ghazni,

⁴⁰ This is the date which his tomb at Ghazni bears.



acknowledged as their master; Asjadi and Farukhi, a pupil of Unsuri, who obtained a pension from the Sultan. But the most famous of all these was Firdausi, the author of the world-famed *Shahnama*, whose great epic has placed Mahmud among the immortals of history. Firdausi had been promised 60 thousand *mishkals* of gold for completing the *Shahnama*, but when the great work was finished, the poet received only 60 thousand silver dirhams.⁴¹ At this he was so offended that he wrote, after the fashion of Voltaire, a satire upon the Sultan, thus justifying the ill name given by Horace to all writers of verse as the irritable breed, and left Ghazni for good.⁴² Mahmud at last made amends for his mistake; he sent 60 thousand gold coins with a robe of state and an apology for his improper treatment, but when this belated present arrived, the poet's corpse was being carried in a bier to the grave.

Mahmud was stern and implacable in administering justice and was always ready to protect the person and property of his subjects. An anecdote, illustrative of his

⁴¹ Firdausi was born at Tus in Khorasan about 339 A.H. (950 A.D.) and died in 411 A.H. (1020 A.D.). Mahmud had promised him a handsome reward, but he was deprived of it through the intrigues of Ayaz, one of his favourites, who entertained ill-feelings towards the poet. (Elliot, IV, pp. 190—92.)

⁴² This is Browne's rendering of Firdausi's satire in his "Literary History of Persia":

Long years this Shahnama I toiled to complete,
That the king might award me some recompense meet,
But naught save a heart writhing with grief and despair,
Did I get from those promises empty as air!
Had the sire of the king been some prince of renown,
My forehead had surely been graced by a crown!
Were his mother a lady of high pedigree,
In silver and gold had I stood to knee!
But, being by birth not a prince but a boor,
The praise of the noble he could not endure!



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desire to do justice, has come down to us, which relates that one day a petitioner complained to the Sultan that his nephew was showing improper attentions to his wife, and that he did not desist from visiting her in spite of his remonstrances. Mahmud bade the man come to him when the evil-minded person next paid a visit to his wife. The man obeyed the royal command, and when he appeared again to complain, the Sultan covered himself with a loose cloak and accompanied him to his house. He put out the candle, lest pity and affection should deter him from doing what he deemed his duty, and severed the offender's head from his body. Once Prince Masud was sued by a merchant of Ghazni and he could escape being called to court by the Qazi by making payment of money. The story of the old merchant woman who reprimanded Mahmud for conquering lands which he could not properly administer is too well known to need mention. There is no need to reiterate the charge of avarice brought against the Sultan. The Muslim chroniclers positively assert that when he was about to die, he ordered all his hoards to be placed before his eyes.⁴³ The same authorities say that he grieved over his impending separation from them and sighed bitterly, but did not give the smallest thing to anybody. The charge cannot be refuted. Mahmud loved money passionately and for its sake he waged so many wars in distant and inhospitable lands. But it can be pleaded in extenuation that if he loved money, he also spent it lavishly. He promoted learning by establishing a university at Ghazni, a library, and a museum adorned with the trophies of war, which he brought from conquered lands. It was through his liberality that beautiful buildings arose at Ghazni, which made her one of the most beautiful cities of the East.

Mahmud was richly endowed with creative genius. He governed his subjects according to the principles of

⁴³ Mirkhond, *Rauzat-us-Safa*, Elliot, IV, pp. 134-35.

Tabqat-i-Akbari, Biblioth. Ind. p. 17.

justice, protected commerce and maintained order in the lands so that caravans could freely pass between Khorasan and Lahore. The provincial governors were kept under firm control and were not allowed to oppress the people. His brother Nasr, who was governor of Nishapur, was a capable and public spirited officer, and 'Utbi writes of him, "so noble, pure, kind, liberal was his disposition that a harsh word was never heard from him during his whole life, and he offered no wrong or violence to any one."⁴⁴ Mahmud carefully watched the activities of the market and sent his officers to examine the weights and measures used by tradesmen. Pious benefactions were also made and 'Utbi informs us that 'he expended nearly one thousand *dinars* in promoting justice and gladness for the people and in honourable and pious liberalities."

Professor Browne thus describes Mahmud's character:—

"As regards Mahmud's character, we naturally find in the verses of his court-poets (save such as were disappointed of their hopes like Firdausi) and in the works of state historians nothing but the most exaggerated praise, but Ibnu'l-Athir (under the year A.H. 421, A.D. 1030) in his obituary notice of this monarch says, after praising him for his intelligence, devoutness, virtue, patronage of learned men, and strenuousness in waging war on the unbelievers, that his one fault was love of money and a certain lack of scruple in his methods of obtaining it. "There was in him, he says, 'nothing which could be blamed save that he would seek to obtain money in every way.' Thus, to give one instance, being informed of a certain man from Nishapur that he was of great opulence and copious wealth, he summoned him to Ghazna and said to him, 'I have heard that you are a Carmathian heretic.' 'I am no Carmathian,' replied the unfor-

⁴⁴ Reynolds, *Kitab-i-Yamini*, pp. 485-86.



fortunate man; 'But I have wealth wherefrom what is desired (by your Majesty) may be taken, so that I be cleared of this name.' So the Sultan took from him some portion of his wealth, and provided him with a document testifying to the soundness of his religious views. In the eyes of most Muslims, so great a champion of the faith, one who was such a scourge to idolators and so conspicuous an iconoclast, is raised above all criticism; but there is no doubt that Ibnu'l Athir has laid his finger on a weak spot in the Sultan's character and that, besides being greedy of wealth (which, no doubt, largely explains the persistence with which he prosecuted his Indian campaign), he was fanatical, cruel to Muslim heretics as well as to Hindoos (of whom he slew an incalculable number), fickle and uncertain in temper, and more notable as an irresistible conqueror than as a faithful friend or magnanimous foe."⁴⁵

It is not difficult to determine Mahmud's place in history. The foregoing remarks have made it abundantly clear what a great personality he was. To the Musalmans of his day, he was a Ghazi, a champion of the faith, who tried to extirpate infidelity in heathen lands. To the Hindus, he is to this day an inhuman tyrant, a veritable Hun, who destroyed their most sacred shrines and wantonly wounded their religious susceptibilities. But the unbiassed enquirer who keeps in mind the peculiar circumstances of the age, must record a different verdict. In his estimate, Mahmud was a great leader of men, a just and upright ruler according to his own lights, an intrepid and gifted soldier, a dispenser of justice, a patron of letters, and deserves to be ranked among the greatest kings of the world.

But his work did not endure. In his scheme, consolidation did not keep pace with conquest, and that

⁴⁵ History of Persian Literature, pp. 118-19.



is why the mighty fabric he had built up, crumbled to pieces in the hands of his weak successors. As Lane-Poole correctly points out, no new institutions or methods of government were initiated by him, and he did not attempt to organise and consolidate what he had acquired. The elements of decay silently gathered strength; they began to assert themselves as soon as his master hand was stiffened in death. The empire was a huge agglomeration of peoples, who could be held in check only by the argus-eyed Sultan. The enemies whom he had subdued were only waiting for an opportunity to strike a blow for independence. The vast wealth, which he had brought to Ghazni, fostered luxury, which, in its turn demoralised the brave men who had fearlessly done battle for him. The court of Ghazni became a nursery of weaklings, from whom the sceptre was snatched by those who knew how to wield it.

Al beruni was born in the territory of Khiva in 973 A.D. When Khiva was conquered by Mahmud,

Al Beruni on
India.

he was taken prisoner and brought to Ghazni. He came to India in the train of Mahmud and wrote a full account of the social and political condition of the Hindus which throws much light upon the history of that age. Al Beruni was a versatile scholar who took a deep interest in Hindu learning, conversed with Brahmana philosophers and was profoundly impressed by their intellectual subtlety and metaphysical speculations. His sincerity is transparent and his convictions are courageous. He dwells upon the ruinous effects of Mahmud's invasions on India and writes: 'Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and performed those wonderful exploits by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions and like a tale of old in the mouths of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason too why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us and