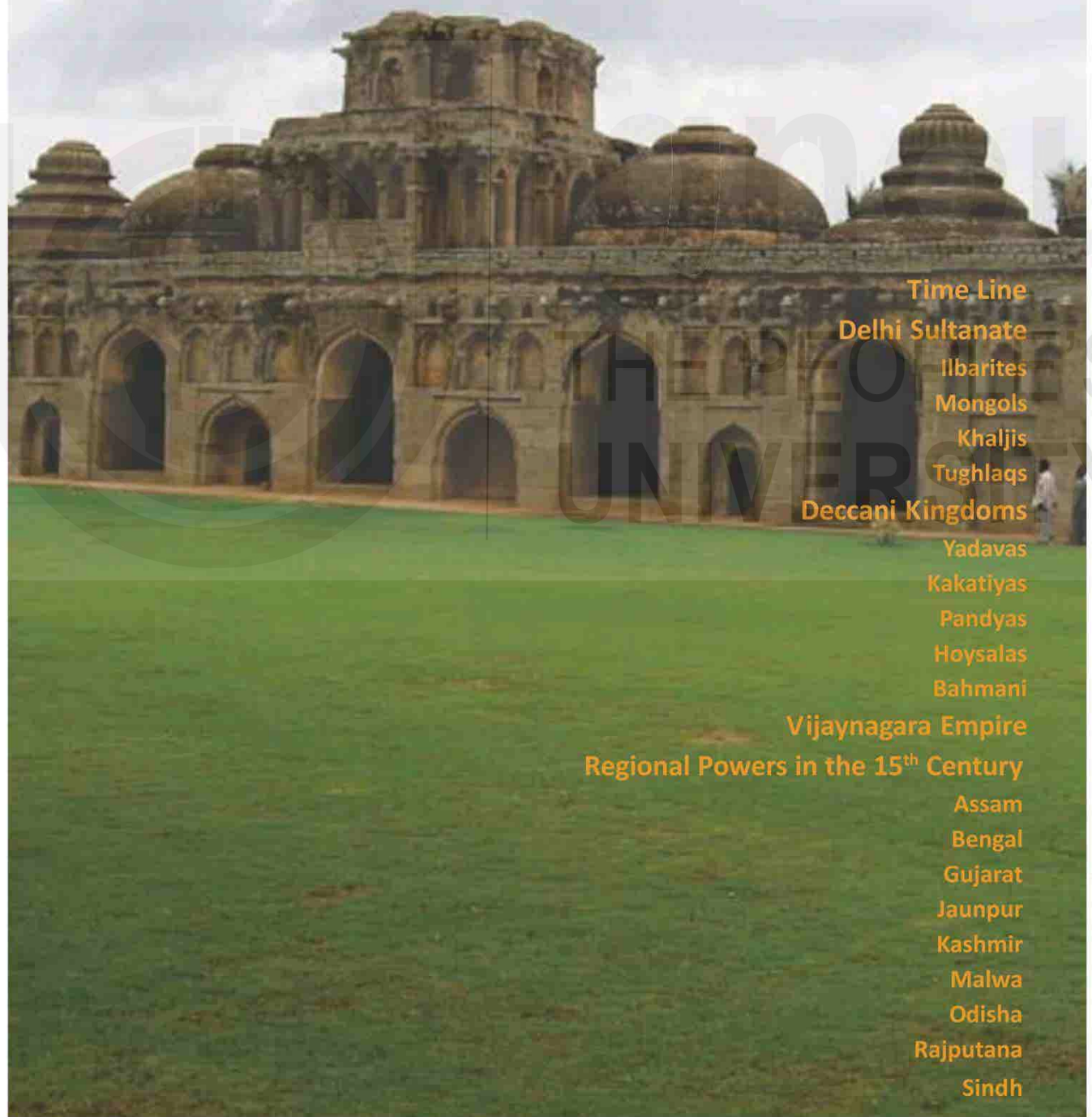


Theme II

Political Formations



Time Line

Delhi Sultanate

Ilbarites

Mongols

Khaljis

Tughlaqs

Deccani Kingdoms

Yadavas

Kakatiyas

Pandyas

Hoysalas

Bahmani

Vijaynagara Empire

Regional Powers in the 15th Century

Assam

Bengal

Gujarat

Jaunpur

Kashmir

Malwa

Odisha

Rajputana

Sindh



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Photograph: Elephant's Stable/Gajshaala

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Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elephant%27s_stable_or_Gajshaale.JPG

UNIT 2 DELHI SULTANATE: CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Conflict and Consolidation: 1206-1290
- 2.3 The Mongol Problem
- 2.4 Political Consequences of the Turkish Conquest of India
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2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the formative and most challenging period in the history of the Delhi Sultanate,
- analyse the Mongol problem,
- list the conflicts, nature, and basis of power of the class that ran the Sultanate,
- evaluate the territorial expansion of the Delhi Sultanate in the 14th century in the north, northwest and northeast, and
- explain the Sultanate expansion in the south.

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

The tenth century witnessed a westward movement of a warlike nomadic people inhabiting the eastern corners of the Asian continent. Then came in wave upon wave, each succeeding invasion more powerful and more extensive than the last. In a relatively short span of time, the barbarian hordes had overrun and brought down the once prosperous empires and kingdoms of Central and West Asia, reaching the shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. While between the tenth and twelfth centuries the invaders were primarily ‘Turks’, the invasion of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries involved a kindred but more ferocious people, the Mongols.

Mahmud of Ghazni’s invasions of India at the close of the tenth century, followed some hundred years later by the Ghorian invasions (both Ghazni and Ghor are in Afghanistan) were distant projections of these vast nomadic movements. As in other parts of Asia, the Turkish irruption in India culminated in the formation of an independent political entity; the Delhi Sultanate in the early years of the thirteenth century. The term ‘Delhi Sultanate’ signifies the rule of Turks over large parts of Northern India from their capital at Delhi. In more than two centuries of existence, the Sultanate gave birth to institutions – political, social and economic – which though greatly different from the ones existing earlier, were a unique combination of what the Turks had brought with and what they found in India. In political and military terms, the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni were the actual precursors of the Delhi Sultanate (For further details, see **BHIC-105, Unit 6**).

In this Unit we will be looking at the conquest of India by the Turks, leading to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate at the beginning of the 13th century. After military conquests, the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate set themselves on the track of consolidating the Sultanate.

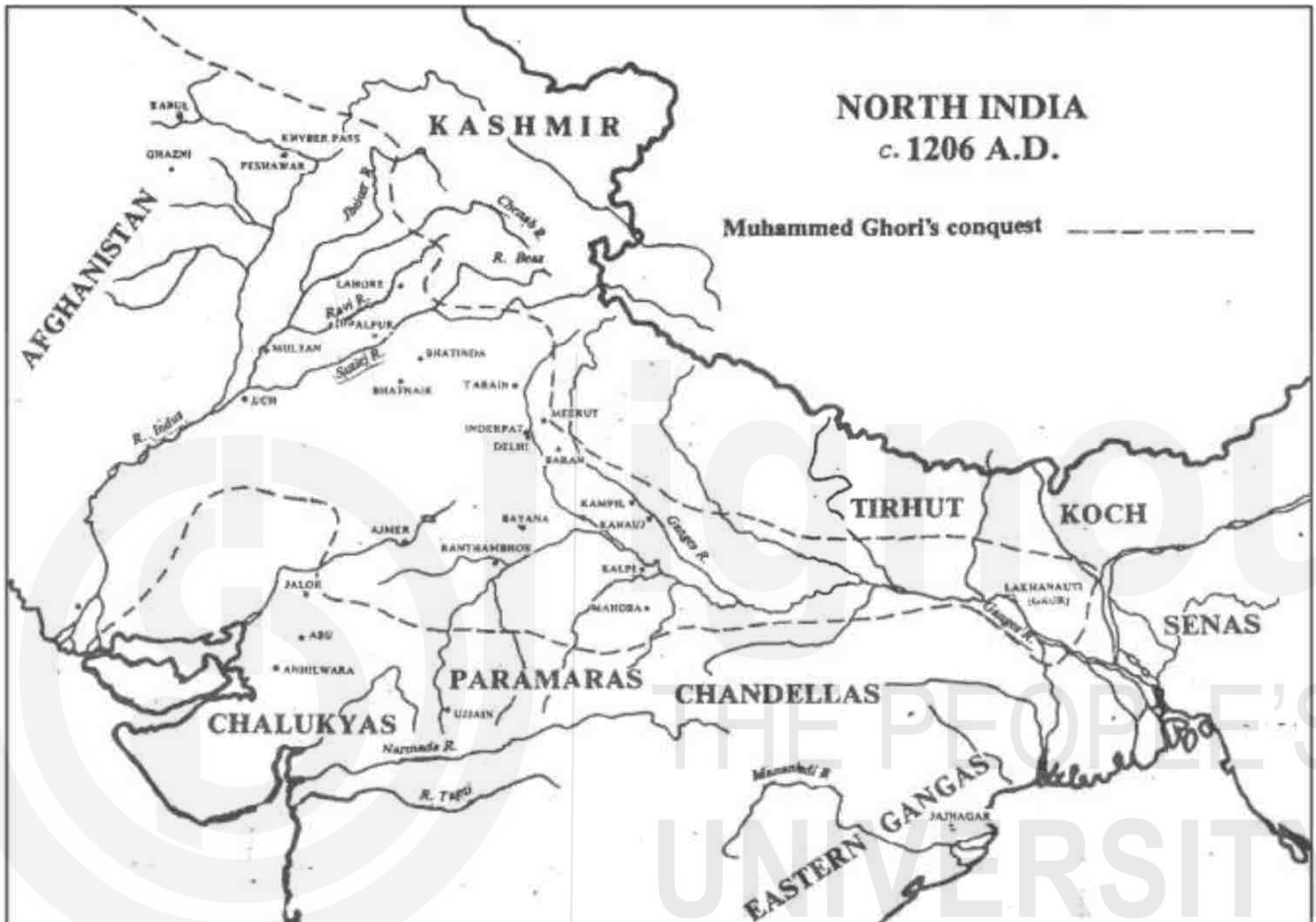
2.2 CONFLICT AND CONSOLIDATION: 1206-1290

The period from 1206 to 1290 constitutes the formative and the most challenging period in the history of the Delhi Sultanate. It was marked by a prolonged, multi-cornered conflict within the Ghorian ruling class as well as against the renewed Rajput resurgence.

Muhammad Ghori’s sudden death in 1206 resulted in a tussle for supremacy among his three important generals, Tajuddin Yalduz, Nasiruddin Qubacha and Qutbuddin Aibak. Yalduz held Karman and Sankuran on the route between Afghanistan and upper Sind. Qubacha held the important charge of Uchh, while Aibak had already been deputed as the ‘viceroy’ of Muhammad Ghori and the overall commander of the army in India. Though, technically still a slave, the title of sultan was conferred upon him soon after the death of his master. The formal establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, as an entity in its own rights, is traced back to this event. Subsequent developments made this a reality.

Early in his brief reign of four years, Aibak (d. 1210) moved his capital to Lahore in order to frustrate Yalduz’s ambition of annexing Punjab. With the Khwarizm Shah steadily advancing on Ghor, there was partly a compulsion in Yalduz’s attempt to establish himself in India.

Aibak was succeeded on the throne by his son-in-law Iltutmish who brought back the capital to Delhi. Large portions of the territories conquered by the Turks had slipped out of control and subjugated Rajput chieftain had 'withheld tribute and repudiated allegiance'. Iltutmish's quarter century reign (1210-1236) was distinguished by a concerted drive to re-establish the Sultanate's authority on areas that had been lost. In 1215, Yalduz was defeated at Tarain and in 1217 Iltutmish wrested the province of Lahore from Qubacha and placed it under his own governor.



Map 2.1: Northern India on the Eve of Ghorid Invasions

Source: EHI-03: *India: From 8th to 15th Century*, Block 4, Units 14, p. 24

Within three years of this event, the Mongols, under Chinghiz Khan's leadership, appeared on the banks of the Indus in pursuit of Jalaluddin Mangbarani (the son of the Khwarizmi ruler) who had taken refuge in Punjab. Henceforth, the Mongols remained a constant factor among the concerns of Delhi Sultans. We will discuss Mongol intrusions during the 13-14th century in the subsequent Section.

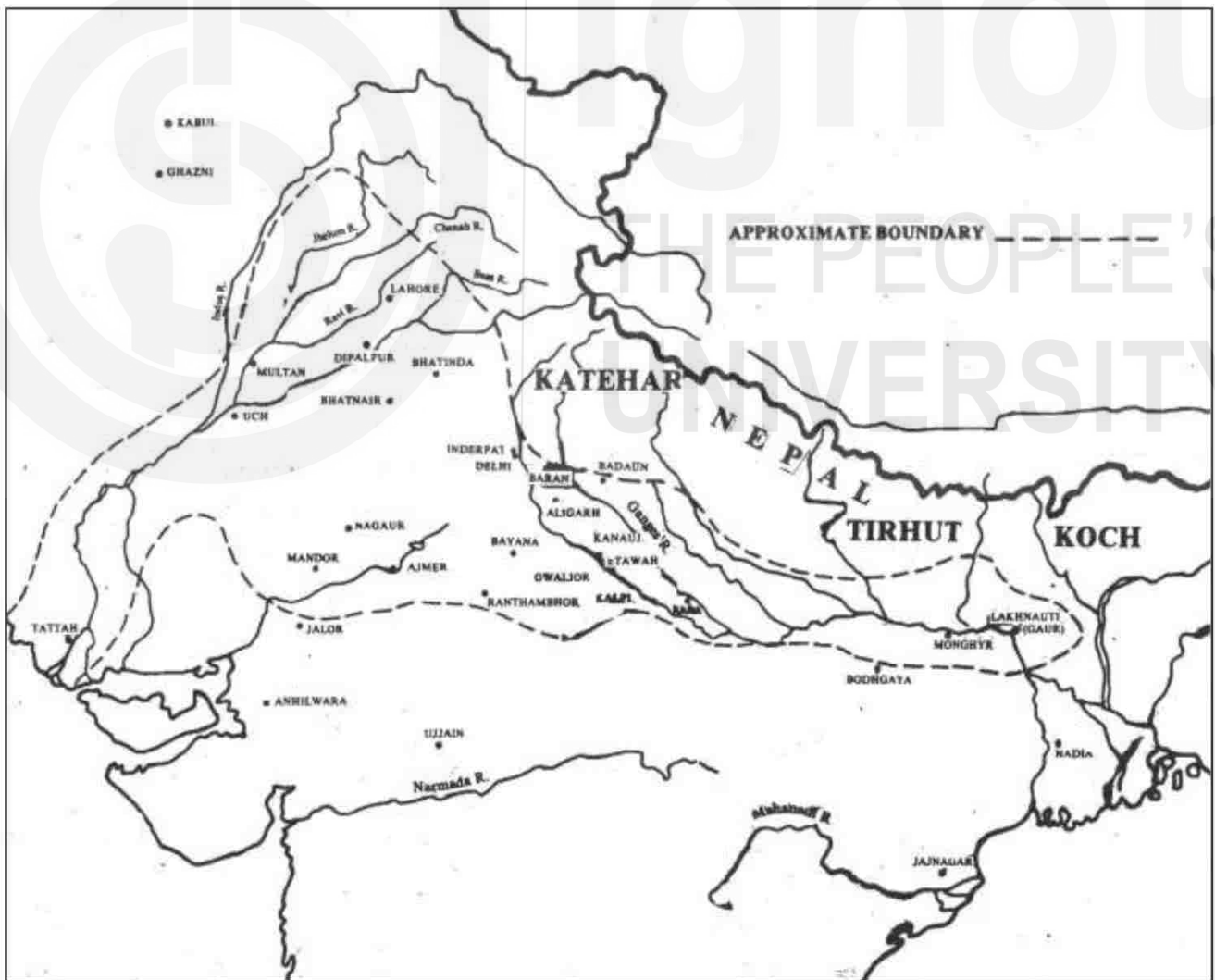
Though, the Mongol presence had upset Iltutmish's plan of consolidation on the northwest, it also created conditions for the destruction of Qubacha who held Uchh and faced the brunt of Mangbarani's invasion. As a consequence, Iltutmish was able to seize Bhatinda, Kuhram, and Sarsuti. About 1228, he launched two-pronged attack on Multan and Uchh. Defeated, Qubacha drowned himself in the Indus. Unified control over the northwest now became possible for the Delhi Sultanate. In Rajputana, the Turks were able to reclaim Ranthambhor, Mandor, Jalore, Bayana and Thangir. After 1225, Iltutmish could turn towards the east. Apart from sporadic military successes, however, Lakhnauti (in Bengal) and Bihar continued to evade

the authority of the Sultanate. A modern historian assesses the Sultan’s achievement as follows:

to him the Sultanate owed the first outline of its administrative system. He laid the foundations of an absolutist monarchy that was to serve later as the instrument of a military imperialism under the Khaljis. Aibak outlined the Delhi Sultanate and its sovereign status; Iltutmish was unquestionably its first king.

Iltutmish’s death saw more sharpened factionalism and intrigue among the Turks. In a period of some thirty years, four rulers (descendants of Iltutmish) occupied the throne. The most prominent group, to decide the course of high politics during these years is identified as the *turkan-i chihilgani bandagan Shamsi* (the ‘forty’ Turkish slave ‘officers’ of Iltutmish) (for details see **Unit 3**). The fourteenth century historian, Ziauddin Barani, has left behind concise and insightful account of these critical years:

During the reign of Shamsuddin – (Iltutmish),... owing to the presence of peerless *maliks, wazirs*...educated, wise and capable, the court of the Sultan (Shamsuddin) had become stable...But after the death of the Sultan...his ‘forty’ Turkish slaves got the upper hand...So owing to the supremacy of the Turkish slave officers, all these men of noble birth...were destroyed under various pretexts during the reigns of the successors of Shamsuddin...



Map 2.2: Iltutmish’s Empire

Source: EHI-03: *India: From 8th to 15th Century*, Block 4, Units 14, p. 28

In the main, Barani's account is borne out by contemporary developments. During 1235-1265 political developments revolved around a conflict between the crown and a military aristocracy determined to retain its privileged position with the balance often increasingly tilting in favour of the latter.

In these circumstances, the very survival of the Sultanate was under question. Political instability was exacerbated by the recalcitrance of smaller Rajput chiefs and local leaders. Moreover, the Mongols were constantly active in and around Punjab.

The accession of Balban in 1265 provided the Sultanate with an iron-willed ruler. Balban addressed himself to two major objectives (for details on Balban's theory of kingship see **Unit 3**):

- (i) to raise the prestige of the crown through elaborate court ceremonials, and inculcation of Sassanian traditions that distanced the ruler from ordinary folks, converting him into a symbol of awe;
- (ii) consolidating Turkish power: rebellions were put down with determination and administrative procedures were streamlined.

After the death of Balban, struggle for the throne started. Balban had nominated Kai Khusrau, son of Muhammad (Balban's eldest son) but the nobles helped Kaiqubad, son of Bughra Khan, to ascend the throne. Intrigues continued for more than two years. Finally, Jalaluddin Khalji, who was a prominent noble during this period, managed to capture the throne which was strongly resented because it was thought that the Khaljis were not Turks but belonged to a different race. Barani does not specify the race to which the Khaljis belonged. The Khaljis had been occupying important positions during the period 1206-1290. For example, Bakhtiyar Khalji was the *muqti* of Bengal. Even Jalaluddin Khalji was the *muqti* of Sunam in Western Punjab.

Jalaluddin Khalji started consolidating his kingdom but was killed in 1296 by his nephew Alauddin Khalji who captured the throne. For almost 20 years, the Sultanate under Alauddin Khalji followed a policy of conquests (You will read about this in **Section 2.5**).

2.3 THE MONGOL PROBLEM

In this Section, our emphasis would be on the Mongol threat on the northwest border of India and its repercussions. For the Delhi Sultans, control over Kabul-Ghazni-Qandahar line flanked by the Hindukush, was important not only for stabilizing the 'scientific frontier' but also for the fact that it connected India with the major silk-route passing from China through Central Asia and Persia. But the development in Central and West-Asia did not permit the newly founded Turkish state to do the job. The situation on account of the Mongol onslaught compelled the Delhi Sultans to take comfort along the Chenab, while the cis-Sutlej region became the cock-pit of confrontations. Thus, the 'Indus remained only the cultural boundary of India,' and for all practical purposes the line of control was confined to the west of the Indus only.

Professor K.A. Nizami has categorized the response of the Sultanate towards, the Mongol challenge into three distinct phases: (i) **aloofness**, (ii) **appeasement**, and (iii) **resistance**.

Iltutmish followed the policy of ‘aloofness’. The Delhi Sultans had to face the Mongol threat as early as 1221 CE when, after destroying the Khwarizmi empire, Chenghiz Khan reached the Indian frontiers in pursuit of the crown-prince Jalaluddin Mangbarni. The latter seeing no alternative, crossed the Indus and entered the cis-Indus region.

Iltutmish had to take note of the Mongols who were knocking at the Indian frontier, but equally prime was the presence of Mangbarni in the cis-Indus region. The Sultan feared a possible alliance of Qubacha and the Khokhars with Mangbarni. But, Qubacha and Mangbarni locked their horns for political ascendancy, and meanwhile bonds of friendship developed between Mangbarni and the Khokhars through a matrimonial alliance. This strengthened the position of Mangbarni in the northwest. Ata Malik Juwaini in his *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha* decisively opines that Iltutmish smelt danger from Mangbarni who might ‘gain an ascendancy over him and involve him in ruin.’ Besides, Iltutmish was also aware of the weaknesses of the Sultanate. These factors compelled Iltutmish to follow the policy of ‘aloofness’.

Chenghiz Khan is reported to have sent his envoy to Iltutmish’s court. It is difficult to say anything about the Sultan’s response, but so long as Chenghiz Khan was alive (d. 1227 CE), Iltutmish did not adopt an expansionist policy in the northwest region. An understanding of non-aggression against each other might have possibly been arrived at. Iltutmish shrewdly avoided any political alliance with the Khwarizm Prince. The latter sent his envoy Ain-ul Mulk to Iltutmish’s court requesting for asylum which Iltutmish denied by saying that the climate was not congenial for his stay. On the other hand, he put the envoy to death. Minhaj Siraj mentions that Iltutmish led an expedition against Mangbarni but the latter avoided any confrontation and finally left the Indian soil in CE 1224.

A shift from Iltutmish’s policy of ‘aloofness’ to ‘appeasement’ was the result of the extension of the Sultanate frontier up to Lahore and Multan which exposed the Sultanate directly to the Mongol incursions with no buffer state left between them. Raziya’s discouraging response to anti-Mongol alliance, proposed by Hasan Qarlugh of Bamyan is the indicator of her **appeasement** policy. We must bear in mind that this policy of non-aggression was due primarily to the partitioning of the Chenghiz’s empire among his sons which weakened their power; and also on account of the Mongol pre-occupation in West Asia.

At any rate, between 1240-66, the Mongols for the first time embarked upon the policy of annexation of India and ‘the golden phase of mutual non-aggression’ with Delhi ended. During this phase, the Sultanate remained under serious Mongol threat. The main reason was the change in the situation in Central Asia. The Mongol Khan of Transoxiana found it difficult to face the might of the Persian Khanate and, thus, was left with no alternative except to try his luck in India.

In 1241, Tair Bahadur invaded Lahore and completely destroyed the city. It was followed by two successive invasions in CE 1245-46. In spite of the best efforts of Balban during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud, the Sultanate frontier during CE 1241 stood at Beas. And, yet, the appeasement policy continued for sometime. In CE 1260 Hulagu’s envoy to Delhi was well received and this diplomatic gesture was reciprocated by Hulagu also.

A distinct change in Delhi Sultan's policy can be seen from Balban's reign onwards. On the whole, it was the phase of 'resistance'. By and large, Balban remained in Delhi and his energies concentrated mainly in keeping away the Mongols, at least from the Beas. Barani mentions, when the two nobles Tamir Khan and Adil Khan suggested the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat and advised him to pursue an expansionist policy Balban replied:

When the Mongols have occupied all lands of Islam, devastated Lahore and made it a point to invade our country once in every year...If I move out of the capital the Mongols are sure to avail themselves of the opportunity by sacking Delhi and ravaging the Doab. Making peace and consolidating our power in our own kingdom is far better than invading foreign territories while our own kingdom is insecure.

Balban used both 'force and diplomacy' against the Mongols. He took some measures to strengthen his line of defence. Forts at Bhatinda, Sunam and Samana were reinforced to check any Mongol advance beyond Beas. Balban succeeded in occupying Multan and Uchh but his forces remained under heavy Mongol pressure in Punjab. Every year Prince Muhammad, Balban's son, led expeditions against the Mongols. The Prince died in CE 1285 while defending Multan. Actually, till CE 1295, the Mongols did not show much enthusiasm to occupy Delhi.

During Alauddin Khalji's reign, the Mongol incursions extended further and they attempted to ravage Delhi for the first time in CE 1299 under Qutlugh Khwaja. Since then, Delhi became a regular target of the Mongols. For the second time, Qutlugh Khwaja in CE 1303 attacked Delhi when Alauddin Khalji was busy in his Chittor campaign. The attack was so severe that the Mongols inflicted large-scale destruction and so long as the Mongols besieged Delhi, Alauddin could not enter the city.

Constant Mongol attacks pressed Alauddin to think of a permanent solution. He recruited a huge standing army and strengthened the frontier forts. As a result, the Mongols were repulsed in 1306 and 1308. Another reason for the Mongol reversal was the death of Dawa Khan in 1306, followed by civil war in the Mongol Khanate. It weakened the Mongols greatly, and they ceased to remain a power to reckon with. This situation helped the Delhi Sultans to extend their frontier as far as the Salt Range. The last significant Mongol invasion was under the leadership of Tarmashirin during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq.

Thus, the Delhi Sultans succeeded in tackling the Mongol problem and succeeded in keeping their kingdom intact. It shows the strength of the Sultanate. Besides, the Mongol destruction of Central and West Asia resulted in large-scale migration of scholars, mystics, artisans and others to Delhi, which transformed it into a great town of Islamic culture area.

2.4 POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE TURKISH CONQUEST OF INDIA

The Turkish conquest of India brought about some far reaching changes in the political, economic and social conditions of India.

Its first major consequence was to replace the 'feudal', multi-centred, polity of the country by a centralized state, in which the king enjoyed practically unlimited powers. The chief institution which made the Sultanate possible was that of the *iqta*: transferable revenue assignments, an institution which the Seljuqs found in

Political Formations

operation in the Abbasid ruled areas and which they updated in the light of their own requirements. In the next theme, you will be reading the history of the *iqta* system in India in greater detail. Here we will simply touch upon its principal features to illustrate how it provided the basis of a different polity. Under this system, the officers of the king were assigned territories to realize revenue and maintain troops and cavalry contingents. The holders of such assignments were known as *maqti*. Unlike the pre-Turkish system wherein the land grantees had acquired permanent rights of ownership, the *iqta*-holders were regularly transferred and their tenure in particular places or localities was normally for 3 to 4 years.

Taking the Delhi Sultanate as a whole, such a system made the assignee dependent on the central authority to a far greater extent than it was possible under the earlier Indian politics. While the *rais*, *ranas* and *thakurs* failed to unite the country, the Turks succeeded in establishing an ‘all-India administration by bringing the chief cities and the great routes under the control of the government of Delhi’.

Much as the *iqta* system provided the base for a despotic state, it was also a means of extracting the agricultural surplus. The Turks had brought with them the tradition of living in the cities and, as a result, the large surplus produce of the countryside found its way into the cities in the form of land tax. This led to a considerable growth of urban economy. Turks also brought with them the **Persian wheel** and the **spinning wheel**. The former helped greatly in increasing the agricultural production (for further details see **Unit 11**).

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Write how Qutbuddin succeeded in crushing the power of Yalduz.
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- 2) Iltutmish was the real founder of the Turkish rule in India. Explain.
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- 3) Aloofness, appeasement and resistance were the three weapons used by the Delhi Sultans to face the Mongol challenge. Explain briefly.
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- 4) Briefly discuss the political consequences of the Turkish conquest.
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2.5 EXPANSION UNDER THE KHALJIS

The initial surge of occupation under the early Turkish Sultans died down about the middle of the thirteenth century. Now the primary objective of the later Sultans became the consolidation of the Sultanate. Thus, it was not until the establishment of the Khalji rule that the boundaries of the Sultanate expanded beyond the early gains. The overthrow of the Turkish hegemony at the end of the thirteenth century and its replacement with the Khaljis, under whom the exclusive racial character of the ruling class was thoroughly diluted, is thus an event not without significance. The opening up of the Sultanate and diversified participation of ruling groups in managing the affairs of the Sultanate made territorial expansion a feasible proposition. Initial forays into Jhain and Ranthambhor soon after the accession of Jalaluddin Firuz Khalji to the Sultanate of Delhi, had brought home the fact that territorial expansion was now a political necessity. Neighbouring kingdoms had become strong and any concerted attempt against the Sultanate could cost it dear. Moreover, Alauddin's glittering prospect of the acquisition of wealth, besides extending territorial gains, had set the stage at the beginning of the fourteenth century for the adoption of an expansionist policy.

The first of the Khalji Sultans, Jalaluddin, did neither have will nor resources to undertake any large-scale expansionist programme. His six years' reign was gripped by the internal contradiction of having to reconcile between the policies of the Sultan and the interests of his supporters. The resolution of this problem came in the unfortunate assassination of the Sultan. Alauddin Khalji, his assassin and successor, had a different imperial design. He was to herald an age of territorial annexation and expansion of the Sultanate which saw the frontiers of the Sultanate reaching close to the tip of the Southern peninsula by the middle of the fourteenth century.

2.5.1 West and Central India

Alauddin Khalji, after consolidating his position and firmly establishing himself at Delhi, undertook the first expedition in the region of Gujarat in 1299. This also happened to be the first project of territorial expansion under him. Possibly Alauddin was attracted by the wealth of Gujarat whose flourishing trade had always lured invaders.

The imperial army was jointly commanded by Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, two of Alauddin's best army generals. Gujarat was an easy prey – the province was plundered and the capital Anhilwara was sacked. The administrative control of Gujarat was entrusted to Alp Khan as governor.

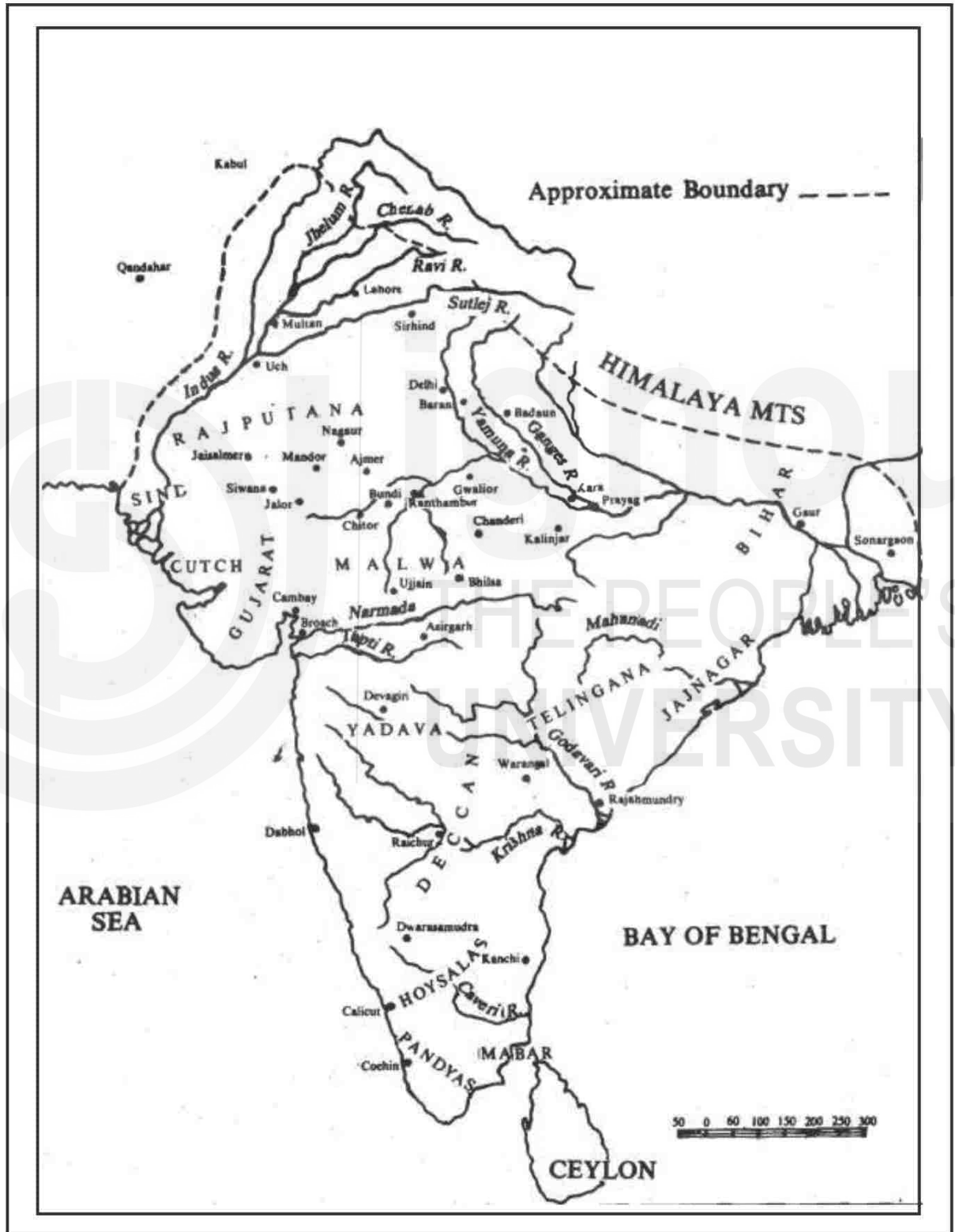
In the control and westward expansion of the empire, the next kingdom to fall was that of Malwa in 1305. It was an extensive region and was governed from the capital Mandu by Rai Mahalak Dev with the assistance of a powerful minister Koka Pradhan. The imperial army was outnumbered by the forces of Rai but did eventually succeed and the fort of Mandu was captured. The province of Malwa, after its fall, was given for administration to Ainul Mulk who was known to have soon brought Ujjain, Dhar and Chanderi, too, under his control.

Malwa was followed by Siwana, a town situated some eighty kilometres to the south-west of Jodhpur. Alauddin's army had been besieging Siwana for five or six

Political Formations

years beginning 1304-05 without much success. The fort was finally captured in 1309. The ruler of Siwana, Rai Sital Dev, was killed in action and the fort and territory was put under the charge of Kamaluddin Gurg.

In the same year (1309), Jalor was attacked and its ruler Kanhar Dev was killed in the battle and the fort annexed to the Sultanate under the control of Kamaluddin Gurg.



Map 2.3: Khalji Expansion

Source: EHI-03: *India: From 8th to 15th Century*, Block 4, Units 15, p. 37

2.5.2 Northwest and North India

Soon after his accession, Alauddin was faced with the problem of suppressing the prospects of revolt by the surviving members of Jalaluddin's family who had fled to Multan. Ulugh Khan and Zafar Khan were entrusted with the job of eliminating Arkali Khan at Multan. Arkali Khan was made prisoner and escorted to Delhi. Multan once again came under the control of Delhi. Strictly speaking, Multan expedition was not an act of territorial expansion but formed part of the policy of consolidation.

In 1300, Alauddin sent Ulugh Khan to march against Ranthambhor ruled by Rai Hamir. Nusrat Khan, then posted at Awadh, joined Ulugh Khan. The Imperial army captured Jhain on the way and then laid a siege. Alauddin had to personally take the command of the campaign. The siege lasted for over six months. Ultimately, the women inside the fort performed *jauhar* and one night the gates of the fort were opened by Hamir Dev who died fighting.

In pursuance of the same policy, Alauddin attacked the kingdom of Chittor in 1303. After several assaults, the ruler of Chittor suddenly sent an offer of surrender to the Sultan on his own. The heir apparent Khizr Khan was assigned the governorship of the territory. But soon the fort was bestowed upon Maldeo, a son of the sister of the earlier ruler of Chittor who remained loyal to Delhi till the end of Alauddin's reign.

By the end of the first decade of Alauddin's rule the frontiers of the Delhi Sultanate had expanded to cover almost the whole of north, west and central India. From Multan in the northwest to the Vindhya in central India, and almost the entire Rajputana, had now been brought under the expanse of the Delhi Sultanate.

2.5.3 Deccan and Southward Expansion

Devagiri in the Deccan had already tasted Alauddin's plunder in CE 1296 during his tenure as the governor of Kara. The next military campaign in the Deccan was again planned by Alauddin against Rai Ram Chandra Dev of Devagiri in 1306-7. An immediate cause for this was an unduly long delay in sending the annual tribute to Delhi in 1296.

The command of the Deccan campaign was given to Malik Kafur, and directions were sent to Ainul Mulk Multani and Alp Khan for providing assistance. Only a feeble resistance was provided by Ram Chandra Dev as he surrendered to the imperial army under the assurance of personal safety. His son, however, fled with a part of the army. Ram Chandra Dev was accorded great honour by the Sultan and restored to the throne of Devagiri in return for the assurance of regular and prompt payment of an annual tribute to the Sultan. The Rai also gave his daughter in marriage to the Sultan. It appears that Alauddin's policy was not to annex Devagiri but retain it as a protectorate and amass as much wealth as possible from the kingdom.

Malik Kafur's careful handling of the affair of Devagiri enhanced Sultan's confidence in his abilities as a military general and he decided to entrust him with the responsibility to make forays in the peninsular region in the South. Acquisition of wealth from southern kingdoms and not actual territorial annexation seems to have been the prime motive in sending these expeditions. Accordingly, in October 1309, the imperial army began its southward march under the command of Malik

Kafur. Amir Khusrau has given details of these campaigns in his *Khazain-ul Futuh*. Enroute a surprise assault was made by Malik Kafur on the fort at Sirpur (in Adilabad District). The nobles of Sirpur fled to Rai Rudra Dev of Warangal and the fort was captured by the Imperial army.

By the middle of January 1310, the marching army had reached the suburbs of Warangal. On 14 February 1310, Kafur attacked the fort. The war came to an end because Rai Rudra Dev decided to surrender. He agreed to part with his treasures and pay an annual tribute as token of submission.

Warangal was a spectacular success for the Sultanate army: the booty comprised of 20,000 horses, 100 elephants, and an enormous stock of gold and precious stones laden on thousand camels. The province was not territorially annexed but accorded the status of a protectorate. The imperial army came back to Delhi at the beginning of June 1310. Sultan's avarice now knew no bounds. Since the Sultanate was by this time made secure of Mongol menace and almost the entire country to the north of the Vindhya had come under the sway of Alauddin, he planned another military campaign in the far south.

The sight of the Sultan was now set on Dwarasamudra, further south of Warangal. Malik Kafur was once again commanding imperial army and was instructed to capture nearly 500 elephants besides the treasures of gold and precious stones. The fort was besieged in February 1311 and the very next day a message seeking peace came from Ballala Dev, the ruler of Dwarasamudra. Like earlier cases the terms included parting of much wealth and a promise for annual tribute.

Encouraged by his success in Dwarasamudra, Malik Kafur decided to move further south. Accordingly, he marched towards Ma'bar in a little less than a month's time reached Madura, the capital of the Pandyas. Sundar Pandya, the ruler, had already fled. The elephants and treasure were captured by Malik Kafur. There were 512 elephants, 5000 horses and 500 *mans* of precious stones.

Alauddin's Deccan and southward campaigns were aimed at achieving two basic objectives: (i) a formal recognition of the authority of Delhi Sultan over these regions, and (ii) the amassing of maximum wealth at the minimal loss of life. His policy of not annexing the conquered territories but accepting the acknowledgement of the Sultan's suzerainty speaks of Alauddin's political sagacity.

Within a year, however, of Malik Kafur's return from Ma'bar, developments in the Deccan called for a review of the policy of non-annexation. Ram Dev, the ruler of Devagiri, died sometime in the latter half of 1312 and was succeeded by his son Bhillama. Bhillama refused to accept the suzerain status of the Sultan of Delhi and declared his independence. Alauddin sent Malik Kafur to suppress the rebellion and instructed him to take temporary charge of the province. But Malik Kafur was soon called back and asked to handover charge of the province to Ainul Mulk. In January 1316, after Alauddin's death, even Ainul Mulk was called back to Delhi, leaving the affairs of Devagiri unsettled. Thus, Mubarak Khalji, the successor of Alauddin, wanted to march to Devagiri soon after his accession, but was advised by his nobles to take some more time so as to consolidate his position in Delhi. In the second year of his reign in April 1317, Mubarak started for the campaign. The march was uneventful. Devagiri offered no resistance, and the Maratha chiefs submitted before the Sultan. The province was annexed to the Sultanate.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) From the places given below, identify the first one conquered by Alauddin Khalji as Sultan of Delhi:
 - a) Devagiri
 - b) Malwa
 - c) Gujarat
 - d) Ma'bar

- 2) Which of the following places were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate by Alauddin Khalji:
 - a) Warangal
 - b) Siwana
 - c) Devagiri
 - d) Jalor

- 3) Explain Alauddin's policy with regards to the kingdoms in the Deccan and far south.
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- 4) Who among the names listed below was appointed the first governor of Devagiri after its annexation by the Sultanate:
 - a) Rai Ram Chandra Dev
 - b) Malik Kafur
 - c) Mubarak Khalji
 - d) Khusrau Khan

2.6 EXPANSION UNDER THE TUGHLAQS

The Tughlaqs came to power in Delhi when Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq ascended the throne in 1320. The Sultanate was suffering from unsettled political conditions and demanded immediate attention of the new ruler. The outlying provinces had proclaimed independence as the effective control of the Sultanate had shrunk only to the heartland. The administrative machinery was completely out of gear and the treasury had been completely depleted. Ghiyasuddin naturally addressed himself first to the task of restoring the exchequer and the administration. But soon after that came the question of restoring prestige and authority in the outlying parts of the empire.

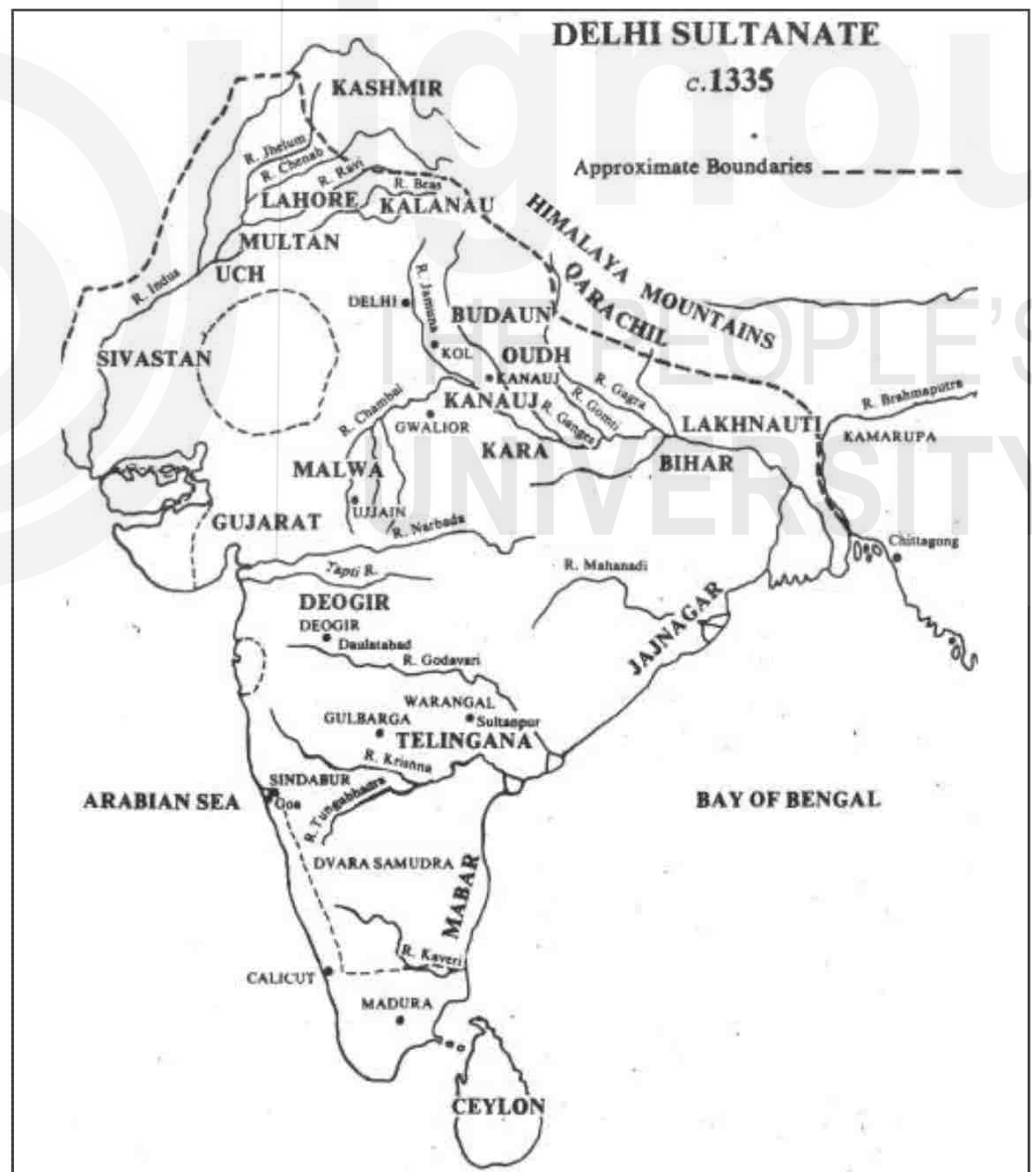
2.6.1 The South

The political condition in the Deccan was not assuring in any way. The acceptance of Alauddin's suzerainty and the promise of loyalty by the rulers of the South were only nominal. Fresh military expeditions were certainly needed for the

reinforcement of imperial authority in Devagiri and Telingana. Devagiri, as you have already read, had been annexed to the Sultanate by Mubarak Khalji. But the southern states beyond Devagiri had completely overthrown whatever little semblance of imperial authority remained there. The Telingana, therefore, claimed Ghiyasuddin's immediate attention.

In 1321, Ulugh Khan (later Muhammad Tughlaq) started for the south with a large army. Without much resistance in the way he reached Warangal. After two sieges, each lasting four or five months, the ruler Rai Rudra Dev finally decided to surrender. But this time there was no forgiving the recalcitrant: the fort was occupied, plundered and some demolitions effected. The Rai was made a prisoner and escorted to Delhi. Warangal was annexed to the Sultanate under direct imperial administration.

In continuation of the same policy Ulugh Khan also brought Ma'bar to submission and set up direct imperial administration there. The region of Telingana was thus made a part of the Delhi Sultanate and divided into several administrative units. The local talent was abundantly employed in the administration and acts of vandalism against the vanquished were forbidden.



Map 2.4: Expansion under the Tughlaqs

Source: EHI-03: India: From 8th to 15th Century, Block 4, Units 15, p. 41

2.6.2 East India

The expedition in the eastern parts of India came as a consequence of the wars in the South. Bhanudeva II, the ruler of Jajnapur in Odisha, had given support to Rai Rudra Dev of Warangal at the time of imperial offensive against the latter. Ulugh Khan, therefore, after leaving Warangal sometime in the middle of 1324, marched against Jajnapur. A fierce battle took place in which victory sided with Ulugh Khan. He plundered the enemy camp and collected large booty. Jajnapur was annexed and made a part of the Sultanate.

Bengal was another kingdom in the east which had always been a hotbed of sedition. Its governors would not miss any opportunity of asserting independence. In 1323-24 a fratricidal quarrel broke out in Lakhnauti after the death of Feroz Shah, the ruler of this independent principality. Some nobles from Lakhnauti came to Ghiyasuddin for help who responded and decided to march to Bengal in person. After reaching Tirthut the Sultan himself made a halt and deputed Babram Khan with a host of other officers to march to Lakhnauti. The rival forces confronted each other near Lakhnauti. In the battle that ensued the forces of Delhi easily pushed back Bengal army and pursued them for some distance. One of the warring groups led by Nasiruddin was conferred a tributary status at Lakhnauti.

2.6.3 Northwest and North

Since Alauddin's expedition to Multan, the northwestern frontier of the Sultanate had remained fixed. Subsequent Sultans were mostly occupied with the affairs of the South and Gujarat. It was after Muhammad Tughlaq acceded to the throne that attention was paid to the northwest frontier. Soon after his accession, Muhammad Tughlaq led campaigns to Kalanaur and Peshawar. Probably it was a sequel to the invasion of the Mongols under Tarmashirin Khan in 1326-27 and was aimed at securing northwestern frontier of the Sultanate against future Mongol attacks. On his way to Kalanaur, the Sultan stayed at Lahore but ordered his army to march and conquer Kalanaur and Peshawar. The task seems to have been accomplished without much difficulty. The Sultanate settled the administrative arrangement of the newly conquered regions and marched back to Delhi.

Sometime in 1332, Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq planned the conquest of the Qarachil region identified as the modern Kulu in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. It formed part of the plan to fortify north and northwest frontier. For this purpose, he enlisted a large army under the command of Khusrau Malik. The army succeeded in occupying Jidya, an important place in Qarachil region, and was then instructed to return. But in his enthusiasm, Khusrau Malik exceeded the instruction and marched ahead towards Tibet. Soon the rains set in and the army was overtaken by disease and panic. The disaster was such that only three soldiers returned to tell the tale of the catastrophe. Qarachil expedition led to tremendous waste of resources and erosion in the authority of Muhammad Tughlaq.

A little before Qarachil expedition, Muhammad Tughlaq had launched an ambitious project of bringing Khurasan under submission. A large army of soldiers numbering about 370,000 was recruited for this purpose and the soldiers were paid a year's salary in advance. Large sum was also invested in the purchase of costly equipments for the army. Ultimately when the project was abandoned as an unrealistic scheme and the army disbanded, it led to a tremendous financial loss. The authority of the

Sultan also suffered a serious setback and a series of rebellions followed that hollowed the most extensive of the empire of Delhi Sultanate.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) When were southern kingdoms annexed to the Delhi Sultanate:
 - a) Under Alauddin Khalji
 - b) Under Mubarak Khalji
 - c) Under Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq
 - d) Under Muhammad Tughlaq

- 2) Which of the following military expeditions was abandoned by Muhammad Tughlaq:
 - a) Warangal
 - b) Qarachil
 - c) Jajnagar
 - d) Khurasan

- 3) Why was Qarachil expedition a disaster?
.....
.....
.....

- 4) Which of the following formed the eastern limit of the Sultanate in 1335?
 - a) Jajnagar
 - b) Peshawar
 - c) Kalanaur
 - d) Malwa

2.7 SUMMARY

On the eve of Turkish invasion, India was not a unified political unit but divided into number of small states ruled by kings and autonomous chiefs. Muhammad Ghori tried to subjugate them, the culmination of which may be seen in the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan at the battle of Tarain. This laid the foundation of the Turkish rule in India. After Muhammad Ghori's departure one of his commanders, Qutbuddin Aibak got busy in establishing the Turkish power in India. In the process he suppressed Yalduz, the Muizi slave who had rival claims to the Muizi throne in India. But, he failed to suppress Qubacba. The task was left to Iltutmish. Iltutmish not only expanded the Muizi empire but also organized and strengthened the administrative machinery with the help of the group of nobles called – the group of 'Forty'. He also introduced certain Sassanid institutions like *iqta* that helped greatly in centralizing the administration. Turks succeeded primarily because of their superior military technology and on account of the fact that Indian armies mainly consisted of 'feudal levies'. Turkish conquest was not, simply the change

of one dynasty by another. It had a far reaching effect on Indian society, economy and polity. You will study about these aspects later during this course.

Following the death of Iltutmish in 1236 CE, for nearly a half century all efforts of the Sultans of Delhi were geared towards consolidating early territorial gains by strengthening the fiscal and administrative base of the Sultanate. The next phase of territorial expansion, therefore, began with the opening of the fourteenth century under the Khaljis. Alauddin's administrative and economic measures had helped consolidation as well as widen the base of the Sultanate. The acquisition of new territories had thus become a feasible proposition.

Even then we find Alauddin moving in this direction with a reasonable distance from the central seat of the Sultanate for implementing an effective control of the Sultan over directly annexed territories and made them the provinces of the Sultanate. But more distant regions were conquered for two main reasons – the acquisition of wealth and according the status of a protectorate rather than making them a part of the Sultanate. This was particularly true of kingdoms conquered in the Deccan and in far south.

This policy was changed, in the case of Devagiri, by Mubarak Khalji. It was followed by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in the distant kingdoms in far south like Warangal and Ma'bar. The question of effective administrative control was addressed by Muhammad Tughlaq by making Devagiri the second administrative seat of the Sultanate. But that experiment was shortlived and failed partially due to the unwillingness of the ruling and other classes of the Sultanate. Nonetheless, under Muhammad Tughlaq's reign the boundaries of the Sultanate were at their apex touching Peshawar in the northwest and Ma'bar in the South, and Gujarat in the West and Jajnagar in Odisha in the East. It was, however, an irony of fate that in the closing years of the reign of the same Sultan, the boundaries of the Sultanate shrank nearly the CE 1296 status.

2.8 KEYWORDS

<i>Bandgan Shamsi</i> <i>(Turkan-i Chihilgani)</i>	Iltutmish's Turkish slave officers' group
Persian wheel	A water-lifting device used to lift the water from some depth
Spinning wheel	Device for spinning the cotton. This was moved with the help of crank-handle and had six spindles
<i>Jauhar</i>	The practice of committing mass self-immolation by women in case of imminent defeat at the hands of enemy followed in some Indian kingdoms

2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 2.2
- 2) See Section 2.2

Political Formations

- 3) See Section 2.3
- 4) See Section 2.4

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) (c) Gujarat
- 2) (b) Siwana
- 3) See Sub-section 2.5.3
- 4) (b) Malik Kafur

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) (b) Under Mubarak Khalji
- 2) (d) Khurasan
- 3) See Sub-section 2.6.3
- 4) (a) Jajnapur

**2.10 CHRONOLOGY OF THE DELHI SULTANS:
1206-1526**

ILBARITES

Qutbuddin Aibak	1206-1210
Aram Shah (for few months)	1210
Iltutmish	1210-1236
Raziya	1236-1240
Bahram Shah	1240-1242
Masud Shah	1242-1246
Nasiruddin	1246-1266
Ghiyasuddin Balban	1266-1287
Kaiqubad	1287-1290

KHALJIS

Jalaluddin Khalji	1290-1296
Alauddin Khalji	1296-1316
Qutbuddin Mubarak	1316-1320

TUGHLAQS

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq	1320-1325
Muhammad Tughlaq	1325-1351
Firuz Tughlaq	1351-1388
Tughlaq Shah II	1388-1390

Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah	1390-1394
Mahmud Shah Tughlaq	1394-1412*

**Delhi Sultanate:
Consolidation and
Expansion**

***Period between 1412-1414 was a period of internal conflict**

SAIYYIDS

Khizr Khan	1414-1421
Mubarak Shah	1421-1434
Muhammad Shah	1434-1443
Alauddin Alam Shah	1443-1451

LODIS

Bahlol Lodi	1451-1489
Sikandar Lodi	1489-1517
Ibrahim Lodi	1517-1526

2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Habib, Mohammad and Nizami, K.A., (ed.) (1970) *Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. V: *Delhi Sultanate CE 1206-1526* (Delhi: People's Publishing House).

Habibullah, A.B.M., (1967) *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* (New Delhi: Central Book Depot).

Husain, Agha Mahdi, (1935) *Tughluq Dynasty* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Pvt. Ltd.).

Lal, K.S., (1980) *History of the Khaljis CE 1290-1320* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt. Ltd.).

Pandey, Awadh Behari, (1970) *Early Medieval India*, (Allahabad: Central Book Depot).

2.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

Establishment and Consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate | IGNOUSSOSS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCmtBgS1csM>

Talking History |2| Delhi: The Foundation of Dilli Sultanate | Rajya Sabha TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJOsomraCaM>

Talking History |4| Delhi: The Era of Alauddin Khilji | Rajya Sabha TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrTs0B1qQ9s>

Talking History |5| Delhi: The rise of Tughlaq Dynasty | Rajya Sabha TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SINeC0D2m-Q>

Talking History |6| Delhi: The decline of Tughlaq Dynasty | Rajya Sabha TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vx6Tln48XA8>

UNIT 3 EVOLUTION OF INSTITUTIONS: SULTAN, NOBILITY AND *ULAMA**

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Caliphate and the Delhi Sultanate
- 3.3 The Sultan
- 3.4 *Turkan-i Chihilgani*
- 3.5 Composition of the Sultanate Ruling Class/Nobility
 - 3.5.1 The Ilbarites
 - 3.5.2 The Khaljis
 - 3.5.3 The Tughlaqs
- 3.6 Conflict Between the Nobility and the Sultans
- 3.7 The *Ulama*
- 3.8 Summary
- 3.9 Keywords
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 3.11 Suggested Readings
- 3.12 Instructional Video Recommendations

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will analyse the evolution of various institutions, particularly the Sultan, the nobility and the class of the *ulama* during the Sultanate period taking into consideration the following:

- relationship of the Delhi Sultans with the Caliphate,
- the institution of the Sultan,
- nature of kingship,
- role of the *turkan-i chihilgani* in the consolidation of the Sultanate,
- the composition of the ruling class,
- conflict between the nobility and the Sultan, and
- the role played by the *ulama* in the Sultanate polity.

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1206 Qutbuddin Aibak laid the foundation of an independent Sultanate at Delhi and a beginning was made in severing links with Central Asia. The most important problem of the Sultanate in its early stages, and even later, was to consolidate the conquered territories. In this Unit, our focus would be on the consolidation of the Sultanate. To this end, the ruling class served as an important pivot who shared the resources of the country. The Turks brought with them the institution of the *iqtas* (see **Unit 4**), which helped in the centralization of authority to a great extent. As greater centralization was sought to be effected, changes could be seen in the institution of the '*iqta*' as well as in the composition of the ruling class. The rulers had to cope with internal strife and external dangers, especially the running struggle between the nobility and the Sultans which contributed towards the gradual decline of the Delhi Sultanate.

3.2 THE CALIPHATE AND THE DELHI SULTANATE

The institution of the Caliphate came into existence after the death of Prophet Muhammad when Abu Bakr became the new head (*Khalifa*) of the Muslim community (*Umma* or *Ummat*). Originally, there existed some elements of elective principle in the matter of succession, a practice not much different from the previous tribal traditions.

In the Islamic world, the Caliph was regarded as the guardian of religion and the upholder of political order. He was the leader of the entire community. After the period of the first four 'pious Caliphs' (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali) dynastic rule became the norm when the Umayyads took over the Caliphate in 661 CE from their base at Damascus in Syria. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate the Abbasids came to power in the mid-8th century as Caliphs at Baghdad. However, with the decline of central authority, the centralized institution of Caliphate (*Khilafat*) broke into three centres of power based in Spain (under the rule of a branch of the Umayyad Caliphs), Egypt (under the Fatimids) and the older one at Baghdad – each claiming the exclusive loyalty of the Muslims. Nearer home, towards the northwest, many minor dynasties carved out small states, one of which was based at Ghazna. The significant point to remember is that, theoretically; no Muslim could have set up an 'independent' state, big or small, without procuring the permission from the Caliph, else its legitimacy could become suspect amongst the Muslims. And, yet, all this was nothing more than a formality which could be dispensed with impunity.

The recognition of a Caliph by the Delhi Sultans seen in the granting of robes of honour, letter of investiture, bestowing of titles, having the name of the Caliph inscribed on coins and reading of *khutba* in his name in the Friday prayer symbolized an acceptance and a link with the Islamic world, though in reality it only meant an acceptance of a situation whereby a ruler, had already placed himself in power. The Sultans of Delhi maintained the fiction of the acceptance of the position of the Caliph. Under the Saiyyids (1414-1451) and the Lodis (1451-1526), the legends on the coins continued in the sense of a tradition being maintained but it was purely a nominal allegiance.

Caliph at Baghdad at the time of the Sultanate was in a 'decadent' state. *Khalifa's* authority just reduced to a nominal allegiance. However, still the orthodox opinion

prevailed that *Khalifa* wielded the final authority. Khalil bin Shahin al-Zahiri conveys that ‘no king of the east or the west could hold the title of Sultan unless there was a covenant between him and the *Khalifah*’ (Nizami 2002:130). It was precisely for this reason that the Delhi Sultans looked towards *manshurs* (approval/mandate) of the *khalifa* with such a reverence. When in 1229, Baghdad Caliph Al-Mustansir’s *manshur*, with a deed of investiture, reached Iltutmish he received it with great honour and pomp. It enhanced the prestige of Iltutmish’s sovereignty and a legal approval to it. Iltutmish added Caliph’s name on his coins. After Al-Mustansir’s death Masud Shah in 1243 replaced his name with the new Caliph Al-Mustasim. In 1258 Mongol Khan Hulagu brutally murdered the Caliph. This created a vacuum and extraordinary situation. Its fallback was that even after the death of Caliph Al-Mustasim his name continued to have been inscribed on the coins as late as 1296. Alauddin merely styled himself as *nasir-i amir-ul muminin yamin-ul khilafat* (the right hand of the caliphate, the helper of the Commander of the Faithful), though Amir Khusrau and Ziauddin Barani called him *naib* or *khalifa* of God. However, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq reverted to the old title *nasir-i amir-ul muminin*. Muhammad Tughlaq who was of an independent mind, initially in his coins discarded the name of the Caliph. But, around 1344 Muhammad bin Tughlaq received Caliph’s emissary Haji Said Sarsari with letter of investiture, a standard and robe of honour. Sultan in recognition issued coins with Caliph Al-Mustakfi-Billah’s name inscribed on it. Caliph’s name was also recited in the *khutba* during Friday and ‘Id prayers. Muhammad bin Tughlaq after Al-Mustakfi-Billah’s death received another letter of investiture and robe of honour from Caliph Al-Hakim II which was also received by the Sultan with all humility. Firuz Shah also received the letter of investiture of the Caliph Al-Mutasid-Billah in 754AH/1353 CE. The same tradition continued by the Saiyyids and the Lodis. Khizr Khan, the founder of the Saiyyid dynasty received the letter from Shah Rukh and read his name in the *khutba*. However, in 1517 Usmani Turks ended the Abbasid Caliphate and thus again the vacuum was created.

In the Delhi Sultanate, thus, in actual effect, the Caliphate, weakened and far removed as it was, had little direct role to play.

3.3 THE SULTAN

In the early Islamic world, there was no sanction for the position of the Sultan. With the disintegration of the Caliphate, the Sultan began to appear in the sense of a powerful ruler “an independent sovereign of a certain territory”.

The Delhi Sultans could make civil and political regulations for public welfare. *Khutba* and *sikka* were recognised as important attributes of sovereignty. The *khutba* was the formal sermon following the congregational prayer on Fridays wherein the name of the Sultan was mentioned as the head of the community. Coinage was the ruler’s prerogative: his name was inscribed on the coins (*sikka*).

Though in the Muslim world legally *khalifa* was the sovereign, in practice Sultan wielded the supreme power, and ruled almost independent of the Caliph’s authority.

Nonetheless there were number of restrictions on Sultan’s unrestricted power in the form of group pressures: *ulama* wanted him to uphold the course of religion; nobility expected him to be the protector of political interests; *raiyat*/commoners expected peace, security and justice. Though he was the supreme interpreter of

Law (*shariat*) he could not ignore *ijma* (opinion of the Muslim community/jurists). Alauddin Khalji is often accused of transgressing *shara'*. In the context of the use of booty acquired by the Sultan during his Deccan campaigns as a Prince the famous conversation between Qazi Mughisuddin and Alauddin recorded by Barani alleges Alauddin not following the *shariat*. Alauddin was the Sultan of strong will he distinctly asserted his authority over the differences with the *ulama*. For him 'government and administration were affairs quite independent of the rules and orders of the *shariat*' (Nizami 1982: 362). Ultimately, it was the 'political expediency alone which determined the attitude of the ruler' (Nizami 1982: 118). Similarly, ruling over a vast majority of non-Muslims it was extremely difficult for any Sultan to ignore the sentiments and interests of non-Muslims. Alauddin gave rebuttal to Mughisuddin's objections in no uncertain terms:

You may say my acts are against the *shariat*. Now this is how I act...I demand back public money from corrupt revenue officers by kicks and blows, and till the last *jital* has been realized, I keep them in bonds and chains. Political offenders I imprison for life. Will you say all this against the *shariat*?...I issue command which I consider to be beneficial to the state and appear prudent under the circumstances. I do not know whether they are permitted by the *shariat* or not' (Nizami 1982: 363-364).

Similarly, Muhammad Tughlaq possessed extremely original mind and was above influences and pressures and never put religion above politics. In spite of all opposition of the *ulama* and the elite Turkish nobility Muhammad bin Tughlaq opened the highest offices to talent, irrespective of the birth: he appointed Aziz Khummar (the distiller), Firuz Hajjam (the barber), Laddha Baghaban (the gardener) to the highest offices. Aziz Khummar held the office of the governor of Malwa; while Pira Mali was appointed in the *diwan-i wizarat*.

While discussing the powers of the Delhi Sultans Qureshi (1971) rightly puts that, 'the sovereignty of a single man is a legal myth'. No ruler could ignore public opinion, popular protests. Raziya could secure her position as Sultan in Delhi on account of the popular support she received in Delhi. Hasan Nizami and Fakhr-i Mudabbir have also emphasized upon the importance of *shura* (consultation) in the Muslim polity. Even for the efficient working Sultan required the constant support of the nobles. Often influential *ulama* and nobles collectively chose the candidate and proclaimed him the Sultan: Iltutmish was invited by the Turkish nobles headed by Amir Ali Ismail, the *sipah salar* to occupy the throne, similarly, Alauddin Masud Shah, Nasiruddin Mahmud, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1320-1325) all were the choice of the nobles. 'The wise Buhlul could at need humble before the nobles by putting his turban at their feet, the inexperienced Ibrahim lost his throne by alienating them' (Qureshi 1971: 52-53).

Thus, though Sultan was autocrat and all powerful, in practice, he could not ignore the *ulama*, nobility and the public opinion for his position and the efficient working of his administration

Nature of Kingship

The early Muslim Turkish State established itself in north India by virtue of conquests. Since the Turks were far fewer in number than the indigenous population over whom they sought to govern and since they also lacked resources, they, of necessity, had to control the resources of the country. This had an important bearing on the nature of the Turkish State.

In a theoretical and formal sense, the Delhi Sultans recognized the supremacy of the Islamic law (*shariah*) and tried to prevent its open violation. But they had to supplement it by framing secular regulations (*zawabit*), too. A point of view is that the Turkish State was a theocracy; in practice, however, it was the product of expediency and necessity wherein the needs of the young state assumed paramount importance. The contemporary historian Ziauddin Barani distinguished between *jahandari* (“secular”) and *dindari* (“religious”) and accepted the inevitability of some secular features, because of the contingent situations coming up. Thus, the needs of the emergent State shaped many policies and practices not always consistent with Islamic fundamentalism. For example, during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish (1211-1236), a sectarian group (*shafai*) of Muslim divines approached the Sultan and asked him to enforce the Islamic law strictly, that is, giving the Hindus the option of Islam or Death. On behalf of the Sultan, the *wazir*, Junaidi, replied that this could not be done for the moment as the Muslims were like salt in a dish of food. Barani records a conversation that Sultan Alauddin Khalji had with one of his leading theologians, Qazi Mughisuddin, over the question of appropriation of booty. While the Qazi pointed out the legalistic position which prevented the Sultan from taking the major share of the booty, the Sultan is said to have emphasized that he acted according to the needs of the State which were paramount. These instances show that, in practice, the Turkish State was not theocratic but evolved according to its special needs and circumstances despite the fact that the main ruling class professed Islam.

Thus, ‘Law, tradition and expediency...shaped the political outlook of the Sultans and conditioned their theories of kingship. Insofar as they considered themselves the “lieutenants of the Caliph” and looked for investiture from Baghdad, their attitude was determined by the legal requirements of the age’ (Nizami 2002: 101). Sultan’s ideas are best reflected in their *wasayas* (precepts) and among the *wasayas* of Delhi Sultans only Balban’s *wasayas* survive; those contain his instructions to his sons Mahmud and Muhammad and later to Bughra Khan. ‘Balban was in fact an ideal ruler...firm, fair and awe-inspiring. Endowed with rare political vision and energy, he set the confused and disorganized state of affairs of government in order and enhanced the dignity and the prestige of the crown’ (Nizami 2002:104). Lanepool has rightly put it that, ‘No one understood better than Balban the conditions of kingship in India’. Balban’s *wasayas* ‘not only epitomize the political ideology of the Middle Ages but also bring out the inner conflicts of his own political personality...’ (Nizami 2002: 104). Balban advises (Nizami 2002: 105-109):

Wasayas to Mahmud and Muhammad:

- a) The heart of the king reflects the glory of God.
- b) If the king allows the low-born, base, irreligious, and faithless people to interfere in government affairs, he is not only guilty of being ungrateful to God but also occupies the territory of God against the orders of the Day of Creation.
- c) He must behave in such a way that his words, deeds, orders, and personal qualities and virtues may enable people to live according to the laws of *Shariat*.
- d) Pious, religious minded, just and God-fearing men alone should be appointed as *qazis*, officials, *amirdads*, and *muhtasibs* so that the laws of *Shariat* might be enforced through them.
- e) Royal dignity should be maintained both in public and private.

- f) You should understand that kingship is the vicegerent of God.
- g) Only noble, virtuous, wise, and skilled people be allowed to come near you.
- h) Under no circumstances you should allow the mean, the vulgar, and the faithless people, and infidels to gather around you.
- i) If a king lives in the same way as other people live and grants to people what others also can bestow, the glory of sovereign vanishes. A king should live and behave in a way different from other people.
- j) Kingship is not possible without these things “justice, beneficence, pomp, army, treasury, confidence of the people, and a number of selected and distinguished men to assist and serve the Sultan. If there is no justice, there can be no stability in government.
- k) Be on good terms with your people, governors, army, and the pious men.
- l) Use moderation in handling the affairs of your people.
- m) Protect your person from wicked people.

Wasaya to Bughra Khan:

- a) It is not advisable for any ruler of Lakhnauti to rebel against the Sultan of Delhi.
- b) *Wilayat dari* (governorship) and *Iqlim dari* (kingship) are two different things. If a *muqtai* commits mistakes and does not perform his duty properly, he is dismissed by the king and the matter ends there; if, on the other hand, a suzerain commits mistakes, it leads to chaos and dissensions in every direction. The people become unruly, the government loses its stability, and the army gets restive.

Delhi Sultan's, particularly that of Balban's ideas of kingship were a direct importation from Sassanid Persia. The chief features of Balban's theory of kingship were:

- a) His ideal of kingship was divine. He declared king as the vicegerent of God (*niyabat-i khudai*). He claimed king as the shadow of God on earth (*zil al-Allah fil arz*). Implied thereby that he did not derive his power and strength from the nobility or people but from the God, thus he placed himself, his acts above 'scrutiny'.
- b) He believed in external pomp of the sovereignty. Since he was above common men and nobles, he kept himself distant from the masses, he even refused to directly talk to commoners. Iltutmish's nobles Malik Izzuddin Salari and Malik Qutbuddin Hasan also advised Iltutmish 'to maintain royal dignity'. Barani records, they tried to convince Iltutmish that, 'it was necessary for the Sultan to strike awe and terror into the hearts of the people', and because 'one could not discharge the obligations of kingship unless he behaved with dignity' (Nizami 2002: 103).
- c) In the court he maintained strict decorum. He used to appear in the court with full 'regalia' and royal paraphernalia.
- d) A distinct distinction was made between high-born and low-born. It was considered below dignity to interact with a low-born. Barani mentions, Balban used to tell, 'When I happen to look at a low-born person, every artery and vein in my body begins to agitate with fury'.
- e) Balban traced his genealogy from mythical Persian hero Afrasiab mentioned by Firdausi in his *Shahnama*. Balban is even reported to have got enquired the genealogies of his *amirs* and nobles through expert genealogists.

Political Formations

- f) To emphasise upon high ideals of kingship he emulated Persian customs and life-style. His first two sons born before his becoming the Sultan were named Mahmud and Muhammad; but his sons born after becoming Sultan he named them after Persian kings: Kaiqubad, Kaikhusrau, Kaikaus.
- g) Persian court etiquettes and ceremonies were introduced. He insisted on *sijda* (prostate) and *paibos* (feet-kissing). No one dare to have loose talks or cut jokes in the court. During royal ceremonies court was lavishly decorated to the extent that Barani records that it was a matter of talk of the common people. While the Sultan was in a procession Sistani soldiers accompany him with naked swords.
- h) The only redemeeing feature of Balban's kingship was his emphasis on justice. He appointed *barids* (intelligence officers) to keep him informed the activities of his officers. He severely punished Malik Baq Baq, father of Qara Beg, *iqtadar* of Badaun and Haibat Khan, father of Malik Qira, *iqtadar* of Awadh for killing menial servants.

Commenting on Balban's attempt to lay emphasis on high ideals of kingship K.A. Nizami argues that it was more of an expression of his 'inferiority complex and guilty conscience behind these frequent exhortations'. 'By dinning into the ears of his *maliks* and *amirs*, most of whom were his quondam colleagues, again and again that kingship was something divinely ordained, he wanted to wash off the stigma of being a regicide and impress their minds that it was Divine Will that had brought him to the throne and not the poisoned cup and the assassin's dagger' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 281). He was also perhaps never manumitted. 'This basic legal disqualification to rule over the people, he tried to cover under a shrewdly designed mask of "divine commitment" of regal authority' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 281). Nonetheless, 'this display of power, authority and dignity, which was inseparably associated in his mind with his theory of kingship, made the most recalcitrant elements in the country submissive and struck awe and terror into the hearts of the people' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 285).

Succession Issue

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

Thus, in the absence of any succession rule in the very beginning intrigues surfaced to usurp power. After Aibak's death, it was not his son Aram Shah but his slave and son-in-law Iltutmish who captured the throne. Iltutmish's death (1236) was followed by a long period of struggle and strife when finally Balban, Iltutmish's slave of the 'Forty' fame, assumed power in 1266. You have already seen how Balban attempted to give a new shape to the concept of kingship to salvage the prestige of the office of the Sultan, but the struggle for power that started soon after Balban's death confirms again that the 'sword' remained the main deciding factor. Kaiqubad was installed at the throne against the claims of Balban's nominee, Kaikhusrau. Later, even he was slain by the Khalji Maliks (1290) who laid the foundation of the Khalji rule. In 1296 Alauddin Khalji, killed his uncle, Jalaluddin Khalji and occupied the throne. Alauddin Khalji's death signalled civil war and scramble for power. Muhammad Tughlaq's reign weakened due to the rebellions

of *amirs*. Rivalries that followed after Firuz Tughlaq ultimately led to the rise of the Saiyyids (1414-51).

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

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) What were the symbols of allegiance maintained by the Delhi Sultans with respect to the Caliphate?
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- 2) Discuss the power and position of the Delhi Sultans.
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- 3) What were the chief features of Balban’s theory of sovereignty?
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- 4) How far did the absence of law of primogeniture contribute to the decline of the Sultanate?
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3.4 TURKAN-I CHIHILGANI

Turkan-i Chihilgani (Barani calls them *bandagan Turk Chihilgan*; group of ‘forty’ Turkish slave officers) was the creation of Iltutmish who used their expertise, unflinching courage, commitment, unconditional fidelity and adroitness for the consolidation of his nascent Sultanate. These Turkish slaves were nurtured with extreme care. They were purchased by Iltutmish at an high cost (each for an average

of 50000 *jitals* or more). They excelled in valour and courage and possessed excellent qualities to administer the territories. Minhaj lists twenty-five from the 'group of forty'. Some of them are referred to by Minhaj as Muizzi suggests probably Iltutmish inherited them from his master Muizzuddin bin Sam. These slave officers were well trained in the art of warfare, provided educational training of Persian, Arabic and *Shariat*.

The most prominent among them were: Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan Ayaz. Iltutmish purchased him from the heirs of Malik Nasiruddin Husain. Ruknuddin Firuz made him *iqtadar* of Sunam. Raziya appointed him at Lahore and also gave *iqta* of Multan; Malik Izzuddin Salari was appointed by Raziya *iqtadar* of Badaun; Malik Saifuddin Kuchi was appointed *iqtadar* of Hansi; Malik Alauddin Jani held the *iqtadari* of Lahore; Ikhtiyaruddin Qaraqash Khan Aitigin was a Qara-Khita Turk. Iltutmish assigned him *iqta* of Multan. He purchased him from Amir Aibek Sunami. Raziya appointed him *iqtadar* of Badaun, and later made him *amir-i hajib*; Ikhtiyaruddin Altunia was *sar chatrdar* at the time of Iltutmish's death. Raziya appointed him *iqtadar* of Baran and later of Tabarhinda (Bhatinda).

However, Iltutmish would have never thought of that those Turkish slaves whom he nurtured with so much affection and trust and raised them to the highest offices would, one day be responsible for series of murders of his descendents and one day would completely exterminate his male line. After Iltutmish's death they practically emerged as king-makers and finally with Balban's accession (who was one of the member of the 'group of forty') they assumed the royal power. They all wielded almost equal power and claimed equality among all being slaves of one of one master (Shamsi) and formed one group (Turkish-slaves). Barani mentions that they claimed: 'I and none other'... What are you that I am not and what have you been that I have not been.' Barani laments: 'Owing to the incompetence of the successors of Shamsuddin and the predominance of the Shamsi slaves, no dignity was left with the supreme command...; and the court of Shamsuddin, which had grown in stability and power till it exceeded the courts of all kings of the inhabited world, was now a thing of no value' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 233).

Very early, Raziya realized the increasing power of the Turkish slaves, attempted to offset them by creating a parallel counter-nobility. It was this that brought her in direct conflict with the **Tajik** (non-Turkish free-born foreigners of high lineage; largely Persians) Turks and Turkish slave officers. Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, a Tajik, *wazir* of Iltutmish opposed Raziya's accession supported by the 'group of forty' (Malik Alauddin Jani, Malik Saifuddin Kuchi, Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan Ayaz, and Malik Izzuddin Muhammad Salari). Raziya's appointment of an Abyssinian Malik Jamaluddin Yaqut to the post of *amir-i akhur* was equally resented by the Turkish slave officers; the office was never before given to a non-Turk. Aitigin and Altunia raised the banner of revolt, rejecting Raziya they placed Muizzuddin Bahram Shah to the throne. Raziya in her attempt to gain power married Altunia. However, Raziya and Altunia got defeated and were later killed (1240).

Under Bahram this 'group of forty' succeeded in creating an office of *naib-i mamalakat* which was directly aimed at creating a parallel power centre and undermining the power of the monarchy. Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Aitigin was appointed to the post; while Muhazzabuddin Muhammad Iwaz held the office of *wazir*. Aitigin not only married the divorced sister of the Sultan but also started keeping elephants

and *naubat* (kettle-drum) at the gate of his house which were exclusive privileges of the Sultan in direct violation. Bahram tried to get rid of Aitigin and I was and got Aitigin killed but Iwaz escaped. Again Sadrul Mulk Saiyyid Tajuddin Ali Musawi hatched the conspiracy against Bahram. Though Bahram also got him killed but could not sustain long the conspiracies of the Turkish slaves and was assassinated by them in 1242. Thus Turkish slaves emerged king-makers; already killed two of Iltutmish's successors. However, they were content with acquiring administrative power and never aspired to replace the Shamsi dynasty. Besides, they enjoyed trust within the 'group of forty' and never attempted to kill each other, a policy which later Balban resorted to.

Turkish slaves now put Alauddin Masud Shah, son of Ruknuddin Firuz to the throne. Tajiks and Turkish slaves distributed the choicest offices among themselves: Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghuri was appointed *naib-i mamalakat*; Ikhtiyaruddin Qaraqash was made *amir-i hajib*; and Malik Izuddin Balban Kishlu Khan was granted *iqta* of Mandor and Ajmer; while Malik Tajuddin Sanjar Qutlaq received Badaun. Balban Kishlu Khan was the most ambitious of the group of 'forty'. Balban was brought from Turkistan to Baghdad and purchased by Khwaja Jamaluddin Basir who brought him to India and was sold to Iltutmish along with his half brother Saifuddin Aibek (Kishli Khan) and father's brother's son Nusratuddin Sher Khan. Under Iltutmish Balban served as *khasadar*. Bahram Shah made him *amir-i akhur* and received *iqta* of Rewari and later received governorship of Hansi. After Muhazzabuddin's murder he got the office of *amir-i hajib*. Balban gradually attempted to remove all powerful Maliks of the group of forty. In 1246, Masud Shah was also imprisoned by the Turkish slaves where he died. Turkish slaves then put Nasiruddin Mahmud, grandson of Iltutmish, to the throne.

Nasiruddin Mahmud who owed his power to Shamsi maliks had no choice but to obey them. Commenting on Nasiruddin Mahmud's meek surrender Isami mentions that he 'was from his heart the well-wisher of every one of them...He expressed no opinion without their prior permission; he did not move his hands or feet except their order. He would neither drink water nor go to sleep except with their knowledge' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 257). But so long as the 'group of forty' remained united Nasiruddin Mahmud had no problem adjusting to their whims. Balban was the most ambitious and powerful of them who was stationed at Delhi. Nasiruddin Mahmud did what Balban asked him to do. Nasiruddin Mahmud married Balban's daughter in 1249 which was followed by the appointment of Balban as *naib-i mamalakat* and received the title Ulugh Khan (the premier Khan). Balban's younger brother Saifuddin Aibek was made *amir-i hajib* and also received the title Kishli Khan. By 1250 a substantial part of the empire came into the hands of one family, that of Balban: at the centre were Ulugh Khan and Kishli Khan; whole Sind was under the control of his cousin Sher Khan; at Lakhnauti (Bengal) Yazbek Tughril Khan was incharge who was Iltutmish's slave and was an appointee of Balban. Ulugh Khan also held the territories of Hansi and Siwalik; while Nagaur was with Saifuddin Kishli Khan.

This raised alarm and suspicion among other Turkish slave officers. Circumstances changed fast with the rise of Imaduddin Raihan, an Indian Muslim to power in 1252-53 who was appointed *wakildar* (deputy to the king in judicial matters). This raised alarm not only among the Turkish slaves but also among the Tajiks (free born non-Turks) also opposed his appointment and rise to power. Balban

succeeded in defeating and later killing him in 1255. Immediately after that shockingly Ulugh Khan ordered the public assassination of Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghuri. Never before the dissensions within the Tajiks and the ‘group of forty’ cropped up to such an extent. By 1257 another senior member of the group Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbek Tughril Khan died in Lakhnauti; while in 1258 Balban poisoned Qutlagh Khan and Arsalan Khan. Thus began Balban’s policy of wiping out major contenders from within the ‘group of forty’. Ulugh Khan’s half brother Kishli Khan also died in 1259 to Balban’s advantage and he also got his uncle’s son Sher Khan poisoned. Finally, Ulugh Khan poisoned Nasiruddin Mahmud in 1266 and usurped the crown with the title Ghiyasuddin Balban. Firishta informs that ‘he killed many of the descendants of Shamsuddin Iltutmish whom he considered to be rivals for the throne’. On Balban’s accession Isami also remarks, ‘When Ulugh Khan ascended the throne the teeth of the officers were broken; they all came under his control without any argument or reasoning’ (Habib & Nizami 1982: 276). Thus with a number of the ‘group of forty’ gone or eliminated Balban was left with hardly any resistance from the ‘group of forty’ to reckon with. The only strong Shamsi Malik left was Tughril Beg at Lakhnauti whom Balban finally got brutally murdered through his officers, not even sparing those who supported him.

Thus the ‘group of forty’ whom Iltutmish created and utilized effectively for the consolidation of his nascent empire not only completely extinguished the Shamsi line of descendents by brutally murdering all of them but also broke the back of the entire Turkish nobility. His policy of ‘poison and dagger’ proved fatal and wiped away ‘talented and gifted Turkish nobles’. ‘Anxious to secure his personal and family interests, he [Balban] completely ignored the interests of the Turkish governing class. He destroyed the talent amongst the Turkish nobles so ruthlessly that when the Khaljis entered the field as competitors for the throne against them, they were completely outmaneuvered and defeated. Balban’s responsibility for the fall of the Turkish power in India cannot be denied. His consolidation programme, no doubt, ensured the continuance of the Delhi sultanate and paved the way for the further expansion of the sultanat under the Khaljis, but his attitude towards the Turkish nobility crippled it and reduced its life-span’ (Habib & Nizami 1982: 286).

Check Your Progress-2

1) Discuss the role played by *Turkan-i Chihilgani* as kingmakers after the death of Iltutmish.

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2) What was the impact of the policy of Balban to eradicate the ‘group of forty’?

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3.5 COMPOSITION OF THE SULTANATE RULING CLASS/NOBILITY

At the time of the Ghorian invasions, North India was divided into a number of principalities ruled by *rais* and *ranas* (local chiefs). At the village level, *khots* and *muqaddams* (village headman) stood on the borderline of the rural aristocracy. In between, the *chaudhuri* can be spotted as the head of hundred villages.

At any rate, we can accept a broad definition of the position of the pre-Ghorian ruling class as one which appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants, by exercising superior rights over land. In analyzing the formation of the ruling class in the Sultanate, some pertinent questions arise: How did the new ruling class supplant this older ruling class? What measures did it adopt for appropriating the surplus revenue? How was it different from the class that it supplanted?

Throughout the thirteenth century, the Turkish armies furthered the political and military control over North India. By the mid-fourteenth century, it spread to the Deccan. A large alien territory had to be pacified and governed and the ruling class had to be maintained and sustained. The early Turkish ruling class was very much in the nature of a co-sharer of political and financial powers with the Sultans. In the beginning, the nobles (*amiran*) were practically independent in distant areas of the conquered territories where they were sent by the Centre as governors. The latter were designated *muqti* or *wali* and their territories were known as *iqtas*. Gradually, the practice began of transferring *muqtis* from one *iqta* to another (a detailed discussion on *iqta* system is given in **Unit 4**). The pre-Ghorian political structure seems to have continued, with tribute being realised from the *rais* and *ranas*, who were expected to collect taxes as they had done before.

From our contemporary historians, like Minhaj Siraj and Barani, we learn that the most important nobles, and even the Sultans, in the early stages of the foundation of the Sultanate, were from the families of the Turkish slave-officers. Many of the early Turkish nobles and Sultans had started their early career as slaves but they received letters of manumission (*khat-i azadi*) before becoming Sultans. One such was Qutbuddin Aibak. On his death in 1210, Iltutmish, one of his favoured slaves, seized Delhi and set himself up as Sultan. He created his own corps of Turkish slaves – the Shamsi *maliks*, called by Barani *turkan-i chihilgani* ('The Forty'). Iltutmish's nobility also included a number of *Tajik* or free-born officers. That this element of free-born immigrants continued to form a part of the ruling class is noted by Minhaj at the time of Nasiruddin Mahmud's accession (1246). The problem of succession after the death of Iltutmish brought into light the division within the nobles.

In spite of the internal quarrels within the ruling class, there was a basic solidarity which manifested itself in its hostility to outsiders. For example, Raziya's (1236-1240) elevation of an Abyssinian, Jamaluddin Yaqut, to the post of *amir-i akhur* ('master of the royal horses') caused great resentment. Similar was the case of Raihan, a Hindu covert to Islam. Thus, the nobility was seen as the preserver of the certain groups, sometimes under the principle of 'high birth', as reflected in the policies ascribed to Balban by Barani.

Now you can understand how an identity of interests bound the dominant groups. Race and perhaps religion, too, played important role in the formation of ruling

groups. Actually, the ruling class was not a monolithic organization. There were numerous factions and cliques, each trying to guard their exclusive positions jealously. The Turkish military leaders who accompanied and participated in the Ghorian invasion formed the core of the early Turkish ruling class: they acquired most of the key-posts at the centre and provinces.

3.5.1 The Ilbarites

Qutbuddin Aibak who succeeded to the Indian territories of Muhammad Ghori, had no greater right than the other nobles like Yalduz and Qubacha who asserted their independence and autonomy at Ghazna and Sind respectively. This was to be a feature of the early history of the Sultanate. The Sultans needed the support of the nobility to establish and maintain themselves in power. For instance, Iltutmish came to the throne with the support of the nobles of Delhi. The Turkish nobles played an important part in elevating Sultans to the throne and supporting contenders to the throne. According to Barani, the older Turkish nobility used to tell each other: 'What are thou that I am not and what will thou be, that I shall not.'

The early Turkish nobility sought to emphasize their exclusiveness and their monopoly to rule. Efforts by other social groups to challenge their monopoly were resented and resisted.

Iltutmish's governing class largely constituted the Turkish slaves. The Turkish slaves nobles of Iltutmish called *turkan-i chihilgani* ('The Forty') wielded considerable power after his death. They were an important group, and efforts by the Sultans to incorporate other groups were met with much resistance. As already mentioned, Raziya Sultan had to face stiff opposition from the Turkish *amirs*, when she elevated an Abyssinian, Jamaluddin Yaqut, to the office of *amir-i akhur*. Efforts of Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-1266) to break the vested power of this group by dismissing Balban (who was one of the 'Forty') from the court and replacing him by an Indian convert, Imaduddin Raihan, did not meet with much success. Minhaj voiced the anger of the 'Turks of pure lineage' who 'could not tolerate Imaduddin Raihan of the tribes of Hind to rule over them'. The opposition of the Turkish ruling class forced the Sultan to remove Raihan and reinstate Balban.

Besides the Turkish slaves, there was another prominent and powerful section of free-born non-Turkish group of that of the Tajiks (free Turks) in the nobility. Among them the most prominent was Nizamul Mulk Junaidi who served as *wazir* of Iltutmish. Other important and powerful Tajik nobles of Iltutmish were Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghuri and Fakhrul Mulk Isami (grandfather of Isami). Turks and Tajiks together constituted the backbone and helped in the consolidation of Iltutmish's empire.

On his accession to the throne, Balban (1266-1286) took measures to break the power of the *turkan-i chihilgani* by various measures. He himself was the creation of a group of nobles loyal to him. Barani states that Balban had several of the older Turkish nobles killed. This was an effort to intimidate the nobility, who could and did pose a challenge to the Crown. Balban himself, according to Barani, kept Sultan Nasiruddin as a 'puppet' (*namuna*); therefore, he was viceroy of the leading old nobles (for details on *turkan-i chihilgani* see **Section 3.4**).

3.5.2 The Khaljis

In 1290, the Ilbari dynasty was overthrown by the Khaljis. The coming to power of

the Khaljis is seen as something new by contemporary historians. Barani mentions that the Khaljis were a different ‘race’ from the Turks. Modern scholars like C.E. Bosworth speak of them as Turks, but in the thirteenth century no one considered them as Turks, and thus it seems that the accession to power was regarded as something novel because earlier they did not form a significant part of the ruling class. Alauddin Khalji further eroded the power of the older Turkish nobility by bringing in new groups such as the Mongols (the ‘New Muslims’), Indians and Abyssinians (for the latter, the example of Malik Kafur is well-known). This trend towards a broadening of the composition of the ruling class continued during the rule of the Tughlaqs.

It may be incidentally mentioned here that there was a very small group called *kotwalian* (plural of *kotwal*) at Delhi during the reign of Balban and Alauddin Khalji. In fact, this was a family group, headed by Fakhruddin who was the *kotwal* of Delhi. This group appears to have played some political role during and after Balban’s death.

3.5.3 The Tughluqs

Under Muhammad Tughlaq, apart from the Indians and the Afghans, the ruling class, became unprecedently more heterogenous with the entry of larger numbers of foreign elements, especially the *Khurasani*, whom the Sultan called *aizza* (dear ones). Many of them were appointed as *amir sadah* (‘commander of hundred’). Concerning the non-Muslim as well as the converted Indians, Barani laments that the Sultan raised the ‘low-born’ (*jawahir-i lutrah*) to high status. He mentions musicians, barbers, cooks, etc. who got high positions. He gives the example of Peera Mali (gardener) who was given the *diwan-i wizarat*. Converts like Aziz-ud Din *khammar* (distiller) and Qawamul Mulk Maqbul, Afghans like Malik Makh and Malik Shahu Lodi Afghan, Hindus like Sai Raj Dhara and Bhiran Rai were given *iqtas* and positions.

The reign of Firuz Tughlaq does not give us any clear pattern about the social origins of the nobles. The situation was fluid with a false veneer of peace between the Sultan and the *amirs*. Certain designations were used with reference to the nobles – *khan*, *malik* and *amir*. *Khan* was often used with reference to Afghan nobles, *amir* came to mean a commander, *malik* – a chief, ruler, or king. Along with their titles of honour, the nobles were given some symbols of dignity designated as *maratib* which signified privileges – *khilat* (robe of honour), sword and dagger presented by the Sultan, horses and elephants that they were entitled to use in their processions, canopy of State and the grant of parasol (*chhatri*) and insignia and kettle-drums.

It is significant to note that every Sultan sought to form and organize a group of nobles which would be personally loyal to him. This obviated the necessity of depending upon previous groups whose loyalty was suspect. That is why we find the contemporary historians employing terms like Qutbi (ref. Qutbuddin Aibak), Shamsi (ref. Shamsuddin Iltutmish), Balbani (ref. Balban) and Alai (ref. Alauddin Khalji) *amirs*. But one thing was quite certain: every group tried to capture the attention of the Sultan – whether weak or strong – because all privileges and power issued forth from the sovereign. This, in turn, went to a great extent in strengthening gradually the position of the Sultan himself if he was a man of strong will.

The Afghans were frequently recruited into the feudal bureaucracy of the Delhi

Sultanate. With the coming of the Lodis (1451-1526), the Afghan predominance got enlarged.

Check Your Progress-3

1) Examine the composition of the ruling class under the Ilbarites.

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2) What changes were brought about in the composition of the nobility under the Khaljis and the Tughluqs?

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3) Mark right (✓) or wrong (×) against the following statements:

- a) In the thirteenth century the Turkish nobles were paid in cash. ()
- b) Muhammad Tughlaq incorporated different social groups into his nobility. ()
- c) Barani regards the Khaljis as Turks. ()

3.6 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE NOBILITY AND THE SULTANS

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

Under the Ilbarite rule (1206-90), the conflicts usually revolved around three issues: succession, organization of the nobility and division of economic and political power between them and the Sultans. When Qutbuddin Aibak became the Sultan, his authority was not accepted by the influential nobles such as Qubacha (governor of Multan and Uchh), Yilduz (governor of Ghazni), and Ali Mardan (governor of Bengal). This particular problem was inherited by Iltutmish who finally overcame it through diplomacy as well as by force. Later, Iltutmish organised the nobles in a corporate body, known as *turkan-i chihilgani* ('The Forty') which was personally loyal to him. Naturally, other groups of nobles (see Section 3.5) envied the status and privileges of the members of the 'Forty', but this does not mean that the latter were free from their internal bickerings. At the most they united in one principle: to plug the entry of non-Turkish persons in the charmed circle as far as possible. On the other hand, the 'Forty' tried to retain its political influence over the Sultan who would not like to alienate this group, but at the same time would not surrender his royal privilege of appointing persons of other groups as officers. Thus, a delicate balance was achieved by Iltutmish which broke down after his death. For example, Iltutmish had declared his daughter, Raziya, as his successor during his life, but some nobles did not approve her succession after his death, because she tried to

organize non-Turkish groups (Abyssinians and Indians) as counterweight to the 'Forty'. That was one main reason why a number of nobles of this group supported her brother, Ruknuddin whom they thought to be incompetent and weak, thereby giving them an opportunity to maintain their position. This spectacle continued during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-66) also, as exemplified by the rise and fall of Imaduddin Raihan, an Indian convert. This episode coincided with the banishment of Balban who was the *naib* (deputy) of Sultan Mahmud (and also belonged to the 'Forty') and his subsequent recall.

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

The reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) saw a broadening in the composition of nobles. He did not admit of monopolisation of the state by any one single group of nobles. State offices were open to talent and loyalty, to the exclusion of race and creed. Besides, he controlled them through various measures (see **Section 3.5**). Moreover, the enhancement of land revenue up to 50 per cent of the surplus produce (see **Unit 9**) must have pacified the nobles because an increase in the revenue of their respective *iqta* would have raised their salary, too. Territorial expansion also provided enough resources towards recruiting persons with *talent*. The case of Malik Kafur, an Abyssinian slave, is well-known. But this situation was shortlived: the death of Alauddin Khalji brought out once again the dissensions and conspiracies of the nobles, leading to the elimination of the Khaljis as rulers.

As for the Tughlaqs, you know (see **Section 3.5**) how Muhammad Tughlaq made attempts to organize nobles again and again, with turns and twists. But all his efforts failed to put them under check. Even the Khurasanis, whom he used to call 'Aizzah' (the dear ones), betrayed him. The problems created by the nobles can be gauged from the fact that twenty-two rebellions took place during his reign with the loss of at least one territory, later known as Bahmani kingdom.

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

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

3.7 THE ULAMA

The *ulama*, the theological class, had an important position in the Sultanate. It was from them that important legal and judicial appointments were made – the *sadr-us sudur*, *shaikh-ul Islam*, *qazi*, *mufti muhtasib*, *imam* and *khatib*. The *ulama* can be seen as an adjunct of the ruling class, maintained by revenue grants from the Sultan, and often by members of the ruling class. The ideological significance of the *ulama* was great as they provided legitimacy to the ruling class. They exercised an influence which was not only religious but sometimes political, too.

Ulama were the most scholarly and esteemed section of the Muslim society. They largely devoted themselves in teaching and scholarly pursuits. They were men of piety and high morals. It was considered that they were ‘heirs of the Prophets’ *ilm-Faraz* (Muslim law). However, they were not ordained priests. Any person of piety, scholarship and of high morals could have been accepted by the society and could become an *alim* (plural *ulama*). On the basis of their attitude towards worldly affairs *ulama* were divided into two categories: *ulama-i akharat* those who led life of piety and learning and kept themselves aloof from the materialistic and political pursuits. Among them Alauddin Usuli of Badaun, teacher of Nizamuddin Auliya held high esteem during the Sultanate period. Maulana Shihabuddin of Meerut, Maulana Ahmad and Maulana Kathali are praised by Nizamuddin Auliya as the three *danishmands* (scholars) of his time. Baba Farid Ganj-i Shakar was also full of praise of Maulana Nur Turk.

The second category was of *ulama-i duniya* who mixed freely with kings and nobles and possessed mundane outlook. *Ulama-i duniya* aspired materialistic gains and often appointed at number of state offices of religious nature. The highest religious office of the state was *qazi-i mamalik/sadr-i jahan/sadr-us sudur*. *Shaikh-ul Islam* was the highest ecclesiastical office which was responsible for the religious grants and the maintenance of the pious and the destitutes. Iltutmish appointed Saiyyid Nuruddin Mubarak Ghaznavi to the office of *Shaikh-ul Islam*. Shaikh Jalaluddin Bistami also served as *Shaikh-ul Islam* under Iltutmish.

Qazis were appointed in almost every town who were responsible to look after exclusively the civil disputes as per *Shariat*. Balban aptly remarked about the *qazis* of his reign: ‘I have three *qazis*, one of them does not fear me but fears God; the other one does not fear God but fears me; the third one neither fears me nor God...Fakhr Naqila fears me but does not fear God; the *Qazi-i Lashkar* fears God but does not fear me; Minhaj neither fears me nor God.’

Khatibs and *imams* were often appointed in the mosques and lead prosperous lifestyle who used to organize *tazkir* (sermon) meetings. Minhaj-us Siraj held the offices of *qaza*, *khitaat*, *imamat*, and *ihtisab*. He was so good that Nizamuddin Auliya in his younger days used to go every Monday to listen to his sermons. They, at times, were also asked to recite sermons in the moment of crisis, to inspire and encourage forces and masses. When Mongols attacked, Bahram Shah asked to deliver sermons (*tazkir*) at his *Qasr-i Sufaid*. Though none of these offices were hereditary, often certain families emerged as family of the *qazis*.

A number of *ulama* were appointed at *madradas* as teachers; esteemed ones often held the principalship of *madradas*. Minhaj held the position of the principalship of Muizi and Nasiriyah *madradas* in Delhi. Maulana Zainuddin was appointed as teacher in Muizi *madrada*.

Ulama enjoyed great respect in the court of Delhi Sultans. Hasan Nizami mentions great respect shown by Aibak towards *ulama*. During Iltutmish's reign Iltutmish faced first attack of *ulama* at the time of his accession when *ulama* led by Qazi Wajhuddin Kashani asked whether he was properly manumitted? However, Iltutmish handled the situation so tactfully that they became his supporters all through to the extent that when Raziya was appointed heir there was no protest from the *ulama* to her accession. During Bahram Shah's reign *ulama* became quite powerful; even some of the *qazis* entered into matrimonial alliances with the royal household. Qazi Nasiruddin married a sister of Muizuddin Bahram. They frequently involved into dirty politics and lost their moral and religious dignity.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) What measures were undertaken by Alauddin Khalji to control his nobility?
.....
.....
.....
- 2) Critically analyse the conflict between the nobility and the Delhi Sultans. Do you agree that over ambitions of the nobility contributed to the decline of the Sultanate? Comment.
.....
.....
.....
- 3) What role did the *ulama* play in the Sultanate polity?
.....
.....
.....

3.8 SUMMARY

The Delhi Sultanate formed very much part of the Eastern Caliphate. Legally, the political head of the Sultanate was the Caliph. However, for all practical purposes Sultan was independent and all powerful. Delhi Sultans acknowledged Caliphal authority and welcomed Caliph's envoy, his *manshur* and robes of honour with pomp and dignity.

With the establishment of the Sultanate a new ruling class emerged which was entirely different in its nature and composition to its predecessors. In the beginning, primarily, it maintained its alien (Turkish) character, but, later, as the process of amalgamation deepened, the Sultans started recruiting nobles from other social groups as well. Thus, the nature and the character of the nobility widened greatly and not only the Turks, but Indian Muslims, non-Muslims and even foreigners (Abyssinians, etc.) were incorporated into its fold.

One political reason for the decline of the Sultanate was the absence of any well-established and universally accepted law of succession. This was in line with the entire history of the Islamic polity. As long as a Sultan was strong and was able to

gain the support of some groups of nobles, he could continue with some superficial semblance of dynastic stability. Dissensions and conflicts amongst the ruling groups might remain apparently dormant in such circumstances; but at the slightest opportunity their internal struggle would come to the force often in a violent fashion.

The *ulama* can also be seen as an adjunct of the ruling class who were primarily maintained by revenue-free land grants or *wazifa* (cash). Sultan though recognized *ulama*'s power and attempted to abide by *sharia*, the Sultanate state was not a theocracy, instead Delhi Sultans, particularly Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq, acted as per political expediency and often transgressed *shariat*.

3.9 KEYWORDS

<i>Aizzah</i>	“Dear Ones” (Khurasani nobles under Muhammad Tughluq)
<i>Amir-i akhur</i>	Master of royal stable/ horses
<i>Amir-i sadah</i>	“Centurians”, “Commander of hundred”
<i>Khat-i azadi</i>	Letter of manumission
<i>Tajik</i>	a race/“free-born nobles”
<i>Turkan-i chihilgani</i>	“The Forty” (corporate body of Turkish nobles of Ilutmish)
<i>Ulama</i>	Theologians
<i>Umara</i>	Nobles (plural of <i>amir</i>)
<i>Wajhdar</i>	Salaried persons <i>iqta</i> -holders

3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 3.2
- 2) See Section 3.3
- 3) See Section 3.3
- 4) See Section 3.3

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 3.4
- 2) See Section 3.4

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 3.5.1
- 2) See Sub-sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3
- 3) a) × b) ✓ c) ×

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Section 3.6
- 2) See Section 3.7
- 3) See Section 3.8

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Habib, Mohammad & Nizami, K.A., (ed.) (1982) *Comprehensive History of India* Vol. V: *Delhi Sultanate CE 1206-1526* (Delhi: People's Publishing House).

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3.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

Political Structure of the Delhi Sultanate: 13th and 14th Centuries

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hscPJx6_KQ

Political Structure of the Delhi Sultanate: 13th and 14th Centuries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pc-36H7PFA>

Unit 4 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Central Administration under the Delhi Sultanate
 - 4.2.1 The Royal Household
 - 4.2.2 *Diwan-i Wizarat*
 - 4.2.3 *Diwan-i Arz*
 - 4.2.4 *Diwan-i Risalat*
 - 4.2.5 *Diwan-i Insha*
 - 4.2.6 *Barids* (News Reporters)
- 4.3 Provincial Administration under the Delhi Sultanate
 - 4.3.1 *Iqta* System
 - 4.3.2 *Muqti/Wali*
 - 4.3.3 *Sahib-i Diwan*
 - 4.3.4 *Shiqq*
 - 4.3.5 *Pargana* and Village Officials
- 4.4 Town, Forts and *Thanas*
- 4.5 Postal System
- 4.6 Nature of Administration under the Delhi Sultanate
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 Keywords
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 4.10 Suggested Readings
- 4.11 Instructional Video Recommendations

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- analyze the nature of administration under the Delhi Sultanate,
- list the different departments at the central and provincial level under the Delhi Sultanate and understand their workings,
- identify basic features of *iqta* system under the Delhi Sultans,

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- know changes introduced in *iqta* system during the 14th century,
- control of the ruling class over the revenue resources of the empire,
- understand the administrative set-up at the local level and its linkage with the central authority, and
- evaluate the manner in which control was exercised by various officials under the Delhi Sultans.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already read in Unit 2 how in 1206 Qutbuddin Aibak laid the foundation of an independent Sultanate at Delhi and a beginning was made in severing links with Central Asia. We have also dealt with the territorial expansion under the Sultans. The initial Turkish conquests in the early 13th century displaced many local chiefs. In order to consolidate power, the Turkish rulers made revenue assignments (*iqta*), in lieu of cash to their nobles (*umara*). The present Unit introduces you to the central and provincial administrative system, *iqta* system in operation and the nature of administration under the Delhi Sultanate.

4.2 CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

The central administrative machinery of the Sultanate consisted of the nobles controlling various offices with the Sultan at the helm of affairs.

4.2.1 The Royal Household

It was the Royal Household where the business of the state was conducted by the Sultan. All discussions and deliberations and decisions were taken place by the Sultan here. For the efficient working there were plethora of officials performing the duties with extreme precision.

Wakil-i Dar

The *wakil-i dar* looked after the entire household. All allowances and salaries to the Sultan's personal staff were disbursed by him. All the departments of the Royal Household – royal kitchen, stables, even affairs of the royal children, queens – were under him. All matters to be reported to the king must reach to him first and all orders passed first entered and got registered here before being disbursed. He acts in real sense as a *deputy* of the Sultan. It was his duty to keep informed the Sultan about all the affairs of the realm. Since he had to deal directly with the Sultan, queens, princes, and other officials directly, he needed to be extremely efficient and tactful. *Naib-i wakil-i dar* worked as his assistant.

Amir-i Hajib

Amir-i Hajib (the chief chamberlain), also known as *barbek*, was the master of the ceremonies at the royal court. All petitions to the Sultan were submitted through the latter. There were other minor officials also. He looked after the placement of nobles in the court as per their ranks. He was assisted by a number of *hajibs*. No one could meet the emperor without being introduced by him. All petitions to the Sultan were to pass through *amir-i hajib*. In the absence of the Sultan he used to work as his deputy in the capital. A few *hajibs* were always in Sultan's attendance,

were known as *khas hajibs*. *Hajibs* incharge of the inventories of the Sultan's presents received were known as *hajib-i fasl*. The office of *amir-i hajib* was of extreme importance and was generally being given to princes of royal blood or to a highly acclaimed and trusted noble.

Naqaib-ul Nuqaba

Naqaib-ul Nuqaba was incharge of proclaiming all orders of the Sultan among the nobles, soldiers and the common masses. His place was in front of the door leading to the Audience Hall. It was his duty to scrutinize all who were entering the court.

Sar-Jandar and Sar-Silahdar

Sultan's bodyguards were known as *jandar* and its head was known as *sar-jandar*. He needed to be a young man with charming personality, an expert soldier, and above all the most loyal and trusted noble. *Jandars* were largely recruited from among the trusted and loyal slaves. Balban recruited Sistani nobles as *jandar* and paid them hefty salaries ranging from sixty to seventy thousand *jitals* annually.

Silahdars were other fully armed soldiers and their incharge was known as *sar-silahdar*. They stood besides the Sultan with naked swords during his public audience or when he was in procession. There were generally two *sar-silahdars* one for each wing.

Besides, it was the duty of the *uhadadar-i darha* to ensure the safety and security of the gates at night. He was supposed to physically inspect that all the gates were properly bolted and guards were in proper place.

Amir-i majlis was to marshall all private parties of the Sultan.

4.2.2 *Diwan-i Wizarat*

The *wazir* (chief minister), as the head of the *diwan-i wizarat*, was the most important figure in the central administration. Though he was one of the four important departmental heads, he exercised a general supervisory authority over others. The entire finance was under his jurisdiction. The *wizarat* organized the collection of revenue, exercised control over expenditure, kept accounts, disbursed salaries and allotted revenue assignments (*iqta*) at Sultan's order. In fact no area of public administration was beyond his jurisdiction.

The *wazir* was generally styled as *sadr-i ali* later he was known as *khwajah-i jahan*. There were two types of *wazirs*: *wazir-i tafwiz* and *wazir-ut tanfiz*; while the former exercised unlimited power and authority, the latter worked just as a meek subordinate to the sovereign. In fact power of the *wazir* depended upon the personality of the Sultan. If the Sultan was weak often *wazirs* enjoyed unlimited powers as we have seen what happened after the death of Iltutmish. Iltutmish's *wazir* Nizamul Mulk Junaidi after his death rebelled and rejected to accept Raziya as Sultan. Since then till Balban usurped the throne all Shamsi Sultans were mere puppets in the hands of the *wazirs*. However, under Sultans like Balban and Alauddin *wazirs* were mere implementor of the Sultan's will/orders. Again we see during the later years of Firuz Shah Tughlaq Khan-i Jahan emerged all powerful.

A person of high character, trust and great knowledge were appointed to the office. In the atmosphere of great intrigues *wazir* needed to be well informed and had to be alert of the court happenings and actions of the nobles.

There were several officials who helped the *wizarat*. To assist him there was a *naib-wazir*. ***Mushrif-i mumalik*** was the accountant-general; while *mustaufi-i mumalik* was the auditor-general. However, under Firuz duties of *mushrif* and *mustaufi* were bifurcated; while the former was made incharge of the income; the latter looked after the expenditure. These officials had direct access to the Sultan. Al-Qalqashandi mentions that under each of these officers three hundred clerks were employed to assist them. *Mushrif* was assisted by a *nazir*. Jalaluddin Khalji created a new office of *waqf* to supervise expenditure of the local authorities. During the reign of Alauddin Khalji, the *diwan-i mustakhraj* was made responsible for the collection of arrears of revenue. Muhammad Tughlaq created a separate *diwan* for agriculture called *diwan-i amir-i kohi*. However, after the Sultan's death it went into oblivion.

Naib-ul mulk/mamalikat

Naib-ul mulk was another officer who served as lieutenant of the realm. Habibullah (1927: 228) calls him the 'extraordinary officer'. His powers were greater than the regent and the *wazir*. The *wazir* was simply a bureaucrat but '*naib*' could take important decisions in the absence of the king and issue directions. But his authority and power depended on the personality of the Sultan. Under the weak Shamsi Sultans he emerged all powerful. But under the strong rulers it was a mere empty title. Behram was forced to agree to appoint Aitigin his *naib*. Even Aitigin appropriated Sultan's prerogatives of *naubat* and kept elephants. Balban as *naib* practically exercised all monarchical powers and Nasiruddin Mahmud was reduced to just a powerless monarch. However, Balban who himself enjoyed the unlimited power of *naib* was well aware of the dangers of the position of *naib*, abolished the office of the *naib*. His *naib* Kotwal Fakhruddin worked merely as his representative and left with no discretionary powers.

Similarly, when Sultan was not in the capital town often his deputy, styled *naib-i ghaibat* was appointed to look after the affairs in the absence of the Sultan, as his representative.

4.2.3 *Diwan-i Arz*

The *diwan-i arz* or military department was headed by the *ariz-i mumalik*. He was responsible for the administration of military affairs. He inspected the troops maintained by the *iqta*-holders. He also supervised the commissariat duties (supply and transport) of the Sultan's army. During the reign of Alauddin Khalji, some measures were introduced to maintain a check on recruitment and quality. He ordered a descriptive roll (*huliyā*) of every soldier to be kept and also ordered the branding (*dagh*) of horses to be done so that horses of poor quality were not brought by the *amirs* or *iqta*-holders to the muster. It seems that the branding of horses was strictly maintained by *diwan-i arz* till the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq.

Army Organisation

During the campaigns *ariz* was incharge of all arrangements and he used to scrutinize individual soldier. In the marches each individual soldier had a specified place; *naqibs* had arrangement charts to arrange the soldiers accordingly. There was a separate judicial set-up for the army known as *qazi-i lashkar* which was the military court and which administered martial laws.

It was Firuz Shah's leniency that caused the indiscipline in the army; often they did not turn for the muster.

The forces stationed at Delhi were known as *hashm-i qalb* consisted of *khasa khel* (royal slaves and guards) and *afwaj-i qalb*. Forces stationed at the provinces were called *hashm-i atraf*. Alauddin is reported to have possessed 475000 horsemen; while the number of soldiers swelled under Muhammad bin Tughlaq to 900000.

Cavalry was the key to Turkish success. Introduction of saddle and horse shoe by the Turks provided edge to the Turkish army over the Indians which helped the mounted archer to strike with speed without being fear of falling down (for details on the new technology introduced by the Turks see **Unit 11**). The cavalry was divided into *murattab* (who had no horse of his own), *sawar* (person with one horse), and *do-aspa* (person with two horses). Sultanat armies were consisted of Ghazz, Turks, Mongols, Greek, Russian, Persian, Tajik and Hindu soldiers. Interestingly, in the Sultanat army huge cavalry soldiers were Hindus. Qutbuddin's army was consisted of a large number of Hindu cavalry soldiers. Balban's army had Hindu cavalry soldiers in such a large number that a separate *arz*, *Rawat arz* was appointed. Horses for the forces were bought in large numbers from Arabia, Turkistan and Russia; though breeding was also done within India as well. In the royal *paigahs* around the capital and the provinces a large number of horses were bred. Sultan Firuz Tughlaq had established a number of such breeding centres (*paigahs*). On account of which Delhi Sultans could maintain supply of horses even when the supply got disrupted on account of Mongol menace. Alauddin Khalji is reported to have possessed seventy thousand horses.

The elephant wing was another strength of the Sultanat army. Balban equated one elephant as equal to five hundred horsemen. Bengal was the main centre of supply. In his advice to Bughra Khan Balban asked to send elephants to Delhi occasionally. Firuz used elephants to break the currents to help troops cross the river. There was a separate *shahna-i fil* to look after the elephant establishment.

Delhi Sultans also maintained huge infantry. The foot soldiers (*payaks*) were largely Hindus, slaves or people of humble origin. They were employed generally as guards, door-keepers, etc. Alauddin's life was saved by his *payak* bodyguards when Akat Khan attacked. It was *payak's* conspiracy against Malik Kafur that Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah got the throne. There were also archers (*dhanuks*) among *payaks*. Some of the *payaks* were *payak-ba-asp* (foot soldiers with horses). The best *payaks* belonged to Bengal.

Horses, elephants and the soldiers were properly clad with steel plates and shields, coats of mail and armours (daggers, swords and arrows) apart from excellent arms. Even elephants' trunks and tusks were provided with scythes. During the battle array to distinguish from the enemy troops soldiers were to wear distinguishing uniform.

Sultanat army also possessed firearms. Delhi Sultan used fireworks, rockets against Timur. The naphtha was known. The usage of the word *sang-i maghribi* as *midfa* faintly suggests the presence of rudimentary 'artillery' in Alauddin's army. They also used catapults. 'The sultanate, however, does not seem to have made much progress in this direction. It was in the provincial kingdoms of Gujrat and the Deccan that this arm was properly developed' (Qureshi 1971: 145).

The *talaiah/yazkis* was an important wing of the army who served as vanguards always moved ahead of the army. Their main job was to bring advance news of the enemy's army. However, they were trained soldiers and very distinct from the spies who used to go inside the opposite camp in disguise and collected information.

The *zarradkhana* was the supplier of arrows and catapults and used to replace weapons that got broken. Similarly, *qurkhana* was the horse repository and was placed under *qurbeg*. There was a separate news writer for the marches called *sahib-i barid-i lashkar*. It was his duty to send all reports pertaining to the expedition to the centre.

The main food suppliers to the army on march were *banjaras* who traded in grains.

The Sultanat army organization was influenced by Mongol decimal system. The following was the hierarchy of the Turkish army: At the lowest rung were the *sar khel* (possessing 10 horsemen); under a *sipah salar* there were 10 *sar khels*; under one *amir* there were 10 *sipah salars*; under one *malik* 10 *amirs*; under one *khan* there were 10 *maliks*. Thus under a *khan* there were ten thousand or more horsemen. However, the above description makes it clear that the system was based on indirect command. *Mufrads* were the unattached soldiers of the army. Royal orders were read by *naqibs*; while *chaushes* and *sahm-ul hashm*'s job was to arrange the soldiers in line.

A soldier received 234 *tankas* under Alauddin Khalji which was done by Alauddin after ensuring the strict price control. Under Muhammad bin Tughlaq he received 500 *tankas* along with his dress and food. *Masalik-ul Absar* provides details of the salaries of the army officers under the Delhi Sultans: *khan* – 1 lakh *tankas*; *malik* – 50-60 thousand *tankas*; *amir* – 30-40 thousand *tankas*; *sipah-salar* – around 20 thousand *tankas*; petty officials – 1-10 thousand *tankas* a year. Soldiers who were paid on a regular basis were called *wajhi*; while those who were recruited on contingency basis were known as *ghair-wajhi* soldiers.

4.2.4 The *Diwan-i Risalat*

The *diwan-i risalat* was headed by the *sadr-us sudur*. He was the highest religious officer. He took care of the ecclesiastical affairs and appointed *qazis*. He approved various grants like *waqf* for religious and educational institutions, *wazifa* and *idrar* to the learned and the poor.

The Sultan headed the judiciary and was the final court of appeal in both civil and criminal matters through *diwan-i mazalim*. In the absence of the Sultan it was presided over by *amir-idad*. During Sikandar Lodi's period, *wazir* was presiding over the *mazalim* court. The complaints against the officials were heard in this court. *Amir-i dad* was an important and powerful office in the capital. It was *amiri dad* Ali Ismail who invited Iltutmish to ascend the throne of Delhi. He had his assistants in the provinces as well as in the army. In fact he looked after the execution side of the justice. It was his duty to see whether the orders passed by the *qazis* were properly carried out.

Next to him was the *qazi-ul mumalik* (or *qazi-ul quzzat*), the chief judge of the Sultanate. Often, the offices of the *sadr-us sudur* and *qazi-ul mumalik* were held by the same person. The chief *qazi* headed the legal system and heard appeals from the lower courts. To assist him there was a *naib* as his deputy.

While passing judgements Delhi Sultans often exercised utmost impartiality. Barani mentions Balban punished his governor severely when found guilty of murder. Even on a complaint of a noble against Muhammad bin Tughlaq that he executed his brother unjustly *qazi* summoned the Sultan before the court of law, informs Ibn Battuta.

The *muhtasibs* (censor of public morals) assisted the judicial department. Their task was to see that there was no public infringement of the tenets of Islam.

4.2.5 Diwan-i Insha

The *diwan-i insha* looked after State correspondence. It was headed by *dabir-i mumalik*. This department dealt with all correspondence between the Sultan and other rulers, and between the Sultan and provincial governments. It issued *farmans* and received letters from subordinate officials. He was assisted by a number of *dabirs*. Those who looked after Sultan’s personal correspondences were known as *katib-i khas*.

4.2.6 Barids (News Reporters)

The *barid-i mumalik* was the head of the state news-agency. He had to keep information of all that was happening in the Sultanate. The administrative sub-divisions had local *barids* who sent regular news-letters to the central office. The *barids* reported matters of state – wars, rebellions, local affairs, finances, the state of agriculture, etc. The office existed from the very inception of the Sultanate. Qutbuddin Aibak is reported to have his own *barids*. Though under the later Shamsi rulers the department got deteriorated, Balban and Alauddin Khalji revived its efficiency. Alauddin Khalji’s success behind his economic reforms was primarily rested on the efficient working of his espionage system. Ibn Battuta is also full of praise of Muhammad Tughlaq’s news-service. *Barids* were spread all over the empire and kept the Sultan informed about the entry of the foreigners, activities of the officials, special happenings, *bazaar* gossips, etc.

Apart from the *barids*, another set of reporters existed, who were known as *munhiyan*. These *munhiyans* were secret spies and worked independently; they were often sent on special missions.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Mention the administrative structure of the royal household.
.....
.....
.....
- 2) Outline the main functions of the *diwan-i wizarat*.
.....
.....
.....
- 3) Discuss the army organization of the Delhi Sultans.
.....
.....
.....
- 4) What were the role and functions of *diwan-i risalat*?
.....

4.3 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

Under the Delhi Sultans *iqtas* (provinces) were of the prime importance. However, later under the Lodis there appears to have occurred some changes at the provincial and local levels when *sarkars* also started appearing as distinct entity.

4.3.1 *Iqta* System

The new rulers brought with them the *iqta* system that combined the two functions of revenue collection and distribution without immediately endangering the unity of the political structure. The *iqta* was a territorial assignment and its holder was called the *muqti* or the *wali*.

What were *Iqtas*?

The initial Turkish conquests in the early 13th century displaced many local chiefs (whom the contemporary sources refer to as *rai* and *rana*). In order to consolidate, the Turkish rulers made revenue assignments (*iqta*), in lieu of cash to their nobles (*umara*). The assignees (known as *muqti* and *wali*) collected revenue from these areas, defrayed their own expenses, paid the troops maintained by them and sent the surplus (*fawazil*) to the centre. *Iqta* is an Arabic word and the institution had been in force in the early Islamic world as a form of reward for services to the State. It was used in the Caliphate administration as a way of financing operations and paying civil and military officers. The grant of *iqta* did not imply a right to the land nor was it hereditary though the holders of *iqta* tended to acquire hereditary rights in Firuz Tughlaq's reign. These revenue assignments were transferable, the *iqta*-holder being transferred from one region to another every three or four years. Therefore, *iqta* should not be equated with the fief of medieval feudal Europe, which were hereditary and non-transferable. The assignments could be large (a whole province or a part). Assignments given to nobles carried administrative, military and revenue collecting responsibilities. Thus, provincial administration was headed by the *muqti* or *wali*. He had to maintain an army composed of horsemen and foot soldiers. The classical definition of the *iqta* system has been given by Nizam-ul Mulk Tusi, a Seljuq statesman of the century:

They (the *muqtis*) should know that their right over the subjects is only to take the rightful amount of money or perquisite (*mal-i haqq*) in a peaceful manner... the life, property and the family of the subject should be immune from any harm, *the muqtis* have no right over them; if the subject desires to make a direct appeal to the Sultan, the *muqti* should not prevent him. Every *muqti* who violates these laws should be dismissed and punished... the *muqtis* and *walis* are so many superintendents over them as the king is superintendent over other *muqti*... After three or four years, the *amilis* and the *muqtis* should be transferred so that they may not be too strong.

A passage from Nizamul Mulk Tusi's *Siyasatnama* on the rights of the *muqti*. English translation from A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*. Allahabad, 1976 pp. 209-10.

Thus, according to Tusi's definition, the *iqta* was a revenue assignment that the *muqti* held at the pleasure of the Sultan. The *muqti* was entitled to collect in proper

manner the land tax and other taxes due to the Sultan, he had no further claims on the persons, women and children, land or other possessions of the cultivators. The *muqti* had certain obligations to the Sultan, the chief being the maintenance of troops and furnishing them at call to the Sultan. The *iqta* was a transferable charge and the transfers of *iqtas* were frequent.

Iltutmish (1210-36) is reported to have assigned in lieu of salaries “small *iqtas*” in the Doab to the soldiers of the Sultan’s army (*hashm qalb*). Balban (1266-86) made a half-hearted attempt at their resumption without success. It was Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) who established firmly the practice of payment of salaries in cash to the soldiers. A practice that was again altered by Firuz Tughlaq who began to assign villages to soldiers in lieu of their salaries. These assignments were called *wajh* and the holders *wajhdars*. These assignments tended to be not only permanent but hereditary.

The *Iqta* System in Operation

In the early years of the foundation of the Sultanate, neither the revenue income of these assignments was known nor the size of the contingent of the assignee was fixed. However, certain modifications and mild attempts at introducing central control to some extent were made by Balban (1266-86) when he appointed a *khwaja* (accountant) with each *muqti*: this may imply that the Sultanate now was trying to find out the actual income of the *iqta* and *muqti*’s expenditure.

The real intervention in the *iqta* administration came under Alauddin Khalji. The central finance department (*diwan-i wizarat*) perhaps prepared some sort of an estimated revenue income from each *iqta*. The audit was stringent, punishments severe, transfers frequent and enhancements (*taufir*) were often made in the estimated revenue income of the *iqta* on various pretexts.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1320-25) introduced some moderation. The *muqtis* were allowed to keep 1/10th to 1/20th in excess of their sanctioned salaries.

The attempt at central intervention reached its climax during the time of Muhammad Tughlaq (1325-51). During the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq, fiscal responsibilities were partially withdrawn from the *muqtis* or *walis* and placed under central officers. According to Ibn Battuta, the *iqta* of Amroha was placed under two officers, one called *amir* (possibly in charge of the army and administration) and the other as *wali-ul kharaj* (in charge of revenue collection). Muhammad Tughlaq also ordered that the salary of the soldiers maintained by *iqta*-holders be paid by the *diwan-i wizarat* to prevent fraud by the officers.

In several cases, a *wali* and an *amir* was appointed to the same territory. The *wali* was to collect revenue and, after deducting his pay, to send the rest to the treasury. The *amir* or commander had nothing to do with revenue realization and received his own salary and the salary of his troops in cash, presumably from the local treasury. During Muhammad Tughlaq’s reign the troops of the *iqta* holders were paid in cash by the state’s treasury. This possibly infuriated the commanders and created political problems for Muhammad Tughlaq. Firuz Tughlaq, therefore, decided to make concessions. He enhanced the cash salaries of the nobles and got new estimates of revenue (*mahsul*) prepared which was designated *jama*.

There was no attempt to restore central control by the successors of Firuz. Under the Lodis (1451-1426), the administrative charges and revenue assignments were

combined together and these were no more called *iqta* but were simply called *sarkars* and *parganas*. A system of sub-assignments came in vogue particularly under Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). The main assignees used to sub-assign portions of their assignment to their subordinates who in turn made sub-assignments to their soldiers.

***Iqta* and the Dispersal of Resources among the Ruling Class**

The income of the Sultanate was primarily and largely derived from the land revenue. *Khalisa* was the term for the land whose revenue was exclusively meant for the Sultan himself, while the revenue from the land, called *iqta*, was assigned by the state to the nobles. The *muqtis* or *iqta*-holders were required to furnish military assistance to the Sultan in times of need, apart from maintaining law and order and collecting the revenue from their *iqta*.

These revenue assignments were generally non-hereditary and transferable. In fact, it was through the institution of *iqta* that the Sultan was able to control the nobles. The *muqti* collected land revenue from the peasants of his territory and defrayed therefrom his own salary as well as that of his soldiers. The demand to send the excess amounts (*fawazil*) to the *diwan-i wizarat* was symbolic of the trend towards centralization. The *muqti* had to submit accounts of their realisation and expenditure to the treasury. Auditing was severe to prevent fraud.

Alauddin Khalji also took other measures for controlling his nobility. Regular reports from the *barids* (intelligence officers) kept him posted with the actions of the nobles. A check was kept on their socialising, and marriages between them could not take place without the permission of the Sultan. These measures have to be seen against the background of recurrent incidents of rebellions in which the *muqtis* utilised and appropriated the resources of their areas, to rebel or to make a bid for the throne. This explains the principle of transfer also. Under Muhammad Tughlaq (1325-1351), the nobles were given *iqta* in lieu of cash salary but their troops were paid in cash by the treasury in contrast to the earlier period. These new fiscal arrangements and the greater control over assignments possibly contributed to the conflict between the Sultan and the nobles since they were deprived of the gains of the *iqta* management. However, during the reign of Firuz Tughlaq there was a general retreat from the practice of increased central authority over *iqta*. In practice, Firuz started granting *iqtas* to the sons and heirs of *iqta*-holders. The long reign of Firuz Tughlaq comparatively witnessed few rebellions but it also saw the beginning of the disintegration and decentralisation. By the time of the Lodis (1451-1526), the *iqtadars* (now called *wajhdars*) do not seem to have been subject to constant transfers.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) How will you define *iqta*?

- 2) What changes were introduced in the *iqta* system by Muhammad Tughlaq?

- 3) Mark (✓) against the correct and (×) against the wrong statements given below:
- a) Alauddin Khalji allowed the *muqtis* to keep the excess income from their *iqtas*. ()
 - b) Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq handed over *iqtas* to revenue-farmers. ()
 - c) The *jama* under Firuz Tughlaq meant the estimated revenue income. ()

4.3.2 *Muqti/Wali*

The provinces were known as *Vilayat* and *iqta*. The provincial governors were called *muqtis* and *walis*. However, position of *wali* appears to be higher than the *muqtis* for we do not hear any appointment of *wali* for the smaller provinces. Thus *walis* were governors with ‘extraordinary powers’. Initially, governor was incharge of both the military and revenue affairs. But, as the State became more settled and efforts were made for greater centralization, provincial administration also underwent a change. Muhammad Tughluq separated fiscal powers of *wali/muqti* (see *supra*).

However, besides the *muqtis/walis* who was overall incharge of the army at provincial level, there were provincial *ariz* meant for the recruitment and supervision of the army. But he worked directly under the central *ariz-i mumalik*.

Muqtis/walis were appointed by the Sultan and could be ‘transferred, removed or punished by him at his pleasure’. However, with disintegration of the Sultanate the office of the *wali/muqti* disappeared. We hear of the viceroys being appointed at the important provinces. When Bahlul Lodi conquered Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur he appointed Barbek as viceroy.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Write a note on *iqta*.

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What were the functions of a *wali* or *muqti*?

.....

.....

.....

- 3) What steps were taken to curb the powers of the *muqti* in the 14th century?

.....

.....

.....

- 4) Mark right (✓) or wrong (×) against the following statements:
- a) i) *Iqtas* were hereditary assignments. ()
- ii) *Iqtas* were the personal property of the nobles. ()
- iii) Generally *iqtas* were transferable revenue assignments. ()
- iv) *Muqtis* were personal body-guards of the Sultan. ()
- v) *Muqtis* were religious teachers. ()
- vi) *Muqtis* were governors to whom the revenue from the *iqtas* were assigned. ()
- b) *Fawazil* was :
- i) Extra payment met to the nobles. ()
- ii) Excess amount paid to the exchequer by the *iqtadars*. ()
- iii) Revenue assigned in lieu of salary. ()

4.3.3 *Sahib-i Diwan*

Greater control also came to be exercised over fiscal matters. The *diwan's* office at the centre received and examined detailed statements regarding income and expenditure in the provinces. It supervised the work of the revenue officials in the provinces. The provinces had a *sahib-i diwan* commonly known as *khwajah* whose office kept books of account and submitted information to the centre. He was also appointed by the Sultan at the recommendation of the *wazir*. He was an expert in accounts. He was to supply details of the expenditure/income to the centre. Though in official hierarchy he was subordinate to *muqtis/walis*, he was a power to reckon with for he was directly recruited by the Sultan and was answerable not to the *wali* but to the centre. It was assisted by officials like *mutasarrifs*. The entire lower revenue staff was called *karkun*.

4.3.4 *Shiqq*

By the end of the 13th century, contemporary sources refer to an administrative division, known as *shiqq*. We do not have adequate information about the exact nature of *shiqq*. The demarcation of their duties is not very clear. Barani, speaking about the rebellion of the peasantry informs that *shiqqdars* and *faujdar*s were ordered to seize the rebels. It suggests that in a provinces there were a number of *shiqqdars* which means in a province there were number of *shiqqs*. In Qutbuddin Aibak's period big *wilayats* (provinces) were divided into *tarfs*, in all likelihood 'the old and the new divisions of the provinces emerge as *shiqqs* during the fourteenth century' (Qureshi 1971: 202). When Sultan Bahlul Lodi occupied *parganas* of Kampil, Patiali, Shamsabad, Sakit, Koil, Marhrah and Jalali he appointed *shiqqdar* for each of these *parganas*. It seems that the position of the *shiqqdar* under the Lodis reduced to a level of a *pargana* official. However, nothing could be said with certainty and probably *shiqqs* were not uniformly applied, only in the 'unwieldy' provinces they were divided into these units. Probably, *shiqqs* of the larger *wilayats* emerged as *sarkars*. By the time of Sher Shah (1540-1545 CE) *shiqq* had emerged as a well-defined administrative unit, known as *sarkar*. Administrative officials, mentioned with respect to *shiqq*, were *shiqqdar* and *faujdar*. The demarcation of their duties is not very clear.

4.3.5 Pargana and Village Officials

According to Ibn Battuta, *chaudhuri* was the head of hundred villages (*sadi*). His *sadi* of Hindpat meant *pargana* Indrapat in the suburb of Delhi. However, the sheer absence of the term in the official records suggests that the term *sadi* was probably never been officially recognized. This was the nucleus of the administrative unit later called *pargana*. *Mutasarrif* at *pargana* level was incharge of revenue collection. Barani uses the term *amil* for him. Besides *amil*, Barani mentions *mushrif*, *muhassil*, *gumashtas*, *sarhangs*. *Mushrif* inspected the crops and determined the state's share; *muhassil* received revenue payments from the peasants; *gumashta* was an agent; *sarhang's* duty was to deliver official orders to the peasants.

Under the Afghans *amil/mutasarrif* came to be known as *shiqqdar*. Under Sher Shah at *pargana* level *shiqqdar* was the head of the local administration; *mushrif* now called **amin/munsif** and the *muhassil* now became *fotadar/khazanachi/khazahandar* (Qureshi 1971: 209).

The village was the smallest unit of administration. The functioning and administration of the village remained basically the same as it had existed in pre-Turkish times. The main village functionaries were *khot*, **muqaddam** (headman) and **patwari** (village accountant). The judicial administration of the sub-division was patterned on that of the centre.

Courts of the *qazi* and *sadr* functioned in the provinces. At the village level, the *panchayat* heard civil cases.

4.4 TOWNS, FORTS AND THANAS

In towns *kotwal* was responsible for maintaining law and order and also looked after the defence. Initially, he was a military officer, a commandant of a fortified town. But with the expansion of civil administration he turned into a police officer.

Forts were another administrative unit. These were built to punish robbers/thieves. Forts were administered by the *kotwals*. Later probably these *kotwals* came to be known as *faujdar* as mentioned by Barani. Besides the forts, Balban established military outposts, *thanas* under a *thanadar* to control the recalcitrant elements. In the Katehr region to control the Kateharias he established *thanas* at Kampil, Patiali and Bhojpur. He populated these centres with Afghans and established mosques and also placed *qazis* there.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) What were the functions of the *wali* or *muqti*?

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.....

.....

- 2) What were the *shiqqs*? Discuss its chief functionaries.

.....

.....

.....

3) Mention briefly the *pargana* and village level officials.

.....

4.5 POSTAL SYSTEM

The Sultanate communication network through its postal system was highly efficient and quick. Al-Umari in his *Masalik-ul Absar* even considered it better than the one practiced in Syria and Egypt. Detailed working of the system under Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq is provided by Ibn Battuta, Al-Umari and Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi.

Ibn Battuta informs:

In India the post was of two kinds. The horse-post called *ulaq* is run by the royal horses stationed at a distance of every four miles. The foot-post has three stations per mile; it is called *dawa*, that is to say one third of a mile. The mile (*mil*) is known among the Indians as *kuroh*. Now, at every third of a mile there is a well-populated village, outside which are three pavilions in which sit men with girded loins ready to start. Each carries a rod, two cubits in length with copper bells at the top. When the courier starts from the city he holds the letter in one hand and the rod with its bells in the other; and he runs as fast as he can. When the men in the pavilion hear the ringing of the bells they get ready. As soon as the courier reaches them, one of them takes the letter from his hand and runs at top speed shaking the rod all the while until he reaches the next *dawa*. And the same process continues till the letter reaches its destination. This foot-post is quicker than the horse-post; and often it is used to transport the fruits of Khurasan which are much desired in India...At the same way notorious criminals are transported...Similarly, water for the Sultan's use is carried from the Ganges to Daulatabad when he resides there...It lies at a distance of forty day's journey from Daulatabad.

Ibn Battuta, *Rihla*, trs. Mahdi Husain, pp. 3-4

However, during Muhammad Tughlaq's period instead of three, ten such runners were stationed. Ziauddin Barani reports when Alauddin sent an expedition he used to ensure the communication network from the capital to the place where the army was stationed. The first station used to be Tilpat and thence every half or one-sixth of a *kos* a post station was established till the place where the army was besieged. There is only one recorded instance when Malik Kafur was campaigning in Warangal Alauddin could not receive the news for forty long days. In general, otherwise, Sultanate postal system was quite swift. Alauddin came to know about Haji Maula's rebellion within three days. Ibn Battuta praises that the royal post reaches within five days from Sind to Delhi while it takes a normal traveller fifty days to reach. The efficient postal system helped Delhi Sultans to keep strict vigilance over the far-flung areas of the empire.

In all likelihood, these relays were not meant for individual private communications. However, these do let the soldiers be connected and communicated with their families.

Besides the relays, Sultans also maintained a system of signals to let him be alarmed by sudden rebellion or attack in the neighbourhoods. Between the larger towns, there established a chain of kettle-drums.

4.6 NATURE OF ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

Peter Jackson calls Delhi Sultanate a 'militaristic state'. 'The Delhi Sultanate was firmly rooted in a long tradition of Muslim military activity within the subcontinent' (Jackson 1999: 21). He argues that Sultans' priorities revolved around the military and defense compulsions, particularly Mongol threat was the dominating factor steering Delhi Sultans' policies. Iltutmish, till the danger of Mankbarni and Chinghiz was there, he never tried to extend his authority in the cis-Indus region. For Balban fear of Mongols was an all-absorbing preoccupation so much so that he took special efforts to strengthen the line of defense; got the forts of Sunam and Bhatinda strengthened and never dared to leave Delhi. In the process in 1285 even he lost his most talented son Prince Muhammad. Alauddin Khalji was also throughout his reign was overoccupied with the defense of his Sultanate against Mongol threat to the extent that his economic reforms particularly price control measures were highly motivated by that. Jackson (1999: 25) argues that all offices 'essentially in the Sultanate were military – *sar-i jandar* (sultan's guards), *sar-i salahdar* (armour bearer), *ariz* (muster-master; like a war-minister), *amir-i hajib* (military chamberlaine; commander of forces), *amir-i dad* (military justiciar), *amir-i akhur* (incharge of sultan's stable), *amir-i shikar* (incharge of royal hunts which were valuable for military exercises of the forces)'. Jackson sees early Turkish state as mere 'conglomeration of sub-kingdoms', some ruled by 'Hindu potentates', others by Muslim princes/*amirs/muqtis*. He looks the Sultanate state from provincial point of view, for him it were the provincial governors who determined the nature of the Sultanate rule, though under Alauddin and Muhammad bin Tughlaq Sultanate could evolve into a 'centrally controlled state'.

Herman Kulke believes that in its early years Sultanate was a 'conquest state' and it was only by Alauddin Khalji's period that serious attempts towards centralization of administration were undertaken. He argues that throughout its structure largely remained 'patrimonial'. Thus according to Kulke, Delhi Sultans could never establish an 'empire', in spite of their military means through which they could subdue large parts of the subcontinent. They failed to establish a sound administrative system that could penetrate deep and far (Kulke & Rothermund 2004: 179). There existed local groups, who often challenged the central authority including the powerful *amirs* and the Sultanate was always preoccupied handling the rebellions. During Muhammad bin Tughlaq's period when the centralization was at its apex, highest numbers of rebellions took place and provincial governors and *amirs* attempted to carve out their own independent principalities; the first crack could be seen in the form of rebellions of *amiran-i sadah* leading to establishment of an independent Bahmani kingdom.

Sunil Kumar (2007: 5) underlines 'the fragmentary and discontinuous political world of the Delhi Sultanate'. He prefers to label it 'the history of the north Indian Sultanates' (in plural form). He 'reflects upon the political complexities and discontinuities of the period', moving 'away from the unicentric and synchronic image of a single and relatively stable political formation'.

However, K.A. Nizami (2002: 95, 97) argues that sheer on the basis of military campaigns and constant wars one cannot label Delhi Sultanate as a 'military state'.

Stanley Lane-Poole, Ishwari Prasad, A.B.M. Habibullah, K.M. Ashraf, Mohammad

Habib, K.A. Nizami and Irfan Habib view Delhi Sultanate as a highly centralized monarchy. Ashraf argues that, ‘the Sultan of Delhi was in theory an unlimited despot, bound by no law, subject to no ministerial check, and guided by no will except his own. The people had no rights, only obligations; they only lived to carry out his commands’ (Ashraf 1969: 32). Similar voice is echoed by I. H. Qureshi (1971: 8-9, 196) who has called the Sultanate ‘despotic’ and Sultan’s powers as ‘absolute’. Centralization reached its ‘climax in the earlier part of Muhammad bin Tughlaq’. Qureshi (1971: 218) believes that, ‘It would, however, be wrong to think that the authority at the centre was weak in normal times; revolt in the provinces was the exception, not the rule’ (For details on Sultan’s position and powers see **Unit 3** of this Course). According to Simon Digby, centralization could be achieved through the superior military strength and exceptional organizational capabilities of the Sultans.

Delhi Sultans attempted towards centralization from the very inception of the Sultanate. Iltutmish took firm steps in this direction. The loosely knitted and newly conquered provinces were brought under uniform system of administration through *iqtas* (for details see **Sub-sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2**). *Iqta* system helped bringing provinces under central command. Irfan Habib also viewed *iqta* enabled ‘political centralization’. Iltutmish maintained standing army, though it was based on indirect command, was directly recruited and directly paid and administered by the centre under the control of central *ariz-i mumalik*. Iltutmish introduced uniform coinage (silver *tanka* and copper *jital*) and uniform administrative set up across the sultanate. Above all Iltutmish created a strong bureaucracy of his Turkish slaves (*Turkan-i Chihilgani*) and Tajik officers who helped in the consolidation of the sultanate. Nizami comments, ‘Aibak had merely visualized an outline of the sultanat; Iltutmish gave it an individuality and a status, a motive power and a direction, an administrative system and a governing class’ (Nizami 1982: 230). The peace so established across various parts of the empire helped in the rise of trade and commerce and economy of the sultanate, thus ensured prosperity of the sultanate. The moment central authority of the Sultans weakened cracks started showing signs and finally it led to the establishment of provincial kingdoms in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Discuss the working of the postal system during the Sultante period.

- 2) What is Peter Jackson’s argument about the Sultanate polity?

4.7 SUMMARY

We have seen how the Delhi Sultanate was shaped by its historical experience of

being a part of the wider Islamic world and how it changed and evolved as a result of its needs and circumstances during the 13th century. We have studied the administrative framework of the Sultanate at the central and local levels. The need of maintaining a large army (for defense and expansion) and maintaining an administrative apparatus shaped many of its institutions. Greater centralization brought about changes in the nature of administrative control.

4.8 KEYWORDS

<i>Amin</i>	Revenue assessor
<i>Diwan-i wizarat</i>	Finance Department
<i>Mawas</i>	Rebellious area/villages where land revenue was extracted by the use of force
<i>Muqaddam</i>	Village headman
<i>Muqtil/Wali</i>	<i>Iqta</i> -holder/governor
<i>Mushrif</i>	Revenue officer
<i>Mutasarrif</i>	Auditor
<i>Patwari</i>	Village accountant
<i>Waqf</i>	Grants assigned for the maintenance of religious institutions

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Sub-section 4.2.1
- 2) See Sub-section 4.2.2
- 3) See Sub-section 4.2.3
- 4) See Sub-section 4.2.4

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 4.3
- 2) See Section 4.3
- 3) See Section 4.3

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Section 4.5
- 2) See Section 4.6

4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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4.11 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMENDATIONS

of the Delhi Sultanate | IGNOUSS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCmtBgS1csM>

Talking History |2| Delhi: The Foundation of Dilli Sultanate | Rajya Sabha TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJOsomraCaM>

Talking History |4| Delhi: The Era of Alauddin Khilji | Rajya Sabha TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrTs0B1qQ9s>

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UNIT 5 DECCAN KINGDOMS*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Geographical Setting of the Deccan
- 5.3 The Four Kingdoms
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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

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- assess the geographical influences on the polity and economy of the Deccan,
- understand the political set-up in South India,
- examine the conflicts among the Southern kingdoms,
- evaluate the relations of the Southern kingdoms with the Delhi Sultanate,
- know their administration and economy,
- understand the emergence of new independent kingdoms in the South,
- appraise the political formation and its nature in Deccan and South India,
- understand the emergence of the Bahmani kingdom,
- analyze the conflict between the old *Dakhni* nobility and the newcomers (the *Afaqis*) and how it ultimately led to the decline of the Bahmani Sultanate, and
- evaluate the administrative structure under the Bahmanis.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present Unit aims at covering the emergence of polities in South India and the Deccan during the 13-15th centuries. For our purpose, South India includes the region to the south of the Vindhyas which comprises of the Deccan and the peninsular south.

The history of South India from the 13th to the 15th centuries presents two distinct phases:

- i) The beginning of the 13th century is marked by the disintegration of the Chola and the Chalukya empires. On their ruins emerged four independent kingdoms in this region. There were the Pandyas and the Hoysalas in the south (on the debris of the Chola power), the Kakatiyas and the Yadavas in the north of this region (in the Deccan as a result of the decline of the Chalukya power). These kingdoms lasted for more than a century.
- ii) In the second phase, beginning from the 2nd quarter of the 14th century, there emerged two powerful states; the Bahmani and the Vijaynagara. These two controlled almost the whole of South India for about two hundred years.

Our discussions for the first phase will centre on the history of the four kingdoms; their relationship with each other; their polity, society and economy. In the 2nd phase, we will discuss their relations with the Delhi Sultanate.

Again, by the turn of the 14th century new political formations emerged – the powerful kingdom of the Bahmanis as a result of the declining hold of the Delhi Sultans over its Deccan possessions; while in South India there emerged the mighty Vijayanagara Empire.

In the present Unit we would be discussing political formations in the Deccan and South India during the 13th century as well as the emergence of the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan. Thus, in this Unit, we will trace the story of the end of the Tughlaq rule in the Deccan and its replacement by the Bahmani Sultanate taking into account the conquests, consolidation, administrative system and the culture of the period. However, two separate **Units (6&7)** are devoted to the emergence and consolidation of the Vijayanagara empire.

We begin our discussion with an understanding of the geographical setting of the region.

5.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF THE DECCAN¹

Geography plays a crucial role in the politico-economic developments. Certain salient geographical features of South India and Deccan influenced the developments in the region. Broadly, the whole tract lying south of the river Narmada is known as South India. However, technically speaking, this tract consists of two broad divisions, Deccan and South India (Here we will discuss geographical setting of the Deccan only for details on deep south, south of the Tungabhadra *doab* see **Section 6.2**).

Deccan

Deccan is bounded in the north and northeast by Narmada and Mahanadi rivers, while Nilgiri hills and Pennar river form its southern boundary. To the west and east lie the Western and Eastern Ghats along with long coastal strip on both the sides. The area between the vast western sea-coast and the Sahyadri ranges is known as Konkan, a sub-region of Deccan. The whole strip is full of dense forest, and the soil is not adequately fertile. The area boasts of great strategic importance. Therefore, a number of strong forts were built there. The famous ports of Chaul and Dabhol also come under this region. On account of its difficult access, local chieftains (*deshmukhs*) often manifested shifting loyalties and at times defied the Central authority. You would find that it was this geographical location that played a crucial role in the rise of the Marathas. On account of its hilly and forest tracts, the Deccan states were difficult to penetrate, but from the side of southern Gujarat it had an easy access through the fertile Baglana tract. For this reason, it repeatedly fell under the sway of the Gujarat rulers. Finally, in the 16th century, the Portuguese altered the balance in that region. With minor variations, Goa marked the boundary between the Bahmani and the Vijaynagara states.

The central Deccan (from the Ajanta ranges to the Nilgiri hills and Palaghat gap) possesses black soil which is good for cotton cultivation. The Khandesh and Berar tracts of Maharashtra lying along the banks of the Tapti and the Wardha and Painganga rivers were known for their fertility. This led to frequent encounters between the Malwa and the Bahmani rulers for the occupation of Kherla and Mahur.

Between the Krishna and Godavari lies the flat plain which is also famous for its rich 'cotton' soil. Then comes the Telangana region: its soil is sandy and does not retain moisture. The rivers, too, are not perennial; as a result, tank irrigation became important. Along the Krishna valley lies the Kurnool rocks where the famous Golconda mines were located. The southern Deccan plateau (parts lying in modern Karnataka) is also rich in mineral resources (copper, lead, zinc, iron, gold, manganese, etc.).

5.3 THE FOUR KINGDOMS

The decline of the Chola and the Chalukya empires gave rise to a number of smaller kingdoms and principalities in the South. The four important ones were:

¹ This Section is taken from **Unit 3, Section 3.1** of IGNOU Course **EHI-04: India from 16th Century to mid-18th Century**.

- i) the Yadavas
- ii) the Kakatiyas
- iii) the Pandyas
- iv) the Hoysalas

5.3.1 The Yadavas and the Kakatiyas

During the 14th century, the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas succeeded in establishing their hegemony over an area almost equal to the modern Andhra Pradesh and the Deccan.

The Yadavas

The history of the Yadava dynasty may be traced to the 9th century. For around 300 years, they ruled as the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas. With the decline of the latter, they emerged as independent rulers with a big territory under their control.

Bhillama V (1175-1191), the feudatory of the Chalukya ruler, Somesvara IV (1181-1189), acquired independent status in CE 1187 and laid the foundation of the Yadava rule. During Simhana's reign (1210-46), the Yadava boundaries extended to southern Gujarat; Western Madhya Pradesh and Berar; parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, the Western half of Hyderabad State and the northern districts of Mysore. Krishna (1246-60) and Ram Chandra (1271-1311) were other important rulers of the Yadava dynasty. With the latter's death came the end of the Yadava power itself (1311-12).

The Kakatiyas

The Kakatiyas were the feudatories of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Kakati Rudradeva (Prataprudra I), the founder of the Kakatiya state, succeeded in overpowering the Chalukya ruler, Tailapa III, during the second half of the 12th century (c. 1162). He also succeeded in capturing Kurnool district from the Velananti chiefs sometime around 1185. Ganapati (1199-1262), Rudrambe (1262-95) and Prataprudra II (1295-1326) were other important rulers of the dynasty. Their rule extended over most of the Andhra region up to Godavari, Kanchi, Kurnool and Cudappah districts. Ulugh Khan (later Muhammad Tughlaq) overran the whole of Telingana in 1322 and thus sealed the fate of the Kakatiya rule.

5.3.2 The Pandyas and the Hoysalas

These two kingdoms controlled the region beyond the Deccan and almost the whole of Southern peninsula.

The Hoysalas

The Hoysalas ruled over parts of the present Karnataka and most of the Tamil region. The first independent ruler of the kingdom was Ballala II (1173-1220). The kingdom achieved independent status by the close of the 12th century but its end came at the beginning of the 14th century. The Hoysala rulers Narasimha II, (1234-63), Narasimha III (1263-91) and Ballala III (1291-1342), had to defend themselves against the aggressive designs of Pandya and Yadava rulers.

The Pandyas

The Pandya kingdom included parts of modern Tamil Nadu and almost the whole of the present Kerala. The kingdom enjoyed the independent status around the first quarter of the 13th century and came to an end by the first quarter of the 14th century. The first independent king was Maravaraman Sundara Pandya (1216-1238). Other important rulers of the dynasty were Maravaraman Sundara Pandya II (1238-51), Jatavaraman Sundara Pandya I (1251-68), Maravaraman Kulsekhara Pandya (1268-1310) and Jatavaraman Sundara Pandya II and Jatavaraman Vir Pandya.

5.3.3 Conflicts Between the Four Kingdoms

During this period, all the four kingdoms were at war with one or the other. We will not go into the details of these conflicts. Here we would mention in brief the nature of these struggles.

- The main conflict was between the Kakatiyas, Hoysalas and the Pandyas for supremacy over the Chola territories.
- The Yadavas were constantly at war with the Kakatiyas. In these struggles none could completely overwhelm the other.
- Similar was the case with the Yadavas and the Hoysalas, and also with the Kakatiyas and the Pandyas.
- Apart from the conflicts between these kingdoms, there were other wars also. The most prominent expeditions across the south were undertaken by the Yadavas and the Pandyas. The founder of the Yadava dynasty, Bhillama V, led expeditions to Malwa and Gujarat. The Yadava king Simhana and Ram Chandra also waged wars against Malwa (1215), and Gujarat without any decisive victories.
- The Pandya king Maravaraman Kulasekhara sent expeditions to Ceylon (1283-1302). King Parakramabaha III (1302-1310) of Ceylon submitted to the Pandya king and the relations between the two remained peaceful thereafter.

5.4 SOUTHERN KINGDOMS AND THE DELHI SULTANATE

After consolidating their hold over North India by the end of the thirteenth century, the Delhi Sultans turned their attention towards the South from the first half of the 14th century.

You have already read in detail in **Unit 2** about the Sultanate's expansion under the Khaljis and the Tughlaqs in the Deccan and the deep south. Here our emphasis will be on the main features of the expansionist policy of the Delhi Sultans and its impact on the Deccan polity. We will discuss the relations of southern kingdoms with the Sultanate in two phases:

- i) During Alauddin Khalji's reign, and
- ii) After Alauddin's death to the end of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign.

5.4.1 First Phase: Alauddin Khalji's Invasion of South

During the reign of Jalaluddin Khalji (1290-96), his nephew Alauddin undertook the first Muslim expedition to Deogir (Devagiri), the capital of the Yadava kingdom. The Yadava ruler was defeated and large booty was collected by Alauddin. The Yadava king, Ram Chandra, promised to pay an annual tribute also. Thereafter, for almost a decade, no invasion took place. After the accession of Alauddin Khalji, a definite policy to subjugate South was planned. From 1306 to 1312, in a series of campaigns, all the four kingdoms of south were subjugated.

i) Devagiri

Alauddin deputed his trusted commander Malik Kafur to invade South in 1306-07 since the Yadava king had ceased to pay tribute. Malik Kafur defeated Raja Ram Chandra. After collecting a large booty, he returned to Delhi with the Raja as captive. The Raja was later reinstated as king on the promise of paying regular tribute to the Sultan.

ii) Warangal

In 1309, Malik Kafur invaded the Kakatiya kingdom. The purpose of the campaign was just to subjugate the king as is clear from Alauddin's instructions to Kafur as described by Barani:

You are going to a far off land; do not remain there long. You must put in all your efforts to capture Warangal and overthrow Rai Rudradeva. If the Rai gives up his treasures, elephants and horses, and promises a tribute for the future, accept this arrangement.

The ruler sent his treasures to the Delhi and promised a regular tribute.

iii) Dwarsamudra

The next target of attack was Dwarsamudra, the Hoysala kingdom (1310-11). The ruler Ballala Deva submitted without much resistance and arrangement was made on the lines of the two other southern kingdoms.

iv) Madura

A conflict between two brothers – Vir Pandya and Sundar Pandya – who were claimants to the Pandya kingdom provided an opportunity to Malik Kafur to invade it. Vir Pandya after capturing the throne had expelled Sunder Pandya. The latter sought the help of Alauddin Khalji. After devastating the Hoysala kingdom, Malik Kafur marched to Madura and inflicted a defeat on Vir Pandya and collected heavy booty.

In 1312, Malik Kafur attacked the Yadava kingdom. Once again, since Ram Deva's death, his son Sankar Deva ceased to pay tribute. Sankar Deva was defeated and almost the whole of their territory between the Krishna and the Tungabhadra was captured by Kafur. When Alauddin called Kafur back to Delhi, he handed over the charge to Ainul Mulk.

Let us look at the characteristic features of Alauddin's Deccan policy:

- Almost the whole of south was conquered without much resistance.
- Alauddin was not in favour of annexing the Southern kingdoms because it was difficult to administer it from distant Delhi. After their defeat, the Southern kingdoms were asked to accept the suzerainty of the Delhi Sultan and to pay regular tribute. The ruling dynasties were not displaced.

- Financially, the Delhi Sultanate gained immensely from the southern campaigns.

5.4.2 Second Phase

After the death of Alauddin Khalji, the southern kingdoms refused to accept the subordinate position and stopped paying tribute. This gave rise to fresh attacks from Delhi Sultanate and a definite shift in policy towards the South emerged.

Alauddin during his last years had given the charge of the Deccan kingdoms to Malik Kafur. Alauddin’s successor Mubarak Shah Khalji (1316-20) took an expedition to Devagiri and annexed major portions. The Sultan appointed his officers there and gave small territories (*iqta*) to them. These officers were called *sadah amirs* or ‘commanders of 100’. These *amirs* were asked to collect land revenue and maintain law and order in their territories. Besides, he also ordered them to invade Warangal. After the defeat of the Raja Prataprudra Deva, some portions of his kingdom were annexed.

After the death of Mubarak Khalji, the tribute from Warangal was again stopped. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq sent a large army under the command of his son Ulugh Khan (Muhammad Tughlaq) to conquer the region of Telingana. After some setbacks, Ulugh Khan defeated the king of Warangal, Prataprudra Deva. Now the whole of Telingana was annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. Ulugh Khan divided the region into several administrative units and placed them under *sadah amirs* who were under the direct control of the Sultanate. Ma’bar was also conquered in 1323, and Sharif Jalaluddin Ahsan was appointed its governor with Madura as the headquarters. When Muhammad Tughlaq became Sultan, he realised that the southern portions of his kingdom were not being managed efficiently. He, therefore, decided to develop Devagiri as second administrative centre of the Sultanate on the lines of Delhi (1327-28). Devagiri was named Daulatabad and large number of nobles, merchants, learned men and other sections of the population were encouraged to settle there.

The Deccan policy of Muhammad Tughlaq was distinct from Alauddin Khalji. He annexed large portions of the Deccan and set-up the Sultanate land revenue and administrative system.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Name the kingdoms and their regions that emerged on the debris of the Chola and the Chalukya empires.
.....
.....
.....
- 2) Mark right (✓) or wrong (×) against the following:
 - i) The Yadavas were the feudatories of the Pandyas. ()
 - ii) Prataprudra I was the founder of the Kakatiya kingdom. ()
 - iii) The Pandya kingdom comprised modern Andhra Pradesh. ()
- 3) What was the major shift brought about by the Tughlaqs in Alauddin Khalji’s Deccan policy?

5.5 ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMY

Here, we will very briefly discuss the administrative and economic changes introduced during the period of the four kingdoms.

5.5.1 Administration

Monarchy was the usual political institution of these kingdoms. Along with this, the practice of feudatories, too, was a common feature. In the Deccan region (the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas), the provincial heads were selected from the successful military chiefs called *nayakas*. They generally controlled the feudal chiefs of lower status, collected land revenue and maintained law and order. According to one source, the king assigned only small villages to the *samantas* or the *nayakas*. The big ones were kept aside to maintain the army. The Kakatiyas were always apprehensive about the growing powers of the *nayakas*. They, therefore, did not allow the *nayakas* to remain at one place for long and strike local roots. It seems that the *nayankara* system, which became very prominent under Vijaynagara, had come into existence during this time.

There were a number of ministers to look after the various departments of the kingdom. The smallest unit of administration was village which was run by the village *panchayat* under a headman. Groups of villages were also organized into administrative divisions (called *sthala* under the Kakatiyas, and groups of *sthala* were called *nadu*). All these administrative units and administrative heads were called by different names in different kingdoms. The *brahmadeya* system still continued and the temples also played some role in administration and economy.

5.5.2 Economy

The tax on agricultural produce continued to be the main source of state income. Efforts were made by the state to bring more land under cultivation. Tanks (called *samudrams* in the Kakatiya kingdom) and dams were constructed for irrigation. There is no definite information available on the magnitude of land revenue demand. With the establishment of the Sultanate's control over Daulatabad, a number of new practices were introduced in the land revenue system (for details see **Sections 5.7 and 5.12**). The state also claimed ownership of pastures, forests and mines and taxes were collected from them. Customs and taxes on merchandise were other sources of state income (called *sunkams* under the Kakatiyas). Under the Kakatiyas, taxes were imposed on possession of certain goods such as carriages (*bandi*), slaves (*banisa*) and horses. The Pandya kingdom was famous for its pearl-fisheries which is testified by Marco Polo. Pearl divers had to pay 10 per cent of the finds as royalty to the king. With the coming of the Arab merchants and later the Europeans, trading activity in many parts of south India was accelerated. The income from these trading activities contributed to the richness of the southern kingdoms in a big way. The merchant guilds played an important role: they helped the state in deciding the policies on taxation and related matters. The **Chettis** were the most important group of merchants in the whole of southern region.

5.6 RISE OF INDEPENDENT KINGDOMS

As referred to earlier, during the second quarter of the 14th century three independent kingdoms were established in the South:

- i) The Ma'bar
- ii) The Bahmani
- iii) The Vijaynagara

These kingdoms emerged after a long period of instability and conflicts. The contact of the Delhi Sultanate with the south played a significant role in their rise. In this Section, we will discuss the process of the emergence of the independent kingdom of Ma'bar, while the emergence of the Vijaynagara kingdom would be discussed in the subsequent **Units 6 and 7**.

Ma'abar

As you know, Ma'bar was conquered in 1323 and was placed under Sharif Jalaluddin Ahsan as Governor. For some years, Jalaluddin remained loyal to the Delhi Sultans. Taking advantage of the distance and poor communication network, he declared himself independent by 1333-34 and assumed the title of Jalaluddin Ahsan Shah. Because of the Tughlaq Sultans' problems with other parts of kingdom no serious effort was made by the Tughlaq Sultans to recapture it. The independent kingdom survived for more than four decades and was finally conquered by Vijaynagara in 1378.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Discuss the role of the *nayakas* in the southern kingdoms.

- 2) What were the main characteristic features of the economy of the southern kingdoms?

5.7 RISE OF THE BAHMANI POWER

Let us review the political situation in the Deccan immediately prior to the establishment of the Bahmani kingdom. Most parts of the Deccan were conquered and annexed to the Delhi Sultanate during Muhammad Tughlaq's reign. He made elaborate administrative arrangements for the Deccan region. Ulugh Khan was appointed as the superior governor or 'viceroy' of the region. The whole region was divided into 23 *iqlims* or provinces. The most important of these were Jajnagar (Odisha), Marhat (Maharashtra), Telingana, Bidar, Kampili and Dwarsamudra. Subsequently, Malwa was also placed under the governor of the Deccan. Each *iqlim* was divided into a number of rural districts (*shiq*). Each *shiq* was divided

into *hazaris* (one thousand) and *sadis* (one hundred) for the collection of revenue. The main officers were *shiqdars*, *wali*, *amiran-i hazarah* and *amiran-i sadah*. The revenue officials were called *mutsarrifs*, *karkuns*, *chaudhuris*, etc.

In this set-up, the most powerful person was the ‘viceroy’ of the Deccan who was virtually the master of a large region with as many as 23 provinces. Another important functionary with wide powers was *amiran-i sadah* i.e. the chief of 100 villages.

In spite of this elaborate administrative set-up, the real control of the Sultan was weak mainly because of:

- the distance from Delhi,
- difficult geographical terrain, and
- wide powers enjoyed by the ‘viceroy’ and other officers.

In this situation, any dissatisfaction of the officers (posted in the Deccan) with the centre could lead to the snapping of ties with Delhi.

Beginning of Trouble

The role of the *amiran-i sadah* in making the Deccan independent of the Tughlaq rule is relevant. These officers of noble lineage performed the twin functions as military officers and revenue collectors. They had direct connection with the people of their territory. When a series of rebellions broke out in the South, Muhammad Tughlaq attributed them to the massive power exercised by these *amirs*; as a result, he embarked upon a policy of suppressing them which in turn sounded the death knell of the Tughlaq rule in the Deccan. We will briefly take note of the various rebellions which broke out during this period and how they contributed to the rise of a new kingdom and a new dynasty.

The earliest Deccan rebellion against the centre took place in 1327 at Sagar in Gulbarga. It was headed by Bahauddin Gurshasp and supported by local chiefs and *amirs*. The revolt was crushed but it paved the way for the need to establish the capital at a place more centrally located than Delhi from where the southern provinces could also be kept in check. Muhammad Tughlaq, thus, made Deogir the second capital of the empire in 1328. But the scheme failed as the very nobles who were sent to stabilize the Tughlaq rule in the Deccan weakened the control of Delhi.

The first major successful rebellion occurred in Ma’bar. The governor of Ma’bar in alliance with certain nobles of Daulatabad raised the banner of revolt. In 1336-1337, the governor of Bidar also rebelled but was suppressed.

Muhammad Tughlaq felt that the danger to the Tughlaq rule in the Deccan was from the scions of the old nobility whom he had sent to the South from Delhi. He, therefore, adopted the policy of replacing them with a new breed of nobles who would be loyal to him. But this was not of much help due to the recalcitrant behaviour of the *amiran-i sadah* who ultimately carved out an independent kingdom in the Deccan.

Around 1344, the amount of revenue due from the Deccan had fallen sharply. Muhammad Tughlaq divided the Deccan into 4 *shiqs* and placed them under the charge of neo-Muslims whom Barani calls ‘upstarts’. This was not liked by the *amiran-i sadah*. In 1345, the nobles posted in Gujarat conspired and rebelled against

Delhi. Muhammad Tughlaq suspected the complicity of the *amiran-i sadah* in the Gujarat insurrection. The viceroy of the Deccan was ordered by Muhammad Tughlaq to summon the *amirs* of Raichur, Gulbarga, Bijapur, etc. to Broach. The *amiran-i sadah*, fearing drastic punishment at the hands of Muhammad Tughlaq, decided to strike a blow at the Tughlaq rule in the Deccan and declared themselves independent at Daulatabad by electing Nasiruddin Ismail Shah, the senior *amir* of Deogir, as their Sultan.

Gulbarga was the first region to be taken after the establishment of their rule in Daulatabad. Those opposing the Delhi Sultanate consisted of the Rajputs, Deccanis, Mongols, Gujarati *amirs* and the troops sent by the Raja of Tanjore. They emerged victorious in the end. But Ismail Shah abdicated in favour of Hasan Kangu (Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah) and, thus, was laid the foundation of the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan in 1347. The new kingdom comprised of the entire region of the Deccan. For the next 150 years, this kingdom dominated the political activities in the South.

5.8 CONQUEST AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE BAHMANI POWER

The political developments of the Bahmani kingdom can be divided into two phases. In the first phase (1347-1422), the centre of activities was Gulbarga. Major conquests were effected in this phase. While in the second phase (1422-1538), the capital shifted to Bidar which was more centrally located and was fertile. The struggle for supremacy between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmanis continued in this period as well. During this phase, we find conflicts between the *Afaqis* and the *Dakhnis* touching its peak.

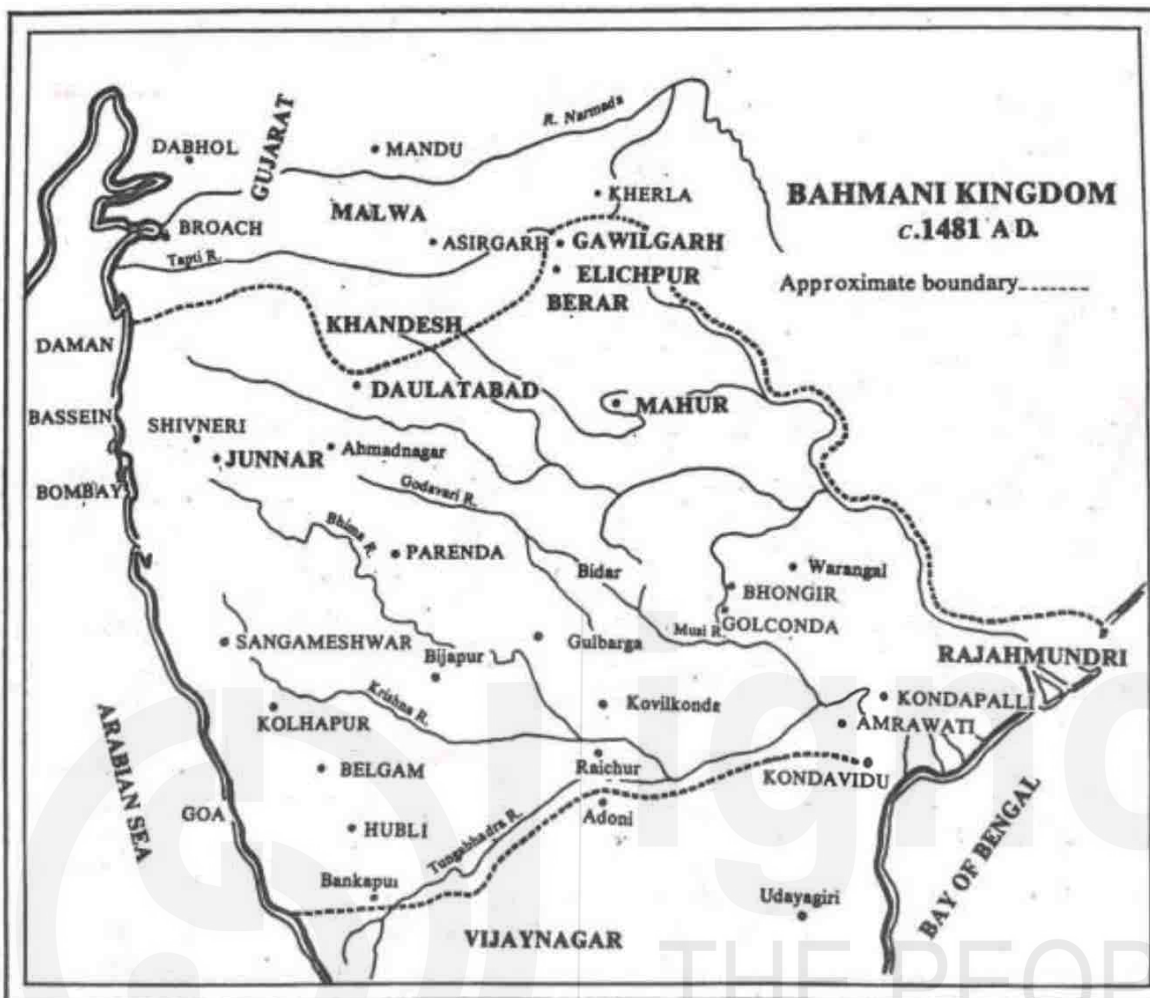
5.8.1 First Phase: 1347-1422

In the period between 1347-1422, major conquests were effected. Kotgir in Andhra Pradesh, Qandahar in Maharashtra, Kalyani in Karnataka, Bhongir in Telingana, Sagar, Khembhavi, Malkher and Seram in Gulbarga (Karnataka), Manram, Akkalkot and Mahendri in Maharashtra and Maridu in Malwa (Madhya Pradesh) were subjugated. The Bahmani rule covered Mandu in the north to Raichur in the south and from Bhongir in the east to Dabhol and Goa in the west.

The Raya of Telingana and Raya of Vijaynagara were the main rivals of the Bahmanis in this period. In one engagement with the Raya of Telingana Golconda was handed over to the Bahmanis. However, war with Vijaynagara did not prove to be decisive and the Tungabhadra *Doab* continued to be shared between the two powers.

Very soon the Bahmanis lost Goa to Vijaynagara in the late 14th century. In one campaign, launched by the Bahmanis against the Raja of Kherla (Maharashtra), who was being encouraged by the rulers of Vijaynagara, Malwa and Khandesh to rebel against the Bahmanis, he was forced to submit. In Telingana, two rivals – Vema (of Rajahmundry) and Velama (of Telingana) (Andhra factions) – were supported by the Vijaynagara and the Bahmanis respectively. The Bahmanis tried to intrude into Telingana but were repulsed by the Vemas. The Bahmanis continued to side with one Andhra faction against the other for territorial gains. An important factor for the Bahmani losses in the campaign against Vijaynagara in the early 15th

century was the fact that the Velamas who had earlier supported the Bahmanis had shifted their allegiance to Vijaynagara.



Map 5.1: The Bahmani Kingdom, c. 1481 CE

Source: EHI-03: India: From 8th to 15th Century, Block 7, Unit 28, p. 56

5.8.2 Second Phase: 1422-1538

The period between 1422-1538 was marked by the shift of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. It was centrally and strategically located. The three linguistic areas (Marathi, Kannad and Telugu) converged on this point. The struggle for supremacy between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmanis continued in this period as well. Warangal was annexed to the Bahmani kingdom in this period. The independent kingdoms of Malwa and Gujarat (see **Unit 8**) also had to bear the brunt of the Bahmani power. While Malwa proved to be weak, the Sultanate of Gujarat, in spite of two major campaigns, did not give way to the Bahmanis. An important consequence of the latter confrontation was the formation of alliance between the Sultanate of Khandesh and the Bahmanis to counter the threat from Gujarat.

Between 1436-1444, two clashes occurred between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmanis. In the first one, the Bahmanis had to face defeat. However, the second one, according to Ferishta, ultimately proved to be advantageous for the Bahmanis. The Rajas of Sangameshwar and Khandesh were subjugated. In the Gujarat campaign, the major cause of the defeat of the Bahmanis was the internal strife between the two factions of the nobles, the *Deccanis* and the *Afaqis* (you will read about this in the subsequent Section). The *Deccanis* had betrayed the Bahmani cause. Therefore, in the campaign against Khandesh, *Deccanis* were excluded which brought serious

repercussions. In 1446, to suppress the Raja of Kherla and Sangameshwar (Konkan), the *Deccanis* and the *Afaqis* were sent. The expedition ended in disaster for the Bahmanis. The *Deccanis* blamed the *Afaqis* who were consequently punished. Later the *Afaqis* pleaded their case and regained ascendancy in the court. These strifes proved harmful for the empire. This was the period when Mahmud Gawan came into prominence as the Bahmani minister. The ruler of Odisha in alliance with the king of Telingana attacked the Bahmanis but they were repulsed by Mahmud Gawan. The ruler of Malwa also made a bid to conquer the Bahmani territories (e.g., Bidar). However, he had to retreat when Gujarat came to the rescue of the Bahmanis. Another attempt of Malwa also failed. Mahmud Gawan conquered Hubli, Belgaum and Bagalkot. The Bombay-Karnatak zone came under the Bahmani sway. Under Gawan's able guidance, the empire extended from Odisha to Goa (Konkan). Finally, Mahmud Gawan, an *Afaqi*, became a victim of group rivalry and was murdered at the hands of the *Deccani* party. After this, the kingdom rolled down the path of disintegration. Wars undertaken against Vijaynagara ended in disaster and ultimately, by 1538 the Bahmani dynasty came to an end and the kingdom broke up into 5 states – Berar, Bidar, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda.

Check Your Progress-3

1) Discuss the role of the *amiran-i sadah* in making the Deccan independent of the Tughlaq rule.

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2) Fill in the blanks:

- i) *Amiran-i sadah* were the.....
- ii)rebellion took place in 1327 at Gulbarga.
- iii)was the cockpit between the Bahmani and the Vijaynagara rulers.
- iv) The Vema's were the rulers of.....

3) The history of the Deccan during the 14-15th century was one of struggle for supremacy between the Bahmani and the Vijaynagara rulers. Comment.

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5.9 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE *AFAQIS* AND THE *DAKHNIS* AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE KING

So far we have seen that the nobles played a crucial role not only as consolidators but also as kingmakers in the Sultanate. Every Sultan's interest was to win the loyalty of his nobles. The same tradition continued in the Bahmani kingdom as well. As early as Alauddin Bahman Shah's reign we see as many as three factions:

one which helped Alauddin Bahman Shah in establishing an independent kingdom in the Deccan; the other was the Tughlaq faction; and the third faction comprised of local chiefs and vassals who had personal interests.

From Alauddin Mujahid's reign (1375-78) onwards, a new factor was introduced in the composition of the nobility, i.e. the *Afaqis*. This word means 'universal' – persons who were uprooted and hence did not belong to any region. They were also called *gharibud diyar*, that is, 'strangers'. These *Afaqis* had migrated from Iran, Transoxiana and Iraq. But it was during Ghiyasuddin Tahamtan's reign, in 1397, that the real clash between the *Dakhnis* and the *Afaqis* began when the Sultan appointed many *Afaqis* to higher posts: for example, Salabat Khan was appointed the governor of Berar, Muhammad Khan as *sar-i naubat* and Ahmad Beg Qazwini as *peshwa*. Appointment of the *Afaqis* to such high posts which were earlier held by the *Dakhnis* greatly raised dissatisfaction among the old nobility and the Turkish faction under the leadership of Taghalchin. Taghalchin succeeded in reducing their influence as early as 1397 when he successfully conspired the murder of Ghiyasuddin and placed Shamsuddin Dawud II (1397) as a puppet king and assured for himself the post of Malik Naib and Mir Jumla. It was Ahmad I (1422-36) who for the first time appointed Khalaf Hasan Basri, an *Afaqi* (with whose help he got the throne), to the highest office of *wakil-i Sultanat* and conferred on him the highest title of *malik-ut tujjar* (prince of merchants). This phenomenal rise was the result of the continuous expression of loyalty shown by the *Afaqis* compared to the *Dakhnis*. It was the *Afaqi* Syed Hussain Badakhohi and others who helped Ahmad I in his escape during his Vijaynagara campaign in the early years of his reign. As a result, Ahmad I recruited a special force of the *Afaqi* archers. Similar other favours were also showered on them. This policy created great resentment among the *Dakhnis*.

Clashes between these two groups can be seen during Ahmad's Gujarat campaign when, on account of the non-cooperation of the *Dakhnis*, the Bahmani arms had to face defeat under the leadership of *Malik-ut tujjar*. This gulf widened further during Ahmad II's reign. At the time of the attacks of Khandesh army on account of the non-cooperation of the *Dakhnis*, only the *Afaqis* could be dispatched under Khalaf Hasan Basri. Humayun Shah (1458-1461) tried to maintain equilibrium between the two factions. During Ahmad III's reign (1461-65), the *Dakhnis* felt that much power was concentrated into the hands of the *Afaqis* with *Khwaja-i Jahan* Turk, *Malik-ut tujjar* and Mahmud Gawan at the helm of affairs. On the other hand, the *Afaqis* were dissatisfied because the power which they enjoyed under Ahmad II's reign was greatly reduced under the latter's successor. Mahmud Gawan, the chief minister of Muhammad III (1463-1482), also tried to maintain the equilibrium between the two. As a result, he appointed Malik Hasan as *sar-i lashkar* of Telingana and Fathullah as *sar-i lashkar* of Berar. But Mahmud Gawan himself fell prey to the conspiracy of Zarif-ul Mulk Dakhni and Miftah Habshi. Once the equilibrium was disturbed, the successive weak kings became puppets in the hands of one group or the other.

During Shihabuddin Mahmud's reign (1482-1518), the clash reached its climax. While the king showed his distinct inclination for the *Afaqis*, the *Dakhnis* joined hands with the *Habshi* (Abyssinian) faction. The latter, in 1487, in a desperate bid attempted to kill the king but failed. It resulted in a large-scale massacre of the *Dakhnis* which continued for three days. All these factional fights weakened the centre. Shihabuddin's reign itself was marred by continuous rebellions and intrigues

of Qasim Barid, Malik Ahmad Nizamul Mulk, Bahadur Gilani, etc. Shihabuddin's death (1518) provided these nobles almost a free hand in their provinces. Finally, Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur was the first to claim his independence in 1537. Thus began the physical disintegration of the Bahmani Sultanate.

5.10 CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE BAHMANI KINGDOM

The Bahmanis seem to have copied the administrative structure of the Delhi Sultans. The king was at the helm of affairs, followed by *wakil*, *wazir*, *bakhshi* and *qazi*. Besides, there were *dabir* (secretary), *mufti* (interpreter of law), *kotwal*, *muhtasib* (censor of public morals). *Munihians* (spy) were appointed not only in every corner of their kingdom, but we are told that during Muhammad's reign, *munihians* were posted at Delhi too.

During Muhammad I's reign, the Bahmani kingdom was divided into four *ataraf* or provinces, i.e. Daultabad, Berar, Bidar and Gulbarga – each ruled by a *tarafdar*. Since Gulbarga was the most important province, only the most trusted nobles were appointed who were called *mir naib* (viceroy) – distinct from the governors (*tarafdar*) of other provinces. Later on, as the boundaries of the kingdom expanded, Mahmud Gawan divided the empire into eight provinces. Certain parts of the empire were put under the direct control of the Sultan (*khassa-i Sultani*).

5.11 ARMY ORGANIZATION UNDER THE BAHMANI KINGDOM

The *amir-ul umara* was the commander of the army. The army mainly consisted of soldiers and cavalry. Elephants were also employed. The rulers maintained a large number of bodyguards known as *khassakhel*. Muhammad I is stated to have had four thousand bodyguards. Besides, there were *silahdars* who were in-charge of the personal armoury of the king. In times of need, *barbardars* were asked to mobilize troops. Another characteristic feature of the Bahmani army was the use of gunpowder that gave them military advantage.

Niccolo Conti, an Italian traveller, who visited India in the 15th century, writes that their army used javelins, swords, arm-pieces, round-shields, bows and arrows. He adds that they used 'ballistae and bombarding machines as well as siege-pieces'. Duarte Barbosa who visited India during 1500-1517 also made similar remarks that they used maces, battle-axes, bows and arrows. He adds: 'they [**Moorish**] ride on high-pommelled saddle... fight tied to their saddles... The gentios... the larger part of them fight on foot, but some on horseback...' Mahmud Gawan streamlined the military administration as well. Earlier, the *tarafdars* had absolute authority to appoint the *qiladars* of the forts. Gawan placed one fort under one *tarafdar's* jurisdiction, the rest of the forts within a province were placed under the central command. To check corruption, he made a rule that every officer should be paid a fixed rate for every 1500 troopers maintained by him. When he was given revenue assignments in lieu of cash, the amount incurred by the officer in the collection of revenue was to be paid to him separately. If he failed to maintain the stipulated soldiers, he had to refund the proportionate amount to the exchequer.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) How can we say that the conflict between the *Afaqis* and the *Dakhnis* ultimately sealed the fate of the Bahmani kingdom?

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- 2) What were the major changes brought about by Mahmud Gawan in administration and army organization?

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5.12 ECONOMY

Mahmud Gawan ordered for systematic measurement of land fixing the boundaries of the villages and towns. Thus, in this regard he was the forerunner of Raja Todar Mal. All this greatly helped the exchequer. First, the income of the empire was ensured and became known in advance; secondly, it also curbed the corruption of the nobles to the minimum, thereby increasing the state's income.

In the Bahmani kingdom, trade and commerce was in a flourishing state. Nikitin, a Russian traveller, who was in the Deccan during 1469-74, provides ample information regarding the commercial activities of Bidar. He says that horses, cloth, silk, and pepper were the chief merchandise. He adds that at Shikhbaludin Peratyr and at Aladinand *bazar* people assembled in large numbers where trade continued for ten days. He also mentions the Bahmani seaport Mustafabad-Dabul as a centre of commercial activity. Dabul was well-connected not only with the Indian but also with the African ports. Horses were imported from Arabia. Khurasan and Turkestan. Trade and commerce was mostly in the hands of the Hindu merchants. Musk and fur were imported from China.

5.13 SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The social structure of the Bahmanis was cosmopolitan in character. There were Muslims, Hindus, Iranians, Transoxonians, Iraqis and Abyssinians (Habshis). The Portuguese came during the early 16th century. This heterogeneous character becomes more prominent if we look at its linguistic pattern: Persian, Marathi, *Dakhni* (proto-Urdu), Kannada and Telugu languages were widely spoken in various parts of the kingdom.

Broadly, two classes existed in the society. According to Nikitin, there were poor, and the nobles who were 'extremely opulent'. He says that 'the nobles were carried on their Silver beds, preceded by twenty horses caparisoned in gold and followed by three hundred men on horseback and five hundred on foot along with ten torchbearers.' Nikitin also gives a graphic account of the grandeur of the Bahmani *wazir*, Mahmud Gawan. He mentions that everyday along with him 500 men used to dine. For the safety of his house alone, everyday 100 armed personnel kept vigilance. In contrast, the general population was poor. Though Nikitin mentions

only two classes, there was yet another class – the merchants (the so-called middle class).

The sufis were greatly venerated by the Bahmani rulers. Initially, they migrated to the Deccan as religious auxiliaries of the Khaljis and the Tughluqs. The infant Bahmani kingdom required the support of the sufis for popular legitimization of their authority. The sufis who migrated to the Bahmani kingdom were chiefly of the Chishti, Qadiri and Shattari orders. Bidar emerged as one of the most important centres of the Qadiri order. Shaikh Sirajuddin Junaidi was the first sufi to receive the royal favour. The Chishti saints enjoyed the greatest honour. Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz, the famous Chishti saint of Delhi, migrated to Gulbarga in 1402-3. Sultan Firuz granted, a number of villages as *inam* for the upkeep of his *khanqah*. But during the later period of his reign dissensions between the two developed on account of the sufi's support for the Sultan's brother Ahmad as his successor. It finally led to the expulsion of Gesu Daraz from Gulbarga.

With the large influx of the *Afaqis* in the Bahmani kingdom, the Shias also found their place under Fazlullah's influence. Ahmad I's act of sending 30,000 silver *tanka* for distribution among the Saiyyids of Karbala in Iraq shows his inclination for the Shia doctrine. The most influential *wazir* of Ahmad III was also a Shia.

Hindu traditions and Culture also influenced the Bahmani court. Sultan Firuz's (1397-1422) marriage with a daughter of the royal family of Vijaynagara helped greatly in the Hindu-Muslims cultural harmony. There is a legend that Firuz even once went to Vijaynagara in the guise of a Hindu *faqir*. Even in the most important ceremony like the celebration of *urs*, Hindu influences are to be seen. During the *urs* celebrations, the *Jangam* (the head of the Lingayats of Madhyal in Gulbarga district) would perform the ceremony in typical Hindu fashion-conch-blowing, flower offerings, etc. What is interesting is that the *Jangam* wore Muslim apparel with the usual cap that the Muslim *darwesh* (hermit) used.

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) Write a note on trade and commerce under the Bahmani rule.

- 2) Mark right (✓) or wrong (×) against the following statements:
 - i) Nikitin was an Italian traveller who visited India during the 15th century. ()
 - ii) Under Mahmud Gawan, systematic measurement of the land was done. ()
 - iii) Gesu Daraz was a famous Suhrawardi saint. ()
- 3) Discuss Nikitin's observation on the Bahmani society.

5.14 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have discussed the political set-up that emerged in South India and the Deccan after the fall of the Chola and the Chalukya empires. The region witnessed the emergence of four independent kingdoms, viz. the Yadavas, the Kakatiyas, the Pandyas and the Hoysalas. After enjoying independent status for about hundred years, these kingdoms were subjugated by the Delhi Sultanate. The main architect of Sultanate's victory was Alauddin Khalji's commander Malik Kafur. But, during this period, these kingdoms continued to enjoy autonomy.

During Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, almost the whole Deccan and some portions of the peninsular south were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. The important town of Devagiri was made the second capital city. This situation did not last long. During Muhammad Tughlaq's rule, new political forces surfaced giving rise to three new independent kingdoms, viz. the Ma'bar, the Bahmani and the Vijaynagara. The last two lasting long and became the main arena of political activity in this part of the subcontinent.

We also witnessed how the *amiran-i sadah* gradually succeeded in carving out an independent Bahmani kingdom. In their formative phase, they were constantly at war with the Vijaynagara, Malwa and Telingana rulers. We have also seen how the clashes between the *Afaqis* and the *Dakhnis* ultimately led to the decline of the Bahmani Sultanate. As for the administrative structure, we do not find it much different from that of the Delhi Sultanate, with the exception of designations and nomenclatures and Mahmud Gawan's reforms concerning the measurement of land.

5.15 KEY WORDS

<i>Afaqi</i>	Literally 'Universal'; from <i>afaq</i> ; Newcomers from Iran, Iraq and Transoxiana
<i>Amiran Hazarah</i>	Nobles of one thousand
<i>Brahmadeya</i>	Religious land-grants to the Brahmins
<i>Chetti</i>	A merchant community in South India
<i>Dakhnis</i>	Old Deccani nobility
<i>Darwesh</i>	Muslim hermit; saint
<i>Iqlim</i>	Provinces
<i>Inam</i>	Revenue free grants
<i>Jangam</i>	Head of the Lingayat sect
<i>Khanqah</i>	Muslim monastery
<i>Khassakhel</i>	Bodyguards of the Sultan
<i>Malik-ut tujjar</i>	Prince of merchants
<i>Mir Naib</i>	Viceroy
<i>Moorish</i>	Muslim
<i>Nadu</i>	Peasant assembly or organization
<i>Nayak</i>	Warrior chief

<i>Shiq</i>	Administrative unit similar to that of a district
<i>Silahdar</i>	Incharge of the armour
<i>Tarafdar</i>	Provincial governors
<i>Wali</i>	Provincial governor; <i>iqta</i> holder

5.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 5.2
- 2) See Section 5.3
- 3) See Section 5.4

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 5.5.1
- 2) See Sub-section 5.5.2

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Section 5.7
- 2) i) revenue collectors and military commanders ii) Bahauddin Gurshasp
iii) Tungabhadra Doab iv) Rajahmundry
- 3) See Section 5.8

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Section 5.9
- 2) See Sub-section 5.3.10 and Section 5.11

Check Your Progress-5

1. See Section 5.12
2. i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ×
3. See Section 5.13

5.17 SUGGESTED READINGS

Derret, J. and M. Duncan, (1957) *The Hoysalas: A Medieval India Royal Family* (London: Oxford University Press).

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Jha, Bishwambhar, (1994) *Kakatiyas of Warangal, Circa A.D. 1000-1323* (Patna: Janaki Prakashan).

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Sastri, Nilakanta, (1958) *A History of South India: from Prehistoric Times to the fall of Vijaynagara* (London: Oxford University Press).

Sethuraman, N., (1980) *Medieval Pandayas* (Kumbakonam: Raman and Raman).

Deccan Kingdoms

Srinivas, Ritti, (1973) *The Seunas: The Yadavas of Devagiri* (Dharwar: Department of Ancient Indian History and Epigraphy, Karnataka University).

5.18 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

The Story of the Bahmanis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc9jTCJAxa8>

The untold story of Hoysala Vishnuvardhana

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uhTKiDpT1k>

The Kakatiyas Emergence of a Regional Kingdom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVeTrjuqZxc>

Rudrama Devi: Warrior Queen of the Kakatiya Dynasty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuSzQYjNI7c>

Warangal fort of Kakatiya dynasty Orugallu in the Telangana State

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqDEY3hfyPU>



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Unit 6 VIJAYANAGARA: EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Geographical Setting of South India
- 6.3 Establishment and Consolidation
 - 6.3.1 Early Phase: 1336-1509
 - 6.3.2 Krishnadeva Raya: 1509-29
 - 6.3.3 Period of Instability: 1529-42
 - 6.3.4 The Portuguese
 - 6.3.5 Vijaynagara's Relations with the Deep South
 - 6.3.6 The Deccan Muslim States
- 6.4 Religion and Politics under the Vijaynagara Empire
 - 6.4.1 Ritual Kingship
 - 6.4.2 Political Role of the Brahmans
 - 6.4.3 Relationship between Kings, Sects and Temples
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Keywords
- 6.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 6.8 Suggested Readings
- 6.9 Instructional Video Recommendations

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- assess the geographical influences on the polity and economy of South India,
- understand the emergence of the Vijaynagara empire,
- analyze the expansion of Vijaynagara power during 14th-16th century,
- evaluate Vijaynagara's relations with the Bahmani rulers and deep south, and
- explain the process of consolidation and decline of the Vijaynagara empire.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the present Unit, we will discuss the process of the emergence, expansion and consolidation of the Vijaynagara power, over the South Indian macro-region, as well as its disintegration. In the previous Unit you have read about the process of

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the emergence of four kingdoms in the South Indian macro-region on the ruins of the Chalukya and the Chola empires. The invasion of the Deccan and South India by the Delhi Sultans weakened the power of the four kingdoms in South India (the Pandya and Hoysala kingdoms in the South, and Kakatiya and Yadava kingdoms in the North) and made them subservient to the Delhi Sultanate. This was followed by the emergence and expansion of the Bahmani and the Vijaynagara kingdoms in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.

Harihara and Bukka, the sons of Sangama (the last Yadava king), had been in the service of the Kakatiyas of Warangal. After the fall of Warangal at the hands of the Delhi Sultans, they shifted to Kampili. After the conquest of Kampili, the two brothers were taken to Delhi where they embraced Islam and became favorites of the Sultan. Soon the Hoysalas attacked Kampili with the support of the local people and defeated the governor of Delhi. The Sultan at this point sent Harihara and Bukka to govern that region. They started the restoration of Sultan's power but came in contact with Vidyanaraya who converted them back to the Hindu fold. They declared their independence and founded the state of Vijaynagara with Harihara as its king in 1336. Soon this state developed into the powerful Vijaynagara empire.

6.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF SOUTH INDIA¹

The region south of the Krishna Tungabhadra *doab* formed South India. The coastal belt in the east is known as Coromandel, while the western tract from south of Kanara (from the river Netravati down to Cape Comorin) is known as Malabar which is bounded by the Western Ghats in the east. During the Chola period the focus of activity was confined mainly around the Kaveri tract which, during the Vijaynagara period, shifted further northeast towards Tungabhadra-Krishna *doab* (the Rayalseema tract) where the capital of Vijaynagara was situated. Throughout the 13th-16th century, this tract remained the centre of struggle: first, between Vijaynagara and Bahmani, and later between Vijaynagara and its successor Nayak states and the Bijapur rulers. The Qutb Shahi rulers also joined the conflict frequently.

Another feature that influenced the 16th century South Indian polity, economy and society was the migration of the Telugu population from the northern tracts (of South India) which started from the mid-15th century and continued during the 16th century. Interestingly, this movement was from the coastal and deltaic wet land areas, which were greatly fertile, well-cultivated and well-irrigated. There might have been numerous reasons for these migrations such as the Bahmani pressure; deliberate attempts on the part of the Vijaynagara rulers to extend their dominion further south; natural process, that is, movement from more densely populated areas; the soil was well suited to the migrants since it was excellent for dry farming, etc. At any rate, it had a deep socio-economic impact. For example, the development of dry farming led to the rise of tank irrigation which became the crucial part of the 16th century South Indian economy. Secondly, its comparatively low productivity yielded low surplus which helped in the rise of what the modern scholars call 'portfolio capitalists' in this tract.

¹ This Section is taken from Unit 3, Section 3.1 of IGNOU Course EHI-04: *India from 16th Century to mid-18th Century*.

6.3 ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSOLIDATION

Geographical configurations played an important role in determining the course of political events in south India. The struggle among the local powers centered around the Krishna Godavari delta, Kaveri basin, the Tungabhadra *doab* and the Konkan region, the latter known for its fertility and access to high seas. During the 8th-13th century, the struggle was between the Rashtrakutas and the Pallavas while the following centuries saw Vijaynagara and Bahmani kingdoms locking horns.

The Bahmanis compelled the Vijaynagara rulers to expand laterally westward and across the peninsula from the main centre of their power on the Tungabhadra. The Vijaynagara rulers also found it difficult to crush the Bahmani power in Raich Warangal. These circumstances prevented Vijaynagara from advancing towards the north and forced it to expand laterally eastward and westward across the peninsula and southwards into the Tamil country. Later, however, this alliance broke up which enabled Vijaynagara to expand at the cost of the Bahmanis.

6.3.1 Early Phase: 1336-1509

Rivalries in this period ensued among the Vijaynagara, the Bahmanis, the Reddis of Kondavidu (in the reaches of upper Krishna-Godavari delta), the Velamas of Rajakonda (in the lower reaches of Krishna-Godavari delta), the Telugu-Chodas (between Krishna-Godavari region) and the Gajapatis of Odisha over the control of the Krishna-Godavari delta, Tungabhadra *doab* and Marathwada (specially Konkan).

On account of constant clashes, the Vijaynagara boundaries kept on changing. Between 1336-1422, major conflicts took place between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmanis with Telugu-Choda chiefs siding with the latter while the Velamas of Rajakonda and the Reddis of Rajahmundry joined hands with Vijaynagara. This tilted the balance largely in favour of the latter.

During 1422-46, clash over the annexation of Raichur *doab* started between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmani rulers which resulted in the defeat of Vijaynagara. This greatly exposed the weaknesses of the Vijaynagara army. It forced its rulers to reorganize the army by enlisting Muslim archers and engaging better quality horses. The Muslim archers were given revenue assignments. During this period the entire Kondavidu region was annexed to the Vijaynagara empire.

Between 1465-1509 again, the Raichur *doab* became the cockpit of clashes. In the beginning, Vijaynagara had to surrender the western ports, i.e. Goa, Chaul and Dabhol to the Bahmanis. But, around 1490, internal disintegration of the Bahmani kingdom began with the establishment of Bijapur under Yusuf Adil Khan. Taking advantage of the situation, Vijaynagara succeeded in occupying Tungabhadra region (Adoni and Kurnool). Earlier, the loss of western ports had completely dislocated horse trade with the Arabs on which Vijaynagara army depended for its cavalry. However, occupation of Honavar, Bhatkal, Bakanur and Mangalore ports led to the revival of horse trade. This ensured regular supply which sustained the efficiency of the Vijaynagara army.

The Gajapatis of Odisha were an important power in the eastern region. They had in their possession areas like Kondavidu, Udayagiri and Masulipatam. The Vijaynagara rulers succeeded in expelling the Gajapatis as far as Godavari and occupied Kondavidu, Udayagiri and Masulipatam. But soon, in 1481, Masulipatam

was lost to the Bahmanis. Vijaynagara had also to contend with the constant rebellions of the chieftains of Udayagiri, Ummatur (near Mysore) and Seringapatam.

6.3.2 Krishnadeva Raya: 1509-29

This phase is marked by the achievements of Vijaynagara's greatest ruler Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29). During this period, the power of the Bahmanis declined, leading to the emergence of five kingdoms: the Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar; the Adil Shahis of Bijapur; the Imad Shahis of Berar, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda and the Barid Shahis of Bidar on the ruins of the Bahmani empire. This helped Krishnadeva Raya greatly in capturing Kovilkonda and Raichur from the Adil Shahis of Bijapur and Gulbarga and Bidar from the Bahmanis. Krishnadeva Raya also recovered Udayagiri, Kondavidu (south of river Krishna), and Nalgonda (in Andhra Pradesh). Telingana and Warangal were taken from the Gajapatis.

By 1510, the Portuguese also emerged as a strong power to reckon with in the Indian waters. Occupation of Goa and sack of Danda Rajouri and Dabhol provided them monopoly in horse trade, since Goa had been the entrepot of the Deccan states for horse trade. Krishnadeva Raya maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese. On Albuquerque's request, Krishnadeva Raya permitted the construction of a fort at Bhatkal. Similarly, the Portuguese soldiers played a reasonable role in Krishnadeva Raya's success against Ismail Adil Khan of Bijapur.



Map 6.1: South India during the Vijaynagara times

Source: EHI-03: India: From 8th to 15th Century, Block 7, Unit 27, p. 42

6.3.3 Period of Instability: 1529-42

Krishnadeva Raya's death generated internal strife and attracted external invasions. Taking advantage of the internal situation, Ismail Adil Khan of Bijapur seized Raichur and Mudgal. The Gajapati and Golconda kings also, though unsuccessfully, attempted to occupy Kondavidu. During this turbulence, Krishnadeva Raya's brother Achyut Raya (1529-42) succeeded in usurping the Vijaynagara throne. But the latter's death once again led to the war of succession between Achyut Raya's son and Sadasiva, the nephew of Achyut Raya. Finally, Sadasiva ascended the throne (1542), but the real power remained in the hands of Rama Raya, the son-in-law of Krishnadeva Raya.

He followed the policy of admitting Muslims in the army and conferred important offices on them which greatly enhanced the efficiency of the army.

6.3.4 The Portuguese

Rama Raya's relations with the Portuguese were not very cordial. Martin Alfonso de Souza, who became the governor of Goa in 1542 plundered Bhatkal. Later, Rama Raya also succeeded in concluding a treaty with Alfonso de Souza's successor, Joao de Castro, in 1547, by which Rama Raya secured a monopoly of the horse trade. Rama Raya also tried to curb Portuguese influence in San Thome on the Coromandel.

6.3.5 Vijaynagara's Relations with the Deep South

By 1512, Vijaynagara rulers succeeded in bringing almost the whole southern peninsula under their control. The small Hindu chiefdom of Rajagambirarajyan (Tondai Mandala), the **Zamorin** of Calicut and the ruler of Quilon (Kerala) accepted the suzerainty of Vijaynagara. By 1496, almost the whole deep south upto the Cape Comorin including local Chola and Chera rulers, Tanjore and Pudukottai and Manabhusha of Madura were subjugated. However, the Pandya ruler (chief of Tuticorin and Kayattar) was allowed to rule as a tributary.

An interesting feature of the occupation of the Tamil country was that, after the conquests the Telugu soldiers settled down permanently in remote and sparsely populated areas. These migrants exploited the black soil which later led to the emergence of the Reddis as an important cultivating group. Besides, the emergence of the *nayakas* as intermediaries in the Tamil country was also the result of expansion into that region.

The Vijaynagara state was a massive political system which included within its domain diverse people, i.e. the Tamils, Kannadas and the Telugu-speaking community.

The Vijaynagara rulers exercised direct territorial sovereignty over the Tungabhadra region. In other parts, the Vijaynagara rulers exercised ritual sovereignty (overlordship) through the Telugu warriors (*nayakas*) and the local chiefs who had metamorphosed into *nayakas* and also through the sectarian groups, i.e. the Vaishnavas (you will read about their political role in the next **Unit**).

6.3.6 The Deccan Muslim States

By 1538, the Bahmani kingdom split up into five states – Ahmadnagar, Bidar, Bijapur, Golconda and Berar. Ahmadnagar and Bijapur came to a mutual

understanding in 1542-43 which gave Bijapur a free hand against Vijaynagara, whereas Ahmadnagar was to expand at the cost of Bidar. With this understanding, Ibrahim Adil Shah attacked Vijaynagara which was repulsed. But the understanding did not remain for long. Ahmadnagar received Rama Raya's help to capture the fort of Kalyani from Bidar. Rama Raya's relations with the Deccan states were quite complex: he helped Ahmadnagar against Bidar but, when Ahmadnagar attacked Gulbarga (Bijapuri territory), Rama Raya came to the help of the Bijapur ruler. Moreover, Rama Raya succeeded in bringing about a collective security plan between the Vijaynagara and the Deccani Muslim states. It was agreed that aggression by any one of them would bring forth armed intervention by the rest of the parties against the aggressor.

In utter violation of the agreement, Ahmadnagar invaded Bijapur in 1560. Rama Raya secured Golconda's help against Ahmadnagar but this alliance, too, proved shortlived. Ahmadnagar was defeated and Kalyani had to be surrendered to Bijapur. Around this time, Rama Raya also violated the security agreement by attacking Bidar. The ruler of Golconda joined hands with Ahmadnagar and attacked Kalyani. Rama Raya sent his forces against Golconda for recapturing the fortress of Kalyani. On the other hand, Vijaynagara and Bijapur joined hands (which was again a transitory alliance) against the aggression of Ahmadnagar and Golconda. Finally, Ahmadnagar had to surrender the forts of Kovilkonda, Ganpura and Pangal. During this phase, Rama Raya's policy was of playing off one Muslim state against the other to secure a balance of power in favour of Vijaynagara. Later, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Bijapur rallied together against Vijaynagara. The final showdown was at Talikota (1565), a town located near Krishna river. It spelt utter doom for Vijaynagara which was sacked. Rama Raya was killed. Though the Vijaynagara kingdom continued to exist for almost hundred more years, its size decreased and the Rayas no longer remained important in the politics of South India.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Briefly explain the geographical setting of South India.
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- 2) Discuss the conflict between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmani kingdoms for the control over Krishna-Godavari delta, Tungabhadra *doab* and the Konkan.
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- 3) Write in about 30 words the relations of the Portuguese with the Vijaynagara rulers.
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- 4) The struggle with the Deccan Muslim states finally sealed the fate of the Vijaynagara rule. Comment.

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6.4 RELIGION AND POLITICS UNDER THE VIJAYNAGARA EMPIRE

Religion and religious classes played an important role in the political, social and economic life of the Vijaynagara empire.

6.4.1 Ritual Kingship

It is generally emphasized that the principle of strict adherence to *dharma* was the chief constituent and distinguishing feature of the Vijaynagara state. But very often it was the Hindu rulers against whom the Vijaynagara rulers had to fight, e.g. the Gajapatis of Odisha. The most strategically placed contingents of the Vijaynagara army were under the charge of Muslim commanders. The Muslim archers were employed by King Deva Raya II. These Muslim contingents played an important role in the victory of Vijaynagara against its Hindu rivals.

The successful military deeds of the Vijaynagara rulers led them to assume the title of *digvijayans*. Vijaynagara kingship was symbolic in the sense that the Vijaynagara rulers exercised their control through their overlords over a region beyond the prime centre of their authority. This symbolism was manifested through the instrument of religion which was used to ensure loyalty from the people. For example, ritual kingship is best exemplified in the *mahanavami* festival. This was an annual royal ceremony lasting for nine days between 15 September and 15 October. It culminated in the *dusserah* festival on the tenth day. Important personages (e.g. military commanders) from the peripheral parts participated in the festival. Through this festival, recognition of the sovereignty of Vijaynagara rulers by peripheral parts of the empire was strengthened. Though the Brahmans participated in the festival, their role was not predominant. The ritual rites of the festival were largely performed by the king himself.

6.4.2 Political Role of the Brahmans

A distinct feature of the Vijaynagara state was the importance of the Brahmans as political and secular personnel rather than ritual leaders. Most of the *durga dannaiks* (in-charge of forts) were Brahmans. Literary sources substantiate the theory that fortresses were significant during this period and were placed under the control of the Brahmans, especially of Telugu origins.

During this period, the majority of educated Brahmans desired to become government servants as administrators and accountants which offered them good career prospects. The Imperial Secretariat was totally manned by the Brahmans. These Brahmans were different from the other Brahmans: they belonged to a sub-caste called the Telugu Niyogis. They were not very orthodox in performing religious rites. They also worked as potential legitimizers. The Brahman Vidyanaya and his kinsmen were the ministers of the Sangama brothers: they provided legitimacy to their rule by accepting them back into the Hindu fold.

The Brahmans also played an important role as military commanders in the Vijaynagara army. For example, under Krishnadeva Raya Brahman Timma received economic support as he was an integral part of the political system. Thus, Brahmans constructed and commanded fortresses in different parts of the empire for which they were assigned revenue of some crown villages, *bhandaravada*. Differentiation was made between crown villages and *amaram* villages (whose income was under the charge of the local military chiefs).

6.4.3 Relationship between Kings, Sects and Temples

To establish an effective control over the distant Tamil region, the Vijaynagara ruler sought the help of the Vaishnava sectarian leaders who hailed from the Tamil Country. For legitimizing their power in this region, it was necessary for the rulers, who were aliens in the Tamil region, to establish contacts with the basic Tamil religious organization – the temples.

The relationship between kings, sects and temples can be explained in terms of four assertions:

- 1) Temples were basic for sustaining kingship.
- 2) Sectarian leaders were the connecting links between kings and temples.
- 3) Though the routine supervision of the temples was done by local sectarian groups, the task of solving disputes concerning temples was in the hands of the king.
- 4) The intervention of the king in the above matter was administrative, not legislative.

During 1350-1650, numerous temples sprang up in south India. Through grants or gifts to the temples in the form of material resources (a part of the agricultural produce of specified villages), a particular type of agrarian economy evolved under the Vijaynagara rule (This will be discussed in the next **Unit**).

The rulers of the early Sangama dynasty were Saivas who made additions to the Sri Virupaksha (Pampapati) temple of Vijaynagara. The Saluvas were basically Vaishnavas who gave patronage to both the Siva and Vishnu temples. Krishnadeva Raya (the Tuluva ruler) constructed the Krishnaswami temple (Vaishnava shrine) and also gave grants to Siva temples. The Aravidu kings also gave gifts to the Vaishnava temples.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Explain ritual kingship.
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- 2) Briefly write about the role and functions of Brahmans in the Vijaynagara empire.
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- 3) What was the relationship between the kings, sects and temples during the Vijaynagara rule?

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6.5 SUMMARY

The present study of Vijaynagara state shows the major conflict between the Vijaynagara and the Bahmanis. In the ensuing struggle the focal area was the Krishna-Godavari delta, Kaveri basin, the Tungabhadra *doab* and the Konkan region. Kingship in peripheral parts was a symbolic one, the rulers exercised control through their overlords.

Brahmans were more of a political and secular personnel rather than ritual leaders.

6.6 KEYWORDS

<i>Amaram</i>	Villages assigned to the local military chiefs
<i>Bhandaravada</i>	Crown villages
<i>Doab</i>	Land between the two rivers
<i>Durga Dannaiks</i>	In-charge of forts
<i>Nayak</i>	Warrior chief
<i>Zamorin</i>	Rulers of Calicut

6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 6.2
- 2) See Section 6.3
- 3) See Sub-section 6.3.4
- 4) See Sub-section 6.3.6

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 6.4.1
- 2) See Sub-section 6.4.2
- 3) See Sub-section 6.4.3

6.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Mahalingam, T.V., (1969) *Administration and Social Life under Vijaynagara* (Madras: University of Madras).

Sastri, Nilakanta, (1958) *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijaynagara* (London: Oxford University Press).

Vijayanagara: Expansion and Consolidation

Stein, Burton, (1999) *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Stein, Burton, (1989) *The New Cambridge History of India, Vijayanagara: 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

6.9 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

The Vijaynagar Empire History | PDF Visuals

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN7P2qefiFk>

Special Report: Hampi – Jewel of Vijaynagar Empire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icF4uuppzTU>



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Unit 7 **EVOLUTION OF INSTITUTIONS: KINGSHIP AND THE *NAYAKA* SYSTEM***

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Nature of the Vijayanagara State
- 7.3 Local Administration under the Vijayanagara Empire
 - 7.3.1 The *Nayankara* System
 - 7.3.2 The *Ayagar* System
- 7.4 Economy of the Vijayanagara Empire
 - 7.4.1 Land and Income Rights
 - 7.4.2 Economic Role of Temples
 - 7.4.3 Foreign Trade
 - 7.4.4 Internal Trade and Urban Life
- 7.5 Society
- 7.6 Summary
- 7.7 Keywords
- 7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 7.9 Suggested Readings
- 7.10 Instructional Video Recommendations

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- construe the nature of the Vijayanagara state,
- understand the administrative set-up with special reference to *nayankara* and *ayagar* system,
- evaluate the economy of the Vijayanagara empire.
- analyze the foreign and internal trade and mercantile activities, and
- appraise the social structure of the Vijayanagara empire.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, we discussed the process of the emergence, expansion and consolidation of the Vijayanagara power in the South Indian macro-region. In the present Unit our focus would be to analyse various approaches pertaining to the nature of the Vijayanagara state, its various institutions, economy and society.

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7.2 NATURE OF THE VIJAYNAGARA STATE¹

There are various approaches – feudal, segmentary and integrative – with respect to evaluating the Indian polity. Let us analyze the nature of the Vijaynagara polity within this model.

Segmentary State

Burton Stein regards the Vijaynagara state as a segmentary state. For him, in the Vijaynagara state, absolute political sovereignty rested with the centre, but in the periphery ‘ritual sovereignty’ (symbolic control) was in the hands of the *nayakas* and the Brahman commanders. The relationship of these subordinate units – segments – in relation to the central authority was pyramidally arranged. The more far removed a segment was from the centre, the greater its capacity to change loyalty from one power pyramid to another.

Feudal Model

Some scholars try to explain the character of the Vijaynagara state in the backdrop of feudal structure. They argue that the practice of giving fresh land grants to Brahmans was an important factor which led to the rise of feudal segments. The frequency of such land grants enhanced the position of the Brahmans. As a result, they enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, possessed administrative powers and controlled revenue resources within their settlements. Scholars further argue that since the rulers of Vijaynagara proposed to protect Hindu *dharma*, it led to the emergence of new Brahman settlements.

Further, the military need to expand into Tamil region created feudal territories under the control of *amaranayakas* (warriors) and other high officials. *Amaranayakas* were hereditary holders of land. They paid tribute and rendered military service to the king (like the *samantas* of north India).

The vassals in turn started giving land grants to their subordinates, thus giving way to sub-infeudation. The large extent of the empire and the absence of adequate means of transport and communication made it necessary for the rulers to entrust power to these feudal segments for the governance of the empire. In the process of conquest and consolidation, recalcitrant chieftains were subdued and their territory distributed among new chiefs. Nevertheless, some old chiefs were also permitted to continue in the new scheme.

Other Interpretations

N.K. Sastri sees the Vijaynagara state in the light of essentially a Hindu kingdom performing the ideological (religio-political) role of the defender of Hindu culture against the Muslims of the Bahmani kingdom and its successor states. From this stems the theory of the militaristic character of the Vijaynagara state. For him, the Vijaynagara state was a ‘war’ state.

7.3 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE VIJAYNAGARA EMPIRE

During the Vijaynagara period, the institutions of *nadu* (territorial assembly) and

¹ This section is taken from IGNOU Course EHI-03: *India: From 8th to 15th century*, p. 63.

sabha and *ur* (village assemblies) did not completely disappear when the *nayaka* and *ayagar* systems came into prominence.

7.3.1 The Nayankara System

The *nayankara* system was an important characteristic of the Vijaynagara political organization. The military chiefs or warriors held the title of *nayaka* or *amaranayaka*. It is difficult to classify these warriors on the basis of definite office, ethnic identity, set of duties or rights and privileges.

The institution of *nayaka* was studied in detail by two Portuguese – Fernao Nuniz and Domingo Paes, who visited India during the reigns of Krishnadeva Raya and Achyut Raya of Tuluva dynasty during the sixteenth century. They regard the *nayakas* simply as agents of Rayas (central government). The evidence by Nuniz for the payments made by the *nayakas* to the Rayas brings up the question of feudal obligations. The Vijaynagara inscriptions and the later Mackenzie manuscripts refer to the *nayakas* as territorial magnates with political aspirations which at times conflicted with the aims of the rulers.

N. K. Sastri (in 1958) drew a distinction between the *nayakas* before 1565 and those after 1565. The former were totally dependent upon the rulers while the latter were semi-independent. However, later he modified his views by pointing out that the *nayakas* before 1565 were military leaders holding military fiefs. In a more recent work (*Sources of Indian History*), he views the Vijaynagara empire as a military confederacy of many chieftains co-operating under the leadership of the biggest among them. He emphasized that the growing threat from Islam led the Vijaynagara rulers to adopt a military and religious stance. Krishnaswami considers the *nayaka* system as feudal. But Venkataramanayya feels that important features of European feudalism such as fealty, homage and sub-infeudation were absent in the *nayaka* system. D.C. Sircar similarly refutes the feudal theory, instead he explains it as a kind of landlordism – a variant of feudalism in which land was allotted to the *amaranayakas* for military services rendered by them to the king.

Thus, D.C. Sircar, and T.V. Mahalingam consider the *nayakas* of Vijaynagara as warriors holding an office (*kara*) bestowed on them by the central government on the condition of rendering military service. *Amaranayankara* was a designation conferred on a military officer or chief (*nayaka*) who had under his control a specified number of troops. These *nayakas* possessed revenue rights over land or territory called **amaram** (*amaramakara* or *amaramahali*). In the Tamil country and also in the Vijaynagara empire, the area of land thus alienated under this tenure was about 3/4th. The obligations and activities of the *nayakas* were among others, giving gifts to temples, repair and building of tanks, reclamation of wasteland and collection of dues from temples. The Tamil inscriptions, however, do not refer to dues given to the king or his officials by the *nayakas*.

Krishnaswami, on the basis of Mackenzie manuscripts, opines that the commanders of Vijaynagara army (formerly under Krishnadeva Raya) later established independent *nayaka* kingdoms. To guard against such dangers, the Vijaynagara kings tried to establish greater control over coastal markets dealing in horse trade. They attempted to monopolize the purchase of horses of good quality by paying a high price for them. They also built strong garrisons fortified with trustworthy soldiers. Thus, on the one hand, the Telugu *nayaks* were a source of strength for the Vijaynagara empire and, on the other, they became its rivals.

7.3.2 The Ayagar System

During the Vijaynagara period, autonomous local institutions, especially in the Tamil country, suffered a set-back. In pre-Vijaynagara days, in Karnataka and Andhra, local institutions possessed lesser autonomy as compared to Tamil country. During the Vijaynagara period, in Karnataka too, local territorial divisions underwent a change but the *ayagar* system continued and became widely prevalent throughout the macro-region. It spread in the Tamil country during 15th -16th century as a result of the declining power of *nadu* and *nattar*. The *ayagars* were village servants or functionaries and constituted of groups of families. These were headmen (*reddi* or *gauda*, *maniyam*), accountant (*karnam senabhova*) and watchmen (*talaiyari*). They were given a portion of or plot in a village.

Sometimes they had to pay a fixed rent, but generally these plots were *manya* or tax-free as no regular customary tax was imposed on their agricultural income. In exceptional cases, direct payments in kind were made for services performed by village functionaries. Other village servants who performed essential services and skills for the village community were also paid by assigning plots of land (like washerman and priest). The village servants who provided ordinary goods and services were leather workers whose products included leather bags used in lift-irrigation devices (*kiapila* or *mohte*), potter, blacksmith, carpenter, and waterman (*niranikkar*: who looked after the maintenance of irrigation channels and supervised bankers and money-lenders). The distinguishing feature of the *ayagar* system is that special allocation of income from land and specific cash payments were for the first time provided to village servants holding a particular office.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Explain the nature of polity of the Vijaynagara empire.

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- 2) Discuss the *nayankara* system under the Vijaynagara empire.

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- 3) Write a note on the *ayagar* system under the Vijaynagara empire.

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7.4 ECONOMY OF THE VIJAYNAGARA EMPIRE

In this Section, we will discuss the various land and income rights and the economic role of temples. We will also take into account aspects related to foreign and internal trade and urban life.

7.4.1 Land and Income Rights

Rice was the staple crop. Both black and white variety of rice was produced from Coromandel to Pulicat. Besides, cereals like gram and pulses were also cultivated. Spices (specially black pepper), coconut and betel-nuts were other important items of production. Land-revenue was the major source of state's income. Rate of revenue demand varied in different parts of the empire and in the same locality itself according to the fertility and regional location of the land. It was generally 1/6th of the produce, but in some cases it was even more ranging up to 1/4th. But on Brahmans and temples it was 1/20th to 1/30th respectively. It was payable both in cash and kind. We find references to three major categories of land tenure: *amara*, *bhandaravada* and *manya*. These indicate the way in which the village income was distributed. The *bhandaravada* was a crown village comprising the smallest category. A part of its income was utilised to maintain the Vijaynagara forts. Income from the *manya* (tax-free) villages was used to maintain the Brahmans, temples, and *mathas*. The largest category was of the *amara* villages given by the Vijaynagara rulers to the *amaranayakas*. Their holders did not possess proprietary rights in land but enjoyed privileges over its income only. The *amara* tenure was primarily residual in the sense that its income was distributed after deductions had been made for support of the Brahmans and forts. Three-quarters of all the villages came under this category. The term *amaramakni* is considered by most historians as referring to an 'estate' or a 'fief', but it literally means one-sixteenth share (*makani*). Thus, it points to the fact that the *amaranayakas* could claim only a limited share of village income. The *manya* rights underwent a transformation during this period. Land tenures continued to be given by the state to individual (*ekabhogan*) Brahmans and groups of Brahmans as well as to *mathas* including the non-Brahman Saiva Siddhanta and Vaishnava *gurus*. But there was a great increase in *devadana* grants (conferred on temples) made by the state as compared to other grants.

Besides land-tax, many professional taxes were also imposed. These were on shopkeepers, farm-servants, shepherds, washermen, potters, shoemakers, musicians etc. There was also tax on property. Grazing and house taxes were also imposed. Villagers were also supposed to pay for the maintenance of the village officers. Besides, *sthala dayam*, *margadayam* and *manula dayam* were three major transit dues.

Another category of land right through which income was derived was a result of investment in irrigation. It was called *dasavanda* in Tamil country and *kattu-kodage* in Andhra and Karnataka. This kind of agrarian activity concerning irrigation was undertaken in semi-dry areas where hydrographic and topographic features were conducive for carrying out developmental projects. The *dasavanda* or *kattu-kodage* was a share in the increased productivity of the land earned by the person who undertook such developmental work (e.g. construction of a tank or channel). This right to income was personal and transferable. A portion of income accruing from the increased productivity also went to the cultivators of the village where the developmental work was undertaken.

7.4.2 Economic Role of Temples

During the Vijaynagara period, temples emerged as important landholders. Hundreds of villages were granted to the deities which were worshipped in the large temple. Temple officers managed the *devadana* villages to ensure that the

grant was utilised properly. The income from *devadana* villages provided sustenance to the ritual functionaries. It was also utilised to provide food offerings or to purchase goods (mostly aromatic substances and cloth) essential for carrying out the ritual rites. Cash endowments were also made by the state to the temples for providing ritual services.

Temples took up irrigational work also. Large temples holding *devadana* lands had under them irrigation department for properly channelising money grants made to the temples. Those who gave cash grants to temples also received a share of the food offering (*prasadam*) derived from the increased productivity.

In fact, temples in South India were important centres of economic activity. They were not only great landholders but they also carried on banking activities. They employed a number of persons. Mahalingam refers to an inscription which mentions a temple which employed 370 servants. Temples purchased local goods for performance of ritual services. They gave loans to individuals and village assemblies for economic purposes. The loans were given against lands whose income went to the temples. Cash endowments made by the state to the Tirupati temple were ploughed back in irrigation. The income thus attained was used to carry out and maintain ritual services. At Srirangam temple, cash grants were used to advance commercial loans to business firms in Trichnopoly. Temples had their trusts which utilised its funds for various purposes. Thus, the temples functioned almost as an independent economic system encompassing persons and institutions that were bound together by economic links.

7.4.3 Foreign Trade

We get information about foreign trade from the *Amuktamalyada* of Krishnadeva Raya, Domingo Paes and Nuniz. They give vivid description of horse trade. The role of the Indians in the overseas carrying trade was minimal. Barbosa mentions that Indian overseas trade was completely controlled by Muslim merchants. They used to get special treatment from the rulers. He says that on returning from the Red Sea the king assigned them a *nayar* bodyguard, a Chetti accountant and a broker for help in local transactions. Such was their status that, at Kayal, even royal monopoly of pearl-fisheries was given to a Muslim merchant. The Arabs and later the Portuguese controlled horse trade. Horses were brought from Arabia, Syria and Turkey to the west-coast ports. Goa supplied horses to Vijaynagara as well as the Deccani Sultanates. Importation of horses was of great military importance for the southern states as good horses were not bred in India. Besides, Vijaynagara's conflict with the northern Deccan Muslim states restricted the supply of horses from north India that were imported from Central Asia. Besides horses, ivory, pearls, spices, precious stones, coconuts, palm-sugar, salt, etc. were also, imported. Pearls were brought from the Persian Gulf and Ceylon and precious stones from Pegu. Velvet was imported from Mecca and satin, silk, damask and brocade from China. White rice, sugarcane (other than palm-sugarcane) and iron were the major exports. Diamonds were exported from Vijaynagara. Nuniz states that its diamond mines were the richest in the world. The principal mines were on the banks of the Krishna river and in Kurnool and Anantapur. This led to the development of a great industry for cutting and polishing precious stones like diamonds, sapphires and rubies in Vijaynagara and Malabar.

7.4.4 Internal Trade and Urban Life

The contemporary foreign accounts show that local and long distance trade increased under the Vijaynagara rulers. Roads and roadside facilities for travellers between towns were excellent. Carts were used for the transport of grains over short distances. Riverine shipping especially the backwater-system on the west-coast has also been referred to. Pack-animals were used for long distance transport. In some places armed guards for long distance transport were employed. Local magnates realised the importance of trade, and gave encouragement to town based trade and auxiliary trade in regular and periodic fairs. Regular and periodic fairs took place along the main roads leading to big temples during festival times. These fairs were conducted by trade associations of a nearby town and under the supervision of the leader of trade association called *pattanaswami*. Fairs which gave impetus to urban trade were also held at the orders of the local magnates, e.g. *gauda* or chief of a *nadu*. The literary and inscriptional evidences of the 14th to 16th centuries reveal the existence of 80 major trade centres. Some towns were religious; others were commercial and administrative centres. Inside these towns were many *bazars* where business was carried on by merchants. They paid rents to the towns. There were separate markets for particular commodities. Markets for agricultural and non-agricultural products were separate in accordance with the left and right hand caste affiliations. Trade in consecrated food for pilgrims and the sale of the right of ritual functions and offices were important aspects of temple-related urban commerce.

The merchants and artisan organisations in Andhra got identified with certain cities, e.g. the Telugu oil-pressers and merchants were associated with the city of Berwada (in Krishna district). In these towns, the transit duties, shop and house-rents provided income to the towns. The temple records refer to the prosperity and prestige of merchants and artisans. The Vijaynagara state possessed an urban quality which is not witnessed in any other South Indian state of the time. The capital city integrated within its precincts markets, palaces, temples, mosques, etc. This urban quality was, however, completely destroyed by the middle-16th century.

7.5 SOCIETY

The social structure of the South Indian macro-region (Vijaynagara empire) is a unique variant of the Indian society. The uniqueness of the social structure was three-fold:

- secular functions of the South Indian Brahmans
- dual division of lower social groups
- territorial segmentation of the society

The Brahmans lived in localities where they controlled land, and their prestige and power was also derived from their control over those dependent on land. They also enjoyed prestige due to their sacral functions as a priestly class. The emergence of a large number of Vedic temples endowed with villages (*devadanas*) gave the Brahmans as temple functionaries the power to exercise ritual control over all other castes and religious institutions. As managers of these religious centres, the Brahmans enjoyed great secular authority.

Territorial segmentation of society implies that social groups in the Tamil country.

were divided on the basis of natural sub-region and occupational patterns associated with them. Social groups in South India had less interaction with groups at some distance from their locality. They gave preference to cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages.

Another characteristic of the social structure was the dual division of lower castes referred to by the right hand (*valangai*) and left-hand (*idangai*) designations (Vaishnavas corresponding to the right hand division and the Saivites corresponding to the left hand castes). In most cases, the right-hand castes were involved primarily in agricultural production and local trade in agricultural commodities whereas left-hand castes were engaged in mobile artisan production and extensive trade in non-agricultural products.

During the Vijaynagara period, the peasant was the basis of the social order on whom all other sections of the society depended. The *satkams*, the Tamil poetic genre, regard the leading peasantry as pure *sat-sudras*. They claimed ritual purity and respectable secular rank for them.

Temples played an important role in delineating or determining social space of groupings who were the participants in the worship of a particular deity. An important characteristic of lineage in the South Indian kingship is marked by the common devotion to the lineage tutelary. The non-Brahman priests of the peasants' tutelary shrines (e.g. *amman*) also participated in the management of great shrines of Siva and Vishnu where the Brahman priests predominated. The *matha*, the seat of sectarian organisation located at great shrines, consisted of persons of both the Brahman and non-Brahman orders. Thus, the social organisation of this period comprised of the Brahmans, the left and right-hand castes which included respectable agricultural castes, namely Vellals and lower castes like the weavers.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Write a note on the nature of land tenure in the Vijaynagara empire.
.....
.....
.....
- 2) Discuss the economic role of temples in the Vijaynagara empire.
.....
.....
.....
- 3) Describe the development of trade and commerce under the Vijaynagara rulers with special reference to foreign trade.
.....
.....
.....
- 4) Define the left hand and right hand castes.
.....

7.6 SUMMARY

Historians have variously looked at the two major political institutions the *nayankara* and *ayagar* systems which were the backbone of the Vijaynagara power. Temples were not only the religious centres but also important centres of economic activity: they performed banking activities and used to undertake irrigational works, etc. Trade and commerce was in a flourishing state. But, the role of the Indian merchants in the overseas trade was minimal instead Muslim merchants enjoyed the monopoly.

7.7 KEYWORDS

<i>Amaram</i>	Villages assigned to the local military chiefs
<i>Bhandaravada</i>	Crown villages
<i>Devadanans</i>	Villages assigned to the temples
<i>Dasavanda and Kattu-Kodage</i>	Income from irrigational investments
<i>Manya</i>	tax-free land given to the village functionaries, Brahmans, temples and <i>mathas</i>
<i>Nadu</i>	Peasant assembly or organization
<i>Nayak</i>	Warrior chief
<i>Sabha</i>	Brahmana assembly

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 7.2
- 2) See Sub-section 7.3.1
- 3) See Sub-section 7.3.2

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 7.4.1
- 2) See Sub-section 7.4.2
- 3) See Sub-section 7.4.3
- 4) See Section 7.5

7.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Mahalingam, T.V., (1969) *Administration and Social Life under Vijaynagara* (Madras: University of Madras).

Sastri, Nilakanta, (1958) *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the fall of Vijaynagara* (London: Oxford University Press).

**Evolution of Institutions:
Kingship and the
Nayaka System**

Stein, Burton, (1999) *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Stein, Burton, (1989) *The New Cambridge History of India, Vijayanagara: 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

7.10 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

Vijayanagara Polity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywHABSci1js>

Socio-Political Formations and Economy of the Vijayanagara Empire

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T_Q_VWjZGU



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UNIT 8 EMERGENCE OF NEW KINGDOMS IN THE 15th CENTURY*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Emergence of Regional Powers: Some Theories
- 8.3 Central and Eastern India
 - 8.3.1 Malwa
 - 8.3.2 Jaunpur
 - 8.3.3 Bengal
 - 8.3.4 Assam
 - 8.3.5 Odisha
- 8.4 Northern and Western India
 - 8.4.1 Kashmir
 - 8.4.2 Northwest: Rajputana
 - 8.4.3 Gujarat
 - 8.4.4 Sindh
- 8.5 Regional States and Legitimization
 - 8.5.1 Characteristics of the Regional States
 - 8.5.2 Nobles and landed Aristocracy
 - 8.5.3 North Indian Kingdoms as Successor States
 - 8.5.4 Succession Issue
 - 8.5.5 Legitimization
- 8.6 Summary
- 8.7 Keywords
- 8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 8.9 Suggested Readings
- 8.10 Instructional Video Recommendations

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In the present Unit, we will study about regional states during the 13-15th centuries. After reading this Unit, you would learn about:

- the emergence of regional states in Central and Eastern India,
- the regional powers that emerged in Northern and Western India,

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- the territorial expansion of these kingdoms,
- their relationship with neighbours and other regional powers,
- their relations with the Delhi Sultanate,
- the characteristic features of the regional states,
- how the succession issue was decided, and
- the ways in which the regional kings legitimized their powers.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Regional kingdoms posed severe threat to the already weakened Delhi Sultanate and with their emergence began the process of the physical disintegration of the Sultanate. In this Unit, our focus would be on the emergence of regional states in Central and Eastern India viz., Malwa, Jaunpur, Bengal, Assam and Odisha.

Our focus would also be on the emergence of regional powers in Northern and Western India. We will discuss in this Unit the territorial expansion of the regional kingdoms of Kashmir, Rajputana, Sindh and Gujarat. We will study the polity – establishment, expansion and disintegration – of the above kingdoms. You would know how they emerged and succeeded in establishing their hegemony.

During the 13th-15th centuries there emerged two types of kingdoms: a) those whose rise and development were independent of the Sultanate (for example, the kingdoms of Assam, Odisha, Kashmir); and b) Bengal, Malwa, Jaunpur, and Gujarat who owed their existence to the Sultanate. Sindh and Rajputana, though all the time were falling prey to the Sultanate and at times even formed part of it, succeeded in retaining their regional features. All these kingdoms were constantly at war with each other. The nobles, chiefs or *rajas* and local aristocracy played crucial roles in these confrontations. Thus, some of these regional powers were the result of the decline of the Delhi Sultanate while others' development was independent. Kashmir developed independently of the Sultanate while Gujarat was the outcome of its decline.

In the present Unit, the term North India is used to denote the entire region north of the Vindhyan ranges, i.e. Kashmir in the north; coming down to northwest – the Rajputana, Sindh, Multan and Gujarat; the mainland – Malwa and Jaunpur; further in the East – Odisha, Bengal, Kamata and Ahom regions of Assam. Since our focal point is to discuss regional powers, Delhi and its environs, which geographically form very much a part of North India, fall outside the purview of our discussion. In this Unit, an attempt is also made to analyse the characteristic features of the regional kingdoms and the role of nobility in the regional politics.

However, here we are intentionally leaving regional powers in South India and the Deccan which emerged after the fall of the Chola kingdom that we have already discussed in detail in our Course **BHIC 132, Units 5 and 6** (Pandayas and Hoysalas); while Yadavas, Kakatiyas, and Ma'bar are discussed in **Unit 2** of this Course in relation to their clashes with the Delhi Sultans and also in **Unit 5**. By fourteenth century new political configurations emerged in South India and the Deccan leading to the emergence of powerful kingdoms of Vijayanagara and Bahmani which are discussed in the **Units 5 and 6** of this Course. Further, here we will be discussing the political developments in the region, and its cultural aspects will form part of **Theme IV**.

8.2 EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POWERS: SOME THEORIES

Social scientists differ greatly over the reasons for the emergence of regional powers. Joseph E. Schwartzberg highlighted certain geopolitical and ecological factors behind the instability that marred the Sultanate period.

According to Schwartzberg:

The key to this progressive decline in the average size and duration of major powers appears to lie in the secularly increasing degree of serious competition which major powers had to face from other major powers of comparable strength. Hence there was a long range tendency towards a rise in the frequency and intensity of wars between or among major powers throughout the Sultanate period. This would have resulted in increasing instability within the power system as a whole and seriously inhibited the growth potential of all states within the system.

By medieval period, in fact, settlement over the best available agricultural land seems to have almost been completed; this led to intensive agriculture; that in turn gave way to greater intensity of settlement vis-a-vis population growth and population pressure. The latter two factors helped greatly in increasing the strength of the army in both ways – the fighting power as well as resistance power. Thus, according to Schwartzberg, geographical features made the conflicts inevitable and contributed to the emergence of regional states.

Richard G. Fox, Bernard Cohn and K.N. Singh have interpreted the emergence of regional powers in socio-political-anthropological model where kinship, clan and lineages were the main organising factors. For Richard Fox, such groups, though served as guarantor or the preserver of the political authority, were also prone to frequent rebellions which led to fragmentation and weakening of the central authority specially when the central control seems to be in doldrums. The Rajput clan-organisation is a glaring example. In Rajputana, these chiefs or rajas, organised on the basis of clan, used to control small principalities of the same lineages. The Rajput social organisation was closely knitted through clan, caste and lineages. Their area of influence could be through matrimony and migration of disgruntled sub-lineages. These ‘unilineal kin-organisations’ performed many political and military functions relating to revenue collection and maintenance of law and order. They used to get ‘legitimization’ by the state. The ‘mandate’ of the state was the ‘mandate’ of the kin allegiance. On account of this ‘internal-cohesion’ and ‘external recognition’, their position became so strong at the local level that neither the state nor the clan members could throw them off.

After Timur’s invasion, the political vacuum created at the centre provided these chiefs or rajas opportunity to strike deep roots at the local level. Thus started internecine warfare throughout the 13-15th century between power centres trying to exploit the situation to their respective interests.

Why Regional States could not become Pan-Indian?

Why these kingdoms remained confined to ‘secondary’ level and could not assume the ‘Imperial’ status? Why did these kingdoms remain ‘Supra-regional powers’ and could not reach to the status of ‘Pan-Indian powers’? There were certain geopolitical, structural and circumstantial factors behind this, argues Schwartzberg. Foremost is their peripheral location: States of Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajputana, Sindh,

Odisha, Assam and Bengal do not lie in the heartland of the empire to assume the central status. Mountainous terrain also obstructed their smooth expansion. Kashmir's expansion was mainly obstructed by the inaccessible mountains. Similarly, the increasing aridity of the great Indian desert in the northwest obstructed the growth of Sindh and Rajputana kingdoms. Though Malwa and Jaunpur were situated in the core and were the most fertile plains, they had 'open-frontiers' surrounded by hostile states. Each state attempted to get control over their rich resources, so constant warfare was the main feature of the regional syndrome which hampered expansion.

Another problem was the paucity of revenue-resources which prevented them to maintain large armies to extend and consolidate their gains. They had very small area under their direct control whose revenue could directly reach to the state. They had to depend largely on 'intermediaries' or 'chiefs' for their income and supply of armed retainers. To add to this, the revenue collectors (intermediaries) had the tendency to evade taxation. Tributary chiefs also exploited every opportunity to rebel. You will find, as discussed in the next Section, that the tributary chiefs residing on the peripheral area between Malwa and Gujarat frequently changed sides – sometimes with Malwa, and sometimes with Gujarat as the opportunity arose. Increasing feuds of the Rajputs among their clan members was the main reason why the Rajput state could not assume the 'Pan-India' status. To add to this, unlike Gujarat and Bengal, other regions being land-locked (specially Jaunpur and Malwa), so could not get opportunity to develop overseas trade and commerce which further curtailed their income and provided little scope for 'extra' resources required for expansion.

8.3 CENTRAL AND EASTERN INDIA

In the present Section our focus would largely be on regional powers that emerged during the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries in central and eastern India.

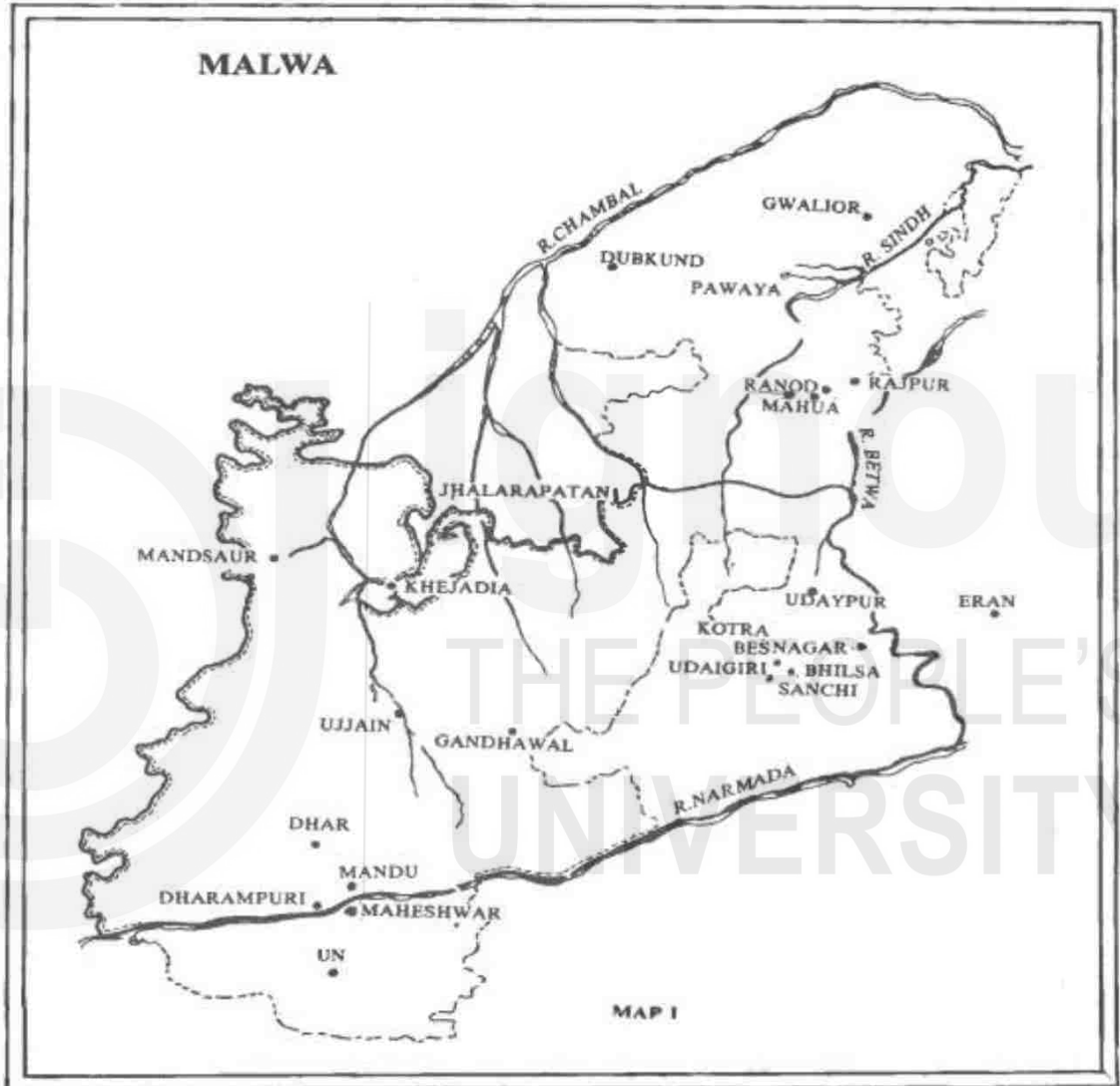
8.3.1 Malwa

The decline of the Sultanate paved the way for the emergence of the independent kingdom of Malwa. Dilawar Khan Ghori, (d. 1406), the Tughlaq governor of Malwa, assumed independence in the year 1401-2 and declared himself king of Malwa. He extended the boundaries of his kingdom by occupying Nimar, Sauyar, Damoh and Chanderi. Dilawar Khan married his daughter to Ali Sher Khalji, the son of Malik Raja Faruqi of Khandesh, and took his (Faruqi ruler's) daughter for his son Alp Khan. These matrimonial alliances helped him in safeguarding his south-eastern frontier. By maintaining friendly relations with Muzaffar Shah of Gujarat, he successfully saved Malwa from attacks. But soon after his death in 1406, Malwa fell prey to the imperialistic designs of Muzaffar Gujarati. But in 1408, Hoshang Shah (1406-35) succeeded in regaining control over the Malwa throne. Very soon he occupied Kherla, and Gagraun. He also had his eyes over Gwalior, but realizing the might of Mubarak Shah, he finally withdrew in 1423 after causing some damage in the countryside. Hoshang Shah entered into matrimonial alliance with the Muslim ruler of Kalpi to use the latter as buffer between Jaunpur-Malwa and Delhi-Malwa.

Hoshang Shah's successor Muhammad Shah proved incompetent. During his brief reign of one year, the court of Malwa became a hotbed of intrigues leading to

disastrous results. The chaos, culminated in his murder (1436) by his noble Mahmud Khalji. Thus came the end of the Ghorid rule itself.

At the outset, the position of Mahmud Khalji was threatened by the old Ghorid nobility. In the beginning, Mahmud followed the policy of appeasement and distributed *iqta* and high posts to them but he failed to elicit their support. He had to face a series of revolts of high ranking nobles. Ultimately, Mahmud Khalji succeeded in tackling the recalcitrant nobles. After consolidating his internal position, Mahmud Khalji now had the time to look for further extension.



Map 8.1: Malwa

Mewar was the foremost state to attract his attention. Mewar under Rana Kumbha followed an aggressive policy in subduing and assimilating the bordering Rajput chiefs into Mewar. This posed a direct threat to the kingdom of Malwa. Mahmud Khalji had to face the mighty Rana as early as 1437. Rana Kumbha promised Umar Khan, son of Hoshang Shah, to install him in place of Mahmud Khalji. In the battle of Sarangpur (1437), Mahmud Khalji was defeated and taken prisoner. Later, Mahmud Khalji took advantage of the confusion that emerged in Mewar after Ranmal's death: he attacked Mewar in 1442. He destroyed the temple of Banmata, but he had to retreat without much gains. Since then, Mahmud Khalji undertook almost yearly campaigns against Rana Kumbha. Though Mahmud had occupied Gagraun (1444)

and Mandalgarh (1457), Rana Kumbha was able to keep his territory intact and well-defended. This rivalry continued unabated.

Kalpi was the bone of contention between Malwa and Jaunpur. Hoshang Shah earlier helped his nephew Jalal Khan in installing him on the throne of Kalpi. But after Jalal Khan's death (1442), Nasir Khan Jahan succeeded in getting hold over Kalpi. However, he was soon expelled by Mahmud Sharqi. This increased the hold of Jaunpur over Kalpi which was not to the liking of Mahmud Khalji. It resulted in a clash between the two (1444). Finally, a treaty was signed. Mahmud Sharqi agreed to hand over Kalpi to Khan Jahan which resulted in cordial relationship between the two.

Another important power which Malwa rulers had to tackle with was Gujarat. Even Muzaffar Gujarati once succeeded in imprisoning Hoshang Shah.

After Ahmad Shah's death (1442), Mahmud Khalji got an opportunity to occupy Sultanpur and Nandurbar (1451) on account of the weak position of Muhammad Shah Gujarati. While Mahmud Khalji was still campaigning against Muhammad Gujarati, the latter died. His successor Sultan Qutbuddin entered into an alliance with Mahmud Khalji. Both parties agreed to respect each other's territorial boundaries. An understanding was also reached between the two to have a free hand in Mewar. However, similar understanding could not be maintained for other areas. Mahmud Khalji's intervention in Bahmani politics was always severely dealt with by Mahmud Begarha.

Ghiyas Shah (1469-1500), the son and successor of Mahmud Khalji, paid more attention towards consolidation rather than conquest. As a result, with the exception of a brief tussle with the Rana of Mewar (1473), the period was of a long peace. With Sultan Mahmud Khalji II's death in 1531 the Khalji dynasty comes to an end. Henceforth for the next three decades until the final occupation of Malwa by the Mughals in 1562 (which was later incorporated as a separate *suba* (province) by Akbar in 1580) Malwa became the hotbed of constant struggle among the Afghans when Bahadur Shah finally succeeded in occupying Malwa in 1531; and later among the Afghans and the Mughals.

8.3.2 Jaunpur

Afif informs us that the city of Jaunpur on the banks of river Gomti was founded by Firuz Shah Tughlaq during his second Bengal campaign (1359-1360). This city became a strong power-base, and it soon evolved as a rival to Delhi for some time.

Malik Sarwar, a noble of Firuz Shah Tughlaq, took full advantage of the succession tussle among the sons of Firuz and rose to the high position of *wazir* under Sultan Muhammad Shah (1390-94). Malik Sarwar got the charge of the eastern districts along with the title of *Sultan-us Sharq*. The invasion of Timur, which virtually shattered the kingdom of Delhi, gave Malik Sarwar an opportunity to declare his independence in Jaunpur. He extended his hold over Kol (Aligarh), Sambhal and Rapri (in Mainpuri district). Malik Sarwar's ambitions led to furious armed clashes with Delhi, Bengal, Odisha and Malwa. Though he did not succeed against them, he brought the rulers of Jaj Nagar and Gwalior under his sway. Mubarak Shah Sharqi (1399-1401), his son and successor, could hardly get time to consolidate the gains. However, his younger brother and successor, Ibrahim Shah Sharqi (1401-1440), efficiently expanded the territories of the kingdom. He took Kanauj in 1406 (which

was under Sultan Mahmud Shah Tughlaq). This enhanced his prestige greatly and paved the way for further achievements. In 1407, Ibrahim aspired to occupy Delhi, but in spite of initial success, the attempt finally failed. Though he was able to lay his hands on Kalpi (1414), its ruler Qadir Khan continued to create problems for him. Ibrahim also subdued Ganesh, the ruler of Bengal, in 1414. During the closing years of his reign (1437), he again turned his attention towards Delhi and captured some of its neighbouring *parganas*. The Delhi Sultan Muhammad Shah ultimately had to sue for peace. He agreed to marry his daughter, Bibi Haji, to Ibrahim's son Mahmud Khan, Ibrahim's energetic zeal and his successes increased the prestige of the kingdom of Jaunpur. The latter earned the title *Shiraz-i Hind*.

During his successor's reigns, Mahmud Sharqi (1440-54), Muhammad Sharqi (1457-58) and Husain Sharqi (1458-1505), clashes with the Delhi Sultans were frequent. Finally, Bahlol Lodi annexed Jaunpur in 1483-84 and placed it under the charge of Mubarak Nohani. Husain Shah did attempt desperately to recover Jaunpur but failed. Bahlol finally placed his son Barbak Shah on the throne of Jaunpur, thus ending the era of the Sharqi rule.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) List the achievements of Hoshang Shah.

.....

- 2) 'Did the Lodi-Sharqi struggle finally seal the fate of the Sharqi kingdom'? Examine the decline of the Sharqis in the light of the above statement.

.....

- 3) Which of the following statements are right. Tick mark (✓ or ×) of the correct answers.

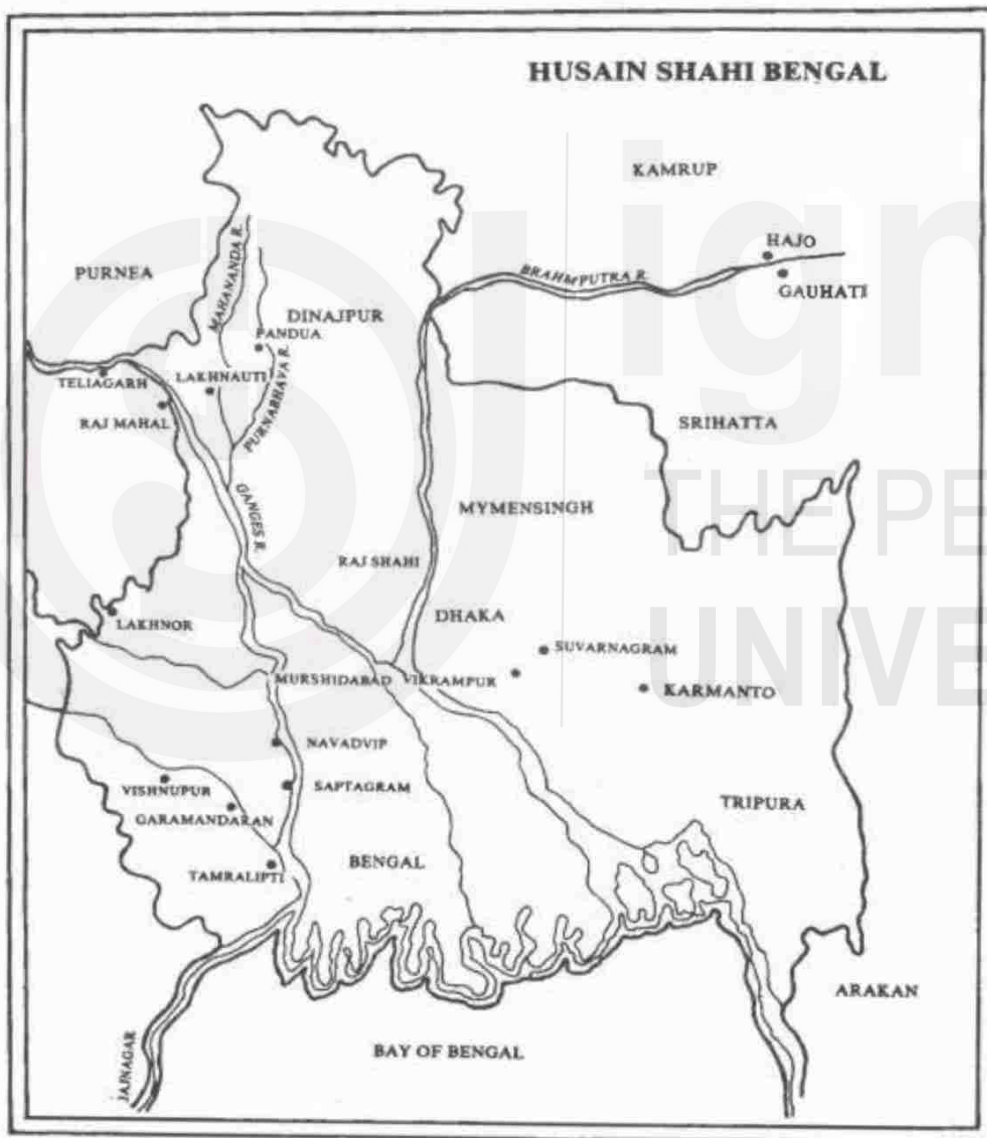
- i) Dilawar Khan was the Tughlaq governor. ()
- ii) Gagraun served as buffer state between Malwa and Sharqi rulers. ()
- iii) Rana Kumbha sided with Umar Khan in his clash with Mahmud Khalji. ()
- iv) Ibrahim Sharqi earned the title of *Shiraz-i Hind*. ()

8.3.3 Bengal

The geopolitical conditions of Bengal, especially the long distance from Delhi, met constraints on its control by the Sultans of Delhi. The governors took full advantage of the distance. As the central power weakened or rulers got involved elsewhere, the nobles used to act almost *de facto* rulers in the region. Earlier, Iltutmish had to march in person to assert his authority (1225) and it took almost three years for Balban in crushing the rebellion of Tughril Beg, the governor of Bengal. To assert Delhi's hold over Bengal, Balban appointed his son Bughra Khan as governor (1281). But after Balban's death, Bughra Khan decided to stay in Bengal rather than contest

the Delhi throne (1287). Later, we see Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq marching towards Lakhnauti. However, it was during Muhammad Tughlaq's reign that a more effective policy was adopted. The latter appointed his trusted nobles at Lakhnauti, Sonargaon and Satgaon to establish a balance among various powerful factions. It greatly helped in reducing the power of the local magnates and increased the hold of Delhi. However, Delhi was challenged at various intervals.

Bengal was ruled over by two powerful dynasties – Ilyas Shahi (1342-1481) and Husain Shahis (1494-1538). In between for two short periods, Raja Ganesh (1415-16-1432-33) and Abyssinians (1487-1493) usurped the power. Later, Bengal fell prey to Sher Shah Suri and Humayun (1536-1539). Thence began the rule of the Afghan-Kararani. Finally, Akbar occupied and incorporated it into his empire in 1576 by defeating Daud Khan Kararani, though complete peace could only be restored in 1599.



Map 8.2: Husain Shahi Bengal

The founder of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty was Ilyas Shah (1342-1357) who was originally a noble of Muhammad Tughlaq and served him at Delhi. Ilyas Shah emerged as a powerful ruler and assumed the title of *Sikandar-i sani* (second Alexander). Soon he occupied Tirhut (1339-40), Lakhnauti (1342), and Sonargaon (1353), and marched as far as Banaras, occupied Gorakhpur and Bahraich. He captured Kamrup in 1357. He also sent an expedition to Nepal (1350-51) and

Political Formations

Jajnagar (Odisha; 1353). Sultan Firuz Tughlaq had to march in person and it took almost one year (1353-54) to decide the issue.

Again in 1359, Firuz Tughlaq marched against Sikandar Shah (1357-89) to suppress his power. After Firuz Tughlaq's death (1388), the Delhi Sultanate became too weak to subdue the recalcitrant rulers of Bengal.

Sikandar Shah's son Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah (1389-90-1410) was a popular ruler. Chatgaon (Chitagong), bordering Arakan also very much formed the part of Azam Shah's sultanate. He provided refuge and later support to the Arakanese ruler in the wake of Burmese attack. He faced the combined attack of the Rajas of Kamata and Ahom and had to surrender the territory beyond Karatoya river. He established diplomatic ties with the Chinese rulers. The first envoy was sent in 1404 by him to Ming ruler and thence till 1409-1410 there was regular exchange of envoys between the two. The famous Chinese traveller, Ma-Huan who provides interesting account of the Bengal sultanate accompanied the 1405 Chinese mission.

After Ghiyasuddin's murder (1410), Bengal had to pass through two critical phases of internal chaos and conflicts (1410-1418; 1435-42). But the matters were set right with the accession of Nasiruddin Abul Muzaffar Mahmud (1434-1460), a descendant of Ilyas Shah. He faced the invasion of Raja Kapilendra Deva of Jajnagar (Odisha; 1445). It was he who again restored the capital to Gaur which was shifted by Alauddin Ali Shah to Firuzabad (Pandua). His son Ruknuddin Barbek Shah I (1460-74) embarked upon an expansionist policy. As a result, his frontier extended to Barner, north of the Ganges and Jessore-Khulna in the south. The militia of the Abyssinian slaves played a crucial role in the expansion, but Barbek's policy of patronising them later on proved fatal. In 1487, the Abyssinian commander Saifuddin Firuz succeeded in occupying the Bengal throne. But he failed to consolidate his position and, in 1493, Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519) got power and laid the foundation of Husain Shahi dynasty. He not only succeeded in subduing Abyssinian slaves but also adopted a rigorous expansionist policy. Under him, the Bengal frontiers reached upto Saran and Bihar in the northwest, Sylhet and Chitagong in the southeast, Hajo on the northeast and Mandaran on the southwest. In 1495, Hussain Shah had to face Sultan Sikandar Lodi's wrath as he had given shelter to the Sultan of Jaunpur, Hussain Shah. Later, a non-aggression treaty was signed and Hussain Shah promised not to give shelter to such fugitives. The glorious reign of Husain Shahi dynasty ended in 1538 with the fall of Gaur to Sher Shah Sur. Its last ruler Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah VI (1526-27-1538) too died soon after in 1539.

Check Your Progress-2

1) How far did the geopolitical conditions of Bengal help in maintaining its independent character?

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.....

2) What was the role of Abyssinian nobles in the politics of late 15th century Bengal?

.....

3) Match the dates and names by drawing arrows:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------|
| a) Bakhtiyar Khalji | 1281 |
| b) Bughra Khan | 1460-74 |
| c) Ilyas Shah | 1357-89 |
| d) Ruknuddin Barbek | 1205 |
| e) Sikandar Shah | 1342 |

8.3.4 Assam

Geographically, medieval Assam covers the entire Brahmaputra valley as far as river Karatoya in the west, while Mishmi Hills and Patkai Bum formed the north-eastern boundary. The boundary of the state of Burma ran parallel to its east. During the 13th-15th centuries in Assam, a number of tribal polities – Chutiyas, Tai-Ahoms (or Ahoms), Koch, Dimasa, Tripuri, Manipuri, Khasis and Jaintias – existed. Finally, the Chutiyas and the Ahoms emerged most powerful. Besides, there also existed the kingdom of Kamata-Kamrup). In the present Section we will discuss in detail the emergence of the Ahoms and the kingdom of the Kamata-Kamrup.

Kamata-Kamrup

The medieval Kamata kingdom included Brahmaputra valley (excluding Rangpur), Bhutan, Cooch Bihar, Mymensingh, and the Garo Hills. Kamrup (Modern North Guwahati) was the capital of the Kamata kingdom prior to Rai Sandhya's reign (1250-70). But Kachari expansion forced Rai Sandhya to shift from Kamrup to Kamatapur (in modern Cooch Bihar district); hence the kingdom is called Kamata-Kamrup.

We have already read how in 1206 Bakhtiyar Khalji, one of the commanders of Muhammad Ghori, invaded Kamrup. But the campaign proved disastrous as his army was totally destroyed. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz also attempted to occupy Kamrup (1227) but met the same fate at the hands of Rai Prithu. Later, however, Iltutmish's son Nasiruddin Mahmud succeeded in crushing Rai Prithu's power. In 1255, Malik Yuzbek attacked Kamrup and succeeded in occupying Kamrup, but later he had to face the same fate as that of Bakhtiyar Khalji. Soon his forces were overpowered; Malik Yuzbek received a severe wound and died soon after (1257). However, during Singhdhvaj's reign (1300-1305), Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah (1301-22), the Sultan of Bengal, occupied Mymensingh and Sylhet across Brahmaputra in 1303.

The Kamrup kingdom always fell prey to Ahom imperialistic designs. The *Buranji* literature records the success of the Ahom king Sukapha (1228-1268) against Kamata ruler Sindhu Rai (1260-1285). The latter is reported to have accepted the suzerainty of Sukapha, but his successor Pratapdhvaj (1300-1305) ceased to pay tribute to the Ahom kings, as a result Sukhangpha (1293-1332) again invaded the Kamata kingdom. After a long-drawn battle and heavy loss, Pratapdhvaj sued for peace and gave his daughter Rajani in marriage to Sukhangpha.

An important feature of the 14th century Kamata kingdom was the great uprising of the Bhuyan chiefs who took advantage of the unstable conditions. A war of

succession followed between the two cousins – Dharma Narain and Durlabh Narain. In the beginning, Bhuyan chiefs failed in their designs as Durlabh Narain (1330-50) and Arimatta (1365-85) were more than a match to their power. However, after Arimatta's death (1385), his successors were too weak to face the Bhuyan onslaught and around mid-15th century Rai Prithu's line was supplanted by a new Bhuyan dynasty (Khyan) with Niladhvaj (1440-1460) as its founder. Nilambar (1480-1498) was the most powerful king of the Khyan dynasty who succeeded in extending his frontier from Karatoya to Barnadi. He also took advantage of the political turmoil created in Bengal (Gaur) by the Abyssinians and succeeded in occupying north-eastern part of Bengal. However, later, Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519) was able to crush the power of Nilambar. With this came the end of the Khyan dynasty.

The Ahoms

The Ahoms belonged to the Mao-Shan sub-tribe of the Tais of southeast Asia. In 1228, they migrated from Mogaung, a principality in upper Burma and Yunan to upper Assam where they finally settled in 1253 in the Dikhou valley (the modern Sibsagar division) with its capital at Charaideo (it was later changed to Charga in 1397). Sukapha (1228-68) of Mao-Shan tribe was the first Ahom King who subjugated the Chutiyas, Morans, Borahis, Nagas, Kacharis and the Kamata kingdom (Kamrup). His son Suteupha (1268-1281) further extended his domain towards the southern banks of Brahmaputra up to Kalang (modern north-Cachar sub-division) by defeating the Kacharis. Under Sukhangpha (1293-1332), the Ahoms became a paramount power in the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley. However, Sukhangpha's death created a void that resulted in the establishment of three interregnums – 1364-69, 1376-80 and 1389-97. Later, at Sudangpha's accession (1397-1407), the situation got stabilized. The latter clashed with the Nara and the Kamata rulers. As a result, the Ahom frontiers reached to Patkai in the north and river Karatoya in the northeast. The boundary extended during Sudangpha's reign continued to form the line of control throughout the 15th century. Later, Suhenpha (1488-93) faced the rebellion of the Nagas and the Kacharis. But the revolts were suppressed. By the close of the 15th century, Supimpha's (1493-97) nobles like, *Buragohain* Khenpung rebelled. Though the rebellion was crushed, it reflected the internal feuds among the nobles that had started since the close of the 15th century.

Another important feature of the Ahoms was their conflict with the Koches under Biswa Singha. Koch ruler Narnarayan and his military commander Chilarai attempted to overthrow Ahom power. However, by 1565 Ahoms emerged most powerful in the region and the division of the Koches in 1581 into Koch Bihar, west of the Sankosh and Koch Hajo, east of the Sankosh weakened their power; while Koch Bihar got absorbed into the Mughal empire, Koch Hajo came under the Ahom hegemony. Mughal expeditions to the Ahom country began in 1612 and continued throughout the period. In between even Mir Jumla succeeded in capturing the Ahom capital Gargaon (1662-63). But Mir Jumla's death turned the tables and finally in the battle of Saraighat (1671-72) balance tilted in favour of Ahoms and Raja Ram Singh, who was sent by Aurangzeb ultimately faced a crushing defeat at the hands of the Ahoms. However, the Mughal onslaught in the region continued till 1682 when finally Aurangzeb's attention shifted towards Deccan.

In the Ahom polity nobles played an important role. The original counsellors who

accompanied Sukapha were *Buragohain* and *Bargohain*. Later, *Barpatragohain* was added by Siu-hum-mong (1497-1539) and Pratapa Singha (1603-1641) further added *Barbarua* and *Barphukan* thus constituted the council of five, the *patra-mantri*. The first three were hereditary and permanent and were continued to be chosen from the descendents of those who accompanied Sukapha. There were also officials like *Phukans*, *Rajkhowas* and *Baruas*. Their position was neither hereditary nor permanent. Another important component of the Ahom administration was the *paiks*. *Paik* system was their socio-economic cum military organization. The adult males between 16-50 age-group of the entire Ahom community were arranged as *paiks* (*karni* (low grade) *paiks*). They could be employed as civil or military labourers or soldiers. There were higher grade *paiks* (*chamua/visayas*) also. They were organized into *khel* (a unit of *paiks* performing specific duties; later *khel* were organized on the basis of *paiks* of a specific area or a group/clan) headed by a *phukan* or a *barua*. Further they were grouped into a *got* which was a unit of four *paiks* and out of each *got* one person was to serve the state at one particular point of time. Thus *paik* system was the key to the centralization of the political authority and socio-political organization of the Ahoms on which the entire administrative machinery rested.

8.3.5 Odisha

On the eve of the Turkish invasion, Odisha was under the control of the Eastern Gangas. The *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* records that Bakhtiyar Khalji had sent two brothers, Muhammad and Ahmad, to invade Jajnapur (modern Odisha) immediately before his death (1205). At that time, Rajaraja III (1197-1211) was the ruler. The next invasion took place under Ghiyasuddin Iwaz soon after Anangbhim III's accession (1211-1238). Though the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* applauds the success of Iwaz, the Chatesvara inscription, however, mentions the success of Anangbhim III in the clash. It appears that perhaps Iwaz's invasion was repulsed.

Narasimha I (1238-1264) also had to face Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbek who got success in his first two attacks, but his later attacks were foiled by Narasimha I. The latter also succeeded in extending his frontier to Midnapur, Howrah and Hooghly. However, by the close of the 13th century (1296), Satgaon fell into the hands of the Delhi Sultans. You have already read in **Unit 2** how during Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's reign (1320-1325), Ulugh Khan (later Muhammad Tughlaq) captured Jajnapur and made its ruler their tributary.

From Bhanudeva III's (1352-1378) reign onwards, the power of the Ganga kings started declining. Taking advantage of the situation, the neighbouring states invaded Odisha.

In 1353, Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah of Bengal succeeded in penetrating as far as Chilka Lake and took away huge booty, including elephants. Later, the rulers of Delhi, Vijaynagara, Jaunpur and also the Bahmani rulers occasionally plundered Odisha.

Under such disorder and confusion, Kapilendra, the minister of Bhanudeva IV (1414-1435), usurped the throne in 1435 and laid the foundation of the Gajapati rule in Odisha. By 1464-65, the extent of his domain reached the south Arcot district and eastern part of the Deccan plateau. Kapilendra also inflicted humiliating defeat upon Humayun Shah Bahmani when the former attacked Devarkonda and Kapilendra came to the rescue of Devarkonda chief (1459). After that, the Bahmani rulers never thought of attacking Telingana so long as Kapilendra remained alive.

Political Formations

In 1450, Kapilendra also succeeded in defeating Sultan Nasiruddin of Bengal (1442-59) and assumed the title of Gaudesvara. In 1453, Rajahmundry also became part of his empire. Thus, by 1462, his frontier extended from Hooghly to Kaveri in the south. However, during the closing years of his reign, the Vijaynagara ruler Saluva Narasimha (1485-1491) expelled the Oriyas from the Kaveri basin. Soon after Purushottama's accession (1467), the latter tried to regain the Tamil territory but his exploits remained confined to Kanchi only. Purushottama had to surrender Kondavidu (Kondnir) and Rajahmundry to the Bahmani ruler Muhammad Shah III (1463-1482). Saluva Narasimha (later the Vijaynagara ruler) took advantage of the situation and occupied Udayagiri (1476). So long as Muhammad Shah III was alive, Purushottama did not attempt to reoccupy these territories. But soon after his death (1482), Purushottama took Rajahmundry, Kondnir by 1484, and Udayagiri from Saluva Narasimha (sometime between 1486-91). Thus, he succeeded in extending the frontiers of his empire from Bhagirathi in the north to river Pennar in the south. His son Pratapa Rudra (1497-1540), too, like his father, embarked upon an expansionist policy. During his reign, he had to face continuous clashes with the Vijaynagara ruler Krishnadeva Raya and the Bengal ruler Hussain Shah. Pratap Rudra invaded the Vijayanagara territory but on account of Bengal Sultan Hussain Shah's invasion of Odisha in 1509 he had to retreat. Krishnadeva Raya after his accession (1510) tried to capture back all the Vijayanagara forts from the Gajapati king Pratapa Rudra Deva and by 1515 he succeeded in occupying Udayagiri, Kondavidu and other forts. He could also capture Pratap Rudra's son Virabhadra who later committed suicide at the Vijayanagara capital which forced Pratapa Rudra to sue for peace in 1519 and thus river Krishna became the dividing line between the two. He also gave his daughter in marriage to Krishnadeva Raya. After Pratapa Rudra's death (1540), his successors could hardly hold the empire intact, and the end of Suryavamsi (Gajapati) dynasty came soon after (1542).

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Examine the relations of Bengal rulers with the kingdom of Kamrup.
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- 2) Who were Tai-Ahoms? List the achievements of Sukhangpha.
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.....
- 3) Discuss Kapilendra's relations with the rulers of Vijaynagara Bahmani and Bengal.
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.....
.....
- 4) Fill in the blanks:
 - a)shifted the capital from Kamrup to Kamatapur.

- b) Assamese literature is called.....
- c) Foundation of Khyan dynasty was laid down by.....
- d) The Ahoms belonged to.....tribe.
- e) Purushottama surrendered Kondavidu and Rajahmundry to.....

8.4 NORTHERN AND WESTERN INDIA

In this Section we would primarily be discussing Kashmir, Sindh, Rajputana and Gujarat kingdoms.

8.4.1 Kashmir

Geographically, Kashmir valley is surrounded by Pir Panjal ranges in the south and southwest, Kishtwar valley in the southeast and the north, and northeast and northwest region is covered by the mighty central and northwestern Himalayan ranges. The Kashmir valley mainly consists of, on the one hand, alluvial plains of Jhelum and its tributaries and, on the other, of plateaus. While the alluvial plains are fertile and extensively cultivated, elevated plateaus are less fertile and either laid waste, or if cultivated yield poor crop. Since the Kashmir valley is surrounded by mountain terrain, passes (Zojila, Banihal, Budil, Pir Panjal and Toshamaidan) occupy great importance and they had great impact on the development of political and socio-economic processes. However, the southern passes remain inaccessible till the time of the Lodis; the northern and western passes (Baramulla, Pakhli and Swat) were always accessible.

The 13th century Kashmir saw an independent but weak Hindu kingdom of Jagadeva (1198-1212). During his reign, the Damras, a turbulent feudal community, rebelled but were successfully suppressed. But his successors Rajadeya (1212-35), Samgramdeva (1235-52) and Ramdeva (1252-56) could not assert their power. After the latter's death, the Damra lord, Simhadeva (1286-1301), got the opportunity to usurp the throne. But his dynasty, too, could not continue for long. Interestingly, in spite of the Muslim inroads in India, Kashmir remained for long outside the Muslim sway for about two centuries. Mahmud of Ghazna made two attempts in 1015 and 1021, but the mighty Himalaya and Hindukush wasted his designs. The myth of the invincibility of Kashmir could only be shattered in 1320 when the Mongol commander Dulacha succeeded in ransacking Kashmir and amassed huge booty. But a severe snow storm dug his grave at Banihal pass itself.

The invasion had its long lasting impact. It paved the way for the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir. The way Raja Sahadeva tackled the Mongol problem, and the large-scale destruction and devastation struck by the Mongols, created great dissatisfaction among his subjects. This was exploited well by Rinchan, a Bhautta Prince of Laddakh, to usurp the throne in 1320. Soon after he accepted Islam and assumed the title of Sultan Sadrudin. His subsequent murder was followed by a long period of internal strifes which finally led to the establishment of the Shah Mir dynasty in Kashmir in 1339 by Shamsuddin I. Later, Shah Mir ruler Shahabuddin (1354-1373) tried to put the state on strong footing. When Timur (Timurlane) invaded India in 1398, he sent his envoy Faulad Bahadur and Zainuddin to Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413) of Kashmir and asked for a huge sum. This resulted in large-scale anarchy till Zainul Abidin ascended the throne in 1420. He ruled the country with utmost vigour for 50 years (d. 1470). He extended his frontiers up to

Western Tibet and occupied Ladakh and Shel. But his deeds were soon undone by his successors. His death created internal feuds. Finally, the Saiyyids succeeded in assuming power in the beginning of the 15th century.

No clashes seem to have occurred between the Delhi Sultans and Kashmir rulers till the Saiyyid rule. But strained relations between the two appeared during the reign of Bahlol Lodi. The *Tabaqat-i Akbari* reports that during the war of succession that followed after Haider Shah's death (1470-72), Tatar Khan, the governor of Punjab, at the instruction of Bahlol Lodi, sided with Bahram Khan, the uncle of Sultan Hasan. Sultan Hasan succeeded in killing Bahram. Tatar Khan's act to help Bahram antagonised Sultan Hasan. He sent Malik Tazi Bhatt to invade Punjab. Tazi Bhatt not only succeeded in defeating Tatar Khan, but also occupied Sialkot. Following Sultan Hasan's death (1484) at the call of Saiyyid Muhammad, the son of Saiyyid Hasan, Tatar Khan again mobilized forces against Kashmir. This time again Tatar Khan had to face defeat at the hands of the united force of the rulers of Jammu and Kashmir. During the closing years of Muhammad Shah's reign (1517-1528), Mughals intervened in Kashmir affairs. Babur sent Mughal army under Kuchak Beg and Shaikh Ali Beg to help Sikandar to secure the throne. Thus began the Mughal intrusions in Kashmir. After Babur, Mirza Kamran also interfered in Kashmir affairs. But the most important role in the Kashmiri affairs was played by Mirza Haider Dughlat. He entered Kashmir in 1532 and thence upto his death in 1551 he dominated Kashmiri politics and practically enjoyed the *de facto* powers and ruled Kashmir at his will. After Mirza's death Chaks again assumed power in the court of Nazuk Shah II (1540-1552). Finally, Ghazi Chak displaced Habib Shah of the Shah Mir dynasty on the charges of incompetence and laid the foundation of the Chak dynasty in 1561 which lasted till 1586 when finally Akbar occupied Kashmir and absorbed it into his empire.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Analyse the role of geography in the emergence of Kashmir as an independent kingdom.
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- 2) Who was Zainul Abidin?
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8.4.2 Northwest: Rajputana

The present northwest region of India comprises Rajasthan and a part of Gujarat and Punjab. From the geographical point of view, this region consists of a vast Thar desert in which Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Barmer lie. In the southwest region are the Kutch plains in which Nagar Parkar state flourished. The states of Mewar, Dungarpur, Banswara, Chittor and Ranthambhor flourished at the foot-hills of the Aravalli ranges.

Before the rise of tribal monarchies of the Rajputs, there were local tribes, namely,

Bhils, Meenas, Mers and Jats. These tribes spread over different regions. For instance, the Bhils were dominant in Mewar, Dungarpur and Banswara states while Meenas, Mers and Jats were dominant in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner respectively. These local tribes, however, could not succeed in establishing monarchies as subsequently founded by other Rajput tribes who came from the northwest part of India.

The Bhatias of Jaisalmer came from the vicinity of the Sutlej river in Punjab and the Sisodias from the Narmada in South India. The Kachhawahas moved from Central India (Narwar), and the Rathors of Jodhpur and Bikaner had their links with Kannauj region. The immigration of the Rajputs indicates some interesting points. Initially, they settled around the banks of rivers where they had access to water and rich soil for agricultural purposes. When the population grew and disputes over succession or on other matters took place, the weaker section moved to the regions which were sparsely populated and had no political authority to resist the settlement of newcomers in their regions. The newcomers were advanced in warfare technology and political organisation compared to the aboriginal tribes. Since the newcomers were few in numbers, they adopted two-pronged measures to control the local tribe; one was the use of force, and the other was socio-religious measures.

In the coercive method, first they strengthened their position by erecting forts to show their military prowess. The second one is significant from socio-religious point of view. The migrant clans established a practice of putting *tika* on the forehead of every succeeding chief by a local tribal. For instance, the Bhils of Mewar, the Godara Jats of Bikaner and the Meenas of Jaipur used to put *tika* on the forehead of the succeeding chiefs of these regions. Without performing this ritual, the succeeding chief was not considered as legal head of the region and its people. Even after the acceptance of the Mughal suzerainty by the Rajput clans in the 16th-17th century, this social tradition of marking *tika* by a local tribal continued. However, at the political level, the Mughal emperor exercised this privilege of bestowing succession rights on one of the family members of the ruling clan. But at the local level, the social ritual of putting *tika* by a local tribal was carried out. It was symbolic in the sense that while the real power rested with the aboriginal tribe, they had delegated this power to a chief whose duty was to protect the region and its people from external aggression and also to look after the welfare of the people. In the beginning, this social custom was followed to assuage the feelings of the local tribes, but with the passage of time it simply became a ritual. Gradually, the Rajputs became *de facto* and *de jure* chiefs of the regions and the local tribes simply turned peasants. Further, the chiefs in order to maintain soldiers and also for themselves extracted surplus from the peasants. A religious colour was given to this act: the surplus was taken as *bhog*. The word *bhog* signified religious sanctity: the offering made to a deity was also called '*bhog*'. Moreover, the king was considered a representative of God. Therefore, it was the religious duty of the peasants to make offerings (*bhog*) to the chief and his officials. It further strengthened the authority of the chiefs and the chances of revolt of the local people were minimised. It became obligatory for a chief to protect his political authority from outside aggression. Thus, the suzerain power enjoyed by a chief within a certain territory gave birth to the tribal-cum-territorial monarchies.

The Guhilas and the Sisodias

The most powerful state which emerged in the northwest was the state of Mewar. During the 13th century, Jaitra Singh (1213-61) consolidated the Guhila power but

failed to face the Turkish menace. Alauddin Khalji succeeded in defeating Rana Ratan Singh and occupied Mewar in 1303. During the 14th century, internal feuds flared up in Mewar that resulted in the victory of Raja Hamir of Sisodia clan. Thus was laid the foundation of the Sisodia rule in Mewar. Hamir's successors extended the domain which included Ajmer, Jahazpur, Mandalgarh, Chhapen, Bundi, Nagor, Jalor and Sambhar. But it was under Rana Kumbha (1433-68) that the Sisodia power reached its peak. An interesting development during the early years of Rana Kumbha's reign was the increasing influence of the Rathor clan over the Sisodias. At any rate, the Rana was able to smother the Rathor's hold.

Rana Kumbha expanded his territories far and wide. Almost the whole of Rajasthan was brought under his sway. He occupied Kota, Bundi, Amber, Narwar, Durgapur, Sambhar, Nagor, Ranthambhor, and Ajmer. Many times he repulsed the invasions of the Sultans of Malwa and Gujarat (the details of these clashes are dealt with in separate Sections on Malwa [8.3.1], and Gujarat [8.4.3]). Rana Kumbha was assassinated by his son Uda who occupied the throne in 1468. During the reign of Uda (1468-1473) and his successor Raimal (1473-1508), struggle for power continued unabated till Rana Sanga ascended the throne in 1508.

There was a long drawn struggle between the Mughals and the state of Mewar that began with the battle of Khanwa (1527) between Rana Sanga and Babur and later between Akbar and Rana Pratap (1567, 1576). So long as Rana Pratap was alive he resisted the Mughal arms. However, later under Jahangir a treaty was signed between Jahangir and Rana Amar Singh in 1615 thus Mewar could finally be subjugated.

The Guhilots of Vagad

The Guhilots of Mewar did not confine themselves to Mewar only. During the first half of the 12th century, Samant Singh of Mewar went to Vagad (modern Dungarpur and Banswara) to establish his own principality. But he could not control the region for a long time on account of the intervention of Gujarat. When Gujarat's control over Vagad weakened, Jagat Singh, a descendant of Samant, re-established his suzerainty in the region in the beginning of the 13th century. The Guhila hold was consolidated in Vagad during 14th-15th century. They used to have frequent clashes with the Sultans of Gujarat. The rulers of Malwa were also their traditional enemies.

Another branch of the Guhilots led by Rana Mokal's second son, Khem Singh, and his descendant Suraj Mal (1473-1528), shifted to Pratapgarh where an independent state arose towards the end of the 15th century.

The Rathors of Marwar

The Rathors of Marwar migrated from the region of Kannauj to Pali during the mid-thirteenth century. Siha, the Rathor chief, helped the Brahmans of Pali in freeing the region from the incursions of the Mers and the Meenas. Thus, he established his suzerainty over that region around 1243. Asthan and the subsequent Rathor chiefs succeeded in extending their sway over Idar, Mallani, Mandisor, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Umarmkot and Bhinmal. But the Rathor power reached its climax during the reign of Rao Chunda (1384-1423) and Rao Jodha (1438-89).

Rao Chunda received Mandor (Mandsor) in dowry (1395). Later, he extended his sway over Khatu, Didwana, Sambhar, Nagaur and Ajmer which were under Delhi Sultan's hegemony. To challenge the rising power of Chunda, a coalition was formed by the Bhatias, the Sankhalas and the governor of Multan. They invaded Nagaur and succeeded in killing Chunda in 1423. Under Rao Jodha, the Rathors emerged as a

formidable power. He further extended his domain by occupying Merta, Phalodi, Pokarana, Bhadrarjun, Sojat, Jaitaran, Siwana, parts of Godwad and Nagaur. Later, during Rao Suja's reign (1492-1515) the Rathor power started showing signs of disintegration. Biran Deo was the first to declare independence. Soon after, the chiefs of Pokarana and Barmer also severed their ties with the Rathors.

The Rathor power did not remain confined to the Marwar region only: it extended further towards Jangla (modern Bikaner) under the leadership of Bika, the son of Rao Jodha (1438-89). Bika migrated to Jangla sometime around 1465. He strengthened his position by establishing matrimonial tie with Rao Shekha of Pungal who gave him his daughter in marriage. The Jats of that region also surrendered to him. In 1488, he founded the city of Bikaner which, since then, became a centre of power. Bika, after his father's death, strived unsuccessfully to occupy the ancestral *gaddi* of Jodhpur, although he was able to conquer a part of Punjab. At the time of his death in 1504, a large territory was under his control.

Minor Rajput Principalities

Besides the above mentioned Rajput principalities, there arose a number of small 'chiefdoms' in Rajputana during the 13-15th century. Foremost were the Bhatias of Jaisalmer who migrated from Punjab to the Thar desert in the beginning of the 11th century. Throughout the 14-15th century, Jaisalmer rulers had frequent clashes with the rulers of Mewar, Multan, Umarkot and Bikaner.

Next came the Kachhwahas who migrated to Dhundhar from central India. They were the feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratihara rulers. During the 11th century, the Kachhwaha chief Dulah Rai migrated from Marwar to Eastern Rajasthan where he subdued the Bargujars and laid the foundation of the Dhundhar state (Amber, modern Jaipur). The Kachhwahas controlled Amber, Med, Bairat and Shaikhawati region during the 15th century. However, they rose to prominence during the Mughal period.

We have already seen in **Unit 2** that the Chauhans were the main power to reckon with when the Turks came to India. But after Prithviraj's defeat at the hands of the Turks (1192: second battle of Tarain) the Chauhan power declined. There emerged a number of petty power-centres at Jalor, Ranthambhor, Nadol, Sirohi and Haroti which at one point of time formed part of the Sultanate (see **Unit 2**) or were too weak to face the onslaught of Mewar and Marwar.

Sometime around mid-13th century, the Hadas succeeded in establishing a principality in the Bundi-Kota region. They were the feudatories of the Rana of Mewar. Samar Singh had defended his territory from the incursion of Balban in 1253-54, but he could not face the might of Alauddin Khalji. He died fighting. His son, Napuj, also faced the same fate at the hands of Alauddin in 1304. During the 15th century, the Hadas were frequently confronted by Mewar, Gujarat and Malwa. In fact, during 13-15th century the Bundi state existed in name only.

The Yadavas of Karawi and Sodhas of Umarkot and Barmer also rose to prominence during the 13-15th century. However, they could not play a prominent role in the 13-15th century regional power formations.

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) How did the Rajput tribes succeed in establishing their monarchies in northwest India?

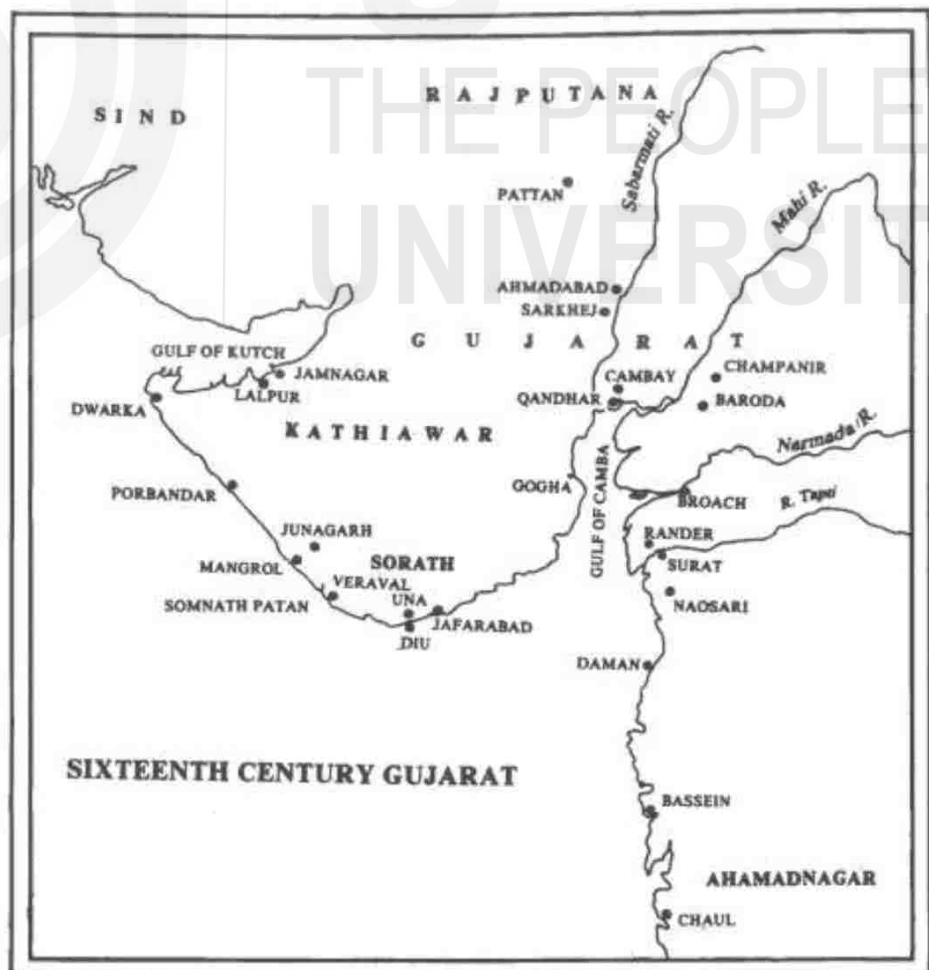
.....

2) Who were the Rathors?

3) Discuss briefly the emergence of Rana Kumbha's power.

8.4.3 Gujarat

You have already read (in **BHIC 132**) about the emergence of the Chalukya state in Gujarat during 8-12th century. The Chalukya hold continued over Gujarat throughout the 13th century in spite of the establishment of the Sultanate. You have also seen (**Unit 2**) how in 1299 Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, Alauddin Khalji's generals, succeeded in overthrowing Raja Kama Baghella, the Chalukya ruler and thus laid the foundation of the Sultanate rule in Gujarat. The Delhi Sultans enjoyed supremacy over Gujarat throughout the 14th century. However, symptoms of decline became



Map 8.3: Sixteenth Century Gujarat

evident from Firuz Shah's reign onwards who entrusted the governorship of Gujarat to Shamsuddin Damghani. Timur's invasion (1398) provided the much sought for opportunity to the governors to break away with the centre. Soon after, in 1407, Zafar Khan (who later assumed the title of Muzaffar Shah), the then Governor of Gujarat, established an independent kingdom in Gujarat.

The kingdom of Gujarat since its inception had been constantly clashing with its neighbouring territories – Malwa, Rajputana, Khandesh and the Bahmani kingdoms.

Relations with Malwa

The Malwa rulers were their traditional enemies. In 1408, Muzaffar Shah attacked Malwa and made its ruler Hoshang Shah captive. Though Hoshang Shah had to accept the suzerainty of Muzaffar Shah, he was jealous of the rising power of Gujarat. To undermine its power, the rulers of Malwa used to join hands with the enemies of Gujarat. But Ahmad Shah of Gujarat succeeded in crushing Hoshang Shah's power. Later during Qutbuddin Ahmad Shah II's reign (1451-1459), Mahmud Khalji of Malwa attacked Gujarat but he was repulsed. Later, Mahmud Khalji allied with Qutbuddin Ahmad Shah II to confront Rana Kumbha of Mewar. But this move was purely a diplomatic one as Mahmud Khalji never left any opportunity to undermine the prestige of the rulers of Gujarat.

Relations with Rajputana

Another formidable power with which the rulers of Gujarat had been constantly at war was Rajputana. The first Rajput kingdom to form part of Gujarat was Idar (1426). Soon, Ahmad Shah overran Dungarpur (1433). Later, Qutbuddin (1451-1459) and Mahmud Begarha (1459-1511) had to face Rana Kumbha, the ruler of Mewar. Rana Kumbha, as we have already seen, had occupied Sirohi, Abu and Nagaur, the latter being ruled by Ahmad Shah's uncle, Firuz Khan. As a result, Rana Kumbha had to cope with the combined attack of Gujarat, Sirohi and Nagaur. The final outcome was that the Rana had to sue for peace by paying huge indemnity. But Rana Kumbha retained his capital, Kumbhalgarh in spite of its being besieged two times.

The Rajput state of Champaner also constantly clashed with Gujarat. But finally it was annexed to the Gujarat kingdom by Mahmud Begarha in 1483-84 who renamed it Muhammadabad and made it his second capital. By Mahmud Begarha's reign other small Rajput kingdoms of Junagarh, Sorath, Kutch and Dwarka were also subjugated and the boundary of the Muzaffar Shahi domain reached the remotest corners of the Kathiawar peninsula.

Relations with Bahmani and Khandesh

The Bahmani ruler Firuz Shah maintained cordial relations with the Gujarati rulers. But after his death (1397-1422), radical change came about with the accession of Ahmad Bahmani (1422-1436) who formed matrimonial alliance with the ruler of Khandesh. When Rai Kanha of Jhalawar fled (1429), Khandesh and Bahmani rulers gave asylum to him. This infuriated Ahmad Shah Gujarati and he had to use force against them. He subjected them to a crushing defeat and occupied Mahim. However, during Mahmud Begarha's reign cordialities revived. When Mahmud Khalji of Malwa attacked the Bahmani kingdom, Mahmud Begarha came twice to its rescue.

Mahmud Begarha also maintained friendly relations with the Khandesh rulers, but Adil Khan II ceased to pay tribute and joined hands with Ahmadnagar and Berar.

As a result, Mahmud Begarha attacked Khandesh and finally Adil Khan was compelled to accept suzerainty of Mahmud Begarha. But the latter did not annex either Khandesh or Daulatabad; instead, he confirmed their rulers on payment of tribute.

Mahmud Begarha also had close ties with the **Jam** Nizamuddin of Sindh. Since he was Mahmud's maternal grandfather, Begarha rushed to support him when the tribal pirates of Sindh rebelled against the Jam.

Mahmud Begarha also succeeded in suppressing the rising Portuguese power in Indian waters. He received help from the rulers of Egypt and the Ottoman who sent their generals Amir Hussain and Sulaiman Rais. The combined forces at first succeeded in defeating the Portuguese flotilla at Chaul in 1508 but, later in 1509, Albuquerque completely crushed them. As a result, in 1510 Mahmud Begarha entered into an alliance with the Portuguese and extracted assurance for the safety of the Gujarati ships in the Arabian Sea.

In 1508, the Delhi Sultan Sikandar Lodi sent an embassy to Gujarat. The embassies of Sikandar Lodi and that of Ismail Safavi of Iran greatly increased the prestige of the Gujarati ruler. It also suggests the important place Mahmud Begarha occupied in the contemporary national and international scene.

8.4.4 Sindh

Sindh was another independent state on the western border of India. The history of the foundation of Muslim power in Sindh goes back to 712, when Muhammad bin Qasim attacked Sindh. The Sumirahs seem to have established their power sometime in the 10th century in Sindh. We do not have much information regarding their rule and their relation with the neighbouring states. But stray references suggest that their influence extended as far as Debal and Makran Coast. They also had parts of Kutch under their control. According to the *Tarikh-i Jahangusha*, the Khwarizmian ruler Jalauddin Mangbarni defeated Chanesar, the Sumirah prince, in 1224 and occupied Debal and Damrilah. During Iltutmish's reign, Nizam-ul Mulk Junaidi, the *wazir* of Iltutmish, occupied it in 1228 and its ruler Chanesar was sent to the court of Iltutmish. Later, Muhammad Tughlaq attacked Thatta in 1350-51 in pursuit of Taghi, the rebel noble.

Later, the Sammahs succeeded in overthrowing the Sumirah in 1351. They ruled for 175 years. The *Chachnama* mentions Sammahs as residents of Sindh even before the conquest of Muhammad bin Qasim. They originally belonged to the Yadava branch of Rajputs and were later converted to Islam. They were mainly agriculturists and held land under the Sumirahs. When Firuz Shah Tughlaq in 1360-61, and again in 1362, attacked Jam Jauna and Banbaniya of Thatta, the Jam had to surrender. But soon after the death of Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1388), the Sammahs threw off the Sultanate yoke and became independent under Jam Tughluq. The Jam rulers of Sindh maintained cordial relations with the rulers of Gujarat. Jam Nizamuddin had married his two daughters to the Gujarat ruler, and Mahmud Begarha was the son of his second daughter, Bibi Mughli. We have already seen how Mahmud Begarha came all out in 1472, for the help of Jam Nizamuddin when the tribal pirates threatened the latter's authority. Jam Nizamuddin (1460-1508), the greatest of the Jams of Sindh, also had close ties with Sultan Husain of Multan. During the closing years of his reign (1493), the **Arghuns** who were the descendants of the Khans of Persia, threatened Jam's power. But so long as Jam

Nizamuddin was alive, the Arghuns' attacks were not successful. After his death (1508), the Arghuns succeeded in establishing their power in Sindh in the 16th century. Sindh was finally annexed and assimilated into the Mughal empire by Akbar in 1590.



Map 8.4: Sindh

Check Your Progress-6

1) Critically examine relations of Gujarat with Malwa rulers.

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2) Who were the Sammahs?

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8.5 REGIONAL STATES AND LEGITIMIZATION

In this Section we will highlight the major characteristics of the regional states.

8.5.1 Characteristics of the Regional States

It is generally held that the 'antipathy' that existed during the Sultanate period between the Hindu and the Muslim states heightened the conflicts and clashes during the 13-15th century. But, as Schwartzberg has rightly pointed out, we find more frequent and fierce struggle between the Muslim-Muslim and Hindu-Hindu rulers rather than between Hindu-Muslim rulers. For example, Gujarat's traditional enemies were Muslim rulers of Malwa and Jaunpur; there was continuous warfare between Kamata and Ahom rulers; Odisha rulers continuously faced the might of the Vijaynagara rulers and in Rajputana quarrels took inter-clan character. They never showed unity even in dire needs. In fact, in framing political alliances, the need of the time and circumstances played more crucial role rather than religion. Mahmud Khalji I of Malwa sided with Ganga Das, the ruler of Champaner, against Mahmud Shah Gujarati in 1450-51; later, Mahmud Khalji joined hands with the Gujarati ruler Qutbuddin against Rana Kumbha of Mewar realizing the latter's strength.

The foremost feature of the 13-15th century polity, was 'vertical' penetration rather than the 'horizontal' one, i.e. horizontally the area under their control was smaller compared to the Sultanate but within their area of influence they 'vertically' penetrated deep into the rural areas.

Under regional rulers, the maximum area lay outside their effective control; even where they exercised a good measure of control, there, too, they often faced some difficulty. On this basis, we can divide their domain into three kinds:

- i) Where land revenue was extracted from the peasants directly through revenue officials, the state's influence and control was of a high order.
- ii) Areas where revenue was collected through local chiefs, and the state's control was still good enough.
- iii) Areas where the states were satisfied with the tribute only, here, the degree of control was minimal. This relationship had direct bearing on regional rulers' relations with the nobles, tributary chiefs or *rajas* and local aristocracy (the so-called *zamindars*, *muqaddams*, etc.).

8.5.2 Nobles and Landed Aristocracy

The nobles played a very crucial role in the 13-15th century regional politics. They hailed from heterogeneous elements, including both the Hindus as well as the Muslims. They used to receive high sounding titles like *khan-i azam*, *khan-i muazzam*, *mahapatradhipatra*, etc. These nobles used to receive their salaries in the form of *iqta* (revenue assignment in lieu of salary); in turn, they maintained law and order, helped in revenue extraction and in times of need supplied armed personnel to the king. Theoretically, their position was not hereditary and they owed their power and position to the king's favour, but gradually their assignments assumed hereditary character. However, Rajputana was an exception where they owed their position primarily to their being the member of the clan; the king's favour was only secondary. You have already seen that these nobles had the tendency to rebel and they used to side with one group or other during the war of succession. On account of their military strength, the king had to depend on them. The power of some of the nobles was such that they became kingmakers, and the kings became tools in their hands (for further details see *supra*).

Landed Aristocracy

In the regional kingdoms landed aristocracy played an important role in revenue

collection and maintenance of law and order. Geopolitically, we can divide them into two categories: (i) landed aristocracy located in the peripheral (frontier) area. In this category come the 'chiefs' or '*rajas*' – the so-called intermediary *zamindars*; (ii) landed class who lived within the mainland – the so-called primary *zamindars*.

The first category was composed of the most refractory elements. They kept on switching over their allegiance from one state to another.

Landed aristocracy that lived in the mainland was generally under greater pressure and closer scrutiny. The characteristic feature of the regional state was that mostly the rulers were considered as aliens; they did not have local base. Their prime need was to create a loyal class of rural aristocracy to counterbalance the existing class. Their success in this task would have been the real achievement of the regional powers. Muslim invasions and clan rivalries within the Rajputana kingdoms resulted in large-scale migration of the Rajputs towards Malwa and Gujarat. By 13th century, we find that most of the landed magnates in these states were Rajputs. The rulers of Malwa and Gujarat thus had to face stiff resistance in this process, in Gujarat, drastic changes were brought about by Sultan Ahmad Shah I by introducing the *wanta* system.

In Bengal, Bakhtiyar Khalji at the outset had distributed all the land among his military commanders and made them *muqti*. The *sufis* and *ulama* were also encouraged to settle down in rural areas to establish Muslim hold for which lavish grants (*madad-i ma'ash*) were made to them.

8.5.3 North Indian Kingdoms as Successor States

Generally, the regional kingdoms are considered as 'successor' states of the Sultanate. An argument has been presented that the founders of the regional kingdoms at one point of time were either governors of the Sultanate or had served under them in 'some' capacity. This was true in some cases but cannot be applied invariably. For example, Zafar Khan, Dilawar Khan and Malik Sarwar, the founders of the regional kingdoms of Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur respectively, served as governors under the Tughlaq Sultans. Besides, Bengal rulers also had direct and continuous links with the Sultanate. But the Rajputana states, though always a prey to the Sultanate onslaught, never accepted the complete hegemony of the Sultans. As and when the opportunity arose, they threw off the Sultanate yoke and succeeded in maintaining their clannish character. Similar was the case with Sindh. Under the Sultanate pressure, the Sindh rulers accepted the suzerainty of Iltutmish, Muhammad Tughlaq and Firuz Tughlaq, but for all practical purposes Sumirah and Sammah rulers ruled independently. Their development was also entirely independent of the Sultanate.

Since some regional powers emerged on the ruins of the Sultanate, it is generally thought, that structurally their polity bore striking resemblance to the Sultanate. Let us find out to what extent this view is correct.

8.5.4 Succession Issue

Islam has not provided any rules for succession. As a result, under the Delhi Sultanate principles of election, nomination and hereditary succession co-existed. In fact 'force' was the main arbiter. Thus, ample opportunity for maneuvering was available.

Like the Sultanate, in the regional states as well, whether ruled by a Hindu or a Muslim, there were no set rules of succession. Hence, there were always

conspiracies and intrigues among various groups in which sometimes women also played a significant role. In Malwa, the principle of nomination took precedence over law of primogeniture. In Jaunpur, 'force' was the deciding factor. Husain Shah Sharqi usurped the throne in 1458 after killing his elder brother Muhammad Shah Sharqi. Similarly, in Gujarat, accession of Ahmad Shah was contested by his uncle Maudud Sultan (Firuz Khan). In Bengal, the role of nobles was more important and they acted as kingmakers. Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah was killed by his slaves Shadi Khan and Nasir Khan (1435). They, in turn, were killed by their rivals (1442). By 1487, the power of Abyssinian nobles reached its peak when, Malik Andil, an Abyssinian noble killed Jalaluddin Fath Shah, and usurped the throne.

In Rajputana, too, the law of primogeniture was not strictly adhered to. In the case of the Guhilas and Sisodias, we find that after Rana Lakha's death, instead of Chunda (the eldest son of the Rana), the throne passed into the hands of his minor son Rana Mokal. Similarly, Uda usurped the throne by killing his father Rana Kumbha. Raimal's accession was also not smooth. He was challenged by Uda's sons Sahasmal and Surajmal.

In Kashmir, too, no succession rules could develop. As early as 1323, Shah Mir, usurped power following his master's death. His eldest son Jamshed's accession (1342), too, was followed by a long-drawn war of succession. Zainul Abidin himself, assumed power after killing his elder brother Ali Shah in 1420.

In the Ahom kingdom, the council of great nobles – *Bar Gohain* and *Burah Gohain* played an important role in appointing and nominating kings. In fact, no one could become the king without their approval. It was only in the kingdom of Odisha where succession rules were respected under the Ganga rulers. But, later, when the power was transferred from the Ganga rulers to the Gajapati rulers, there seems to have emerged some lapses: we find that after Kapilendra's death, his younger son Purushottama usurped the throne by setting aside the claims of his elder brother Hamir.

8.5.5 Legitimization

The king was at the helm of affairs, and he was the final authority in all matters. But, in the Islamic world, there was no legal sanction for the Sultan's authority and it was the Caliph who was the political head of the Muslims. The Delhi Sultans used to recite *khutba* in Caliph's name and inscribe his name on their coins to get legal sanction for their authority. For the regional states, the need for legitimization, not only in the eyes of the masses but also their competitors, became more important, for every accession was usually preceded by clashes and wars. For those regional states which were situated too far away to get the legal sanction from the Caliph at Baghdad, the *ulama* and the *sufis* were more potential legitimizers.

To pacify the orthodox Muslim opinion, the rulers of Malwa, Gujarat, Bengal and Jaunpur always showed their eagerness to get the support of the *ulama* and *sufis* by offering them lucrative offices and revenue-free land grants (*madad-i ma'ash*). They also used to pay frequent visits to the *khanqahs* of the Muslim saints. The legal authority of the Caliph was explicitly recognized by the Bengal rulers Iwaz Khalji, Mughisuddin, Ruknuddin Kaikaus, Shamsuddin Firuz, etc. who all engraved the Abbasid Caliph's name on their coins. Under Ibrahim Sharqi's patronage flourished famous Muslim mystics Makhdum Asaduddin Aftab-i Hind, Makhudum

Sadrudin Chirgh-i Hind, Saiyyid Alaul Haqq of Pandua, etc. The Malwa ruler Hoshang Shah made special efforts to encourage the *ulama* and *mashaikhs* to come and settle in Malwa. Hoshang Shah had profound respect for Makhdum Qazi Burhanuddin and he became his disciple (*murid*). Mahmud Khalji received *khilat* (*robe of honour*) from the Abbasid Caliph at Egypt. It helped greatly in enhancing the prestige of the Malwa ruler. The famous *sufi* Saiyyid Usman, the disciple of Burhanuddin, was greatly respected by the Gujarati ruler Mahmud Begarha. He built a mosque and *rauza* (tomb) in his memory at Ahmadabad immediately after his death in 1459. Burhanuddin's son Shah Alam also enjoyed great prestige and patronage of the Gujarati rulers, Qutbuddin and Mahmud Begarha. In Kashmir, too, the *sufis* enjoyed great honour and favour of the Kashmiri rulers. In Rajputana, the rulers lavishly distributed revenue-free lands to the Brahmans to win over their favour to justify their various political acts.

In Odisha, Lord Jagannath was believed to be the real ruler. Therefore, Brahmans gained great political influence. They legitimized the usurpation of the Ganga throne by Kapilendra Deva (1435) and the accession of Purushottama Deva to the exclusion of Hamir.

Check Your Progress-7

- 1) What do you understand by 'horizontal' and 'vertical' penetration under the regional states?

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- 2) Can the regional states may truly be called the successor states of the Sultanate? Comment.

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8.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have studied the emergence of independent kingdoms of Malwa, Jaunpur and Bengal. These kingdoms emerged as a result of the decline of the Delhi Sultanate. We have also studied the territorial expansion of each state and their relations with the Sultanate and the neighbouring state. Apart from these kingdoms, we have also discussed the kingdoms of Assam and Odisha. Their development was independent of the Sultanate. In Assam there existed two kingdoms, the Kamata-Kamrup and the Ahoms. The latter was still in the process of state formation and was mainly based on tribal organization.

We have also discussed the emergence of regional powers in Northern and Western India during 13-15th century. We have seen that Kashmir as an independent state developed outside the Sultanate. The relations of Kashmir Sultans with the Delhi Sultanate throughout the 13-15th century remained cordial except during Bahlol Lodi's reign. In Rajputana, there emerged a number of small principalities based on clan-organization, of which the Guhilas, Sisodias and Rathors were more

prominent. Gujarat became independent as a result of Sultanate's decline. By early 15th century, it attained a complete independent status. Gujarat was constantly at war with its neighbours – Malwa, Rajputana and Bahmanis. During this period, in the extreme west, Sindh under the Sumirah and Sammah rulers was trying to throw off the Sultanate yoke. It could succeed in its designs only after Firuz Tughlaq's death. We have also studied the characteristic features of north Indian regional states. They penetrated 'vertically' deep into the rural areas, though 'horizontally' the area under their control was not very large as compared to the Sultanate. Regional states are represented as 'successor states' of the Sultanate. But it is not true in its strict sense.

8.7 KEYWORDS

Arghun	Descendants of the Khans of Persia.
Bhog	Land revenue; offering to a deity.
Gaddi	Throne
Gots	A unit of four adult males
Hakim	Provincial Governor
Jam	Title assumed by the Sammah rulers of Sindh.
Paik	Ahom militia/householders
Patra-mantri	Council comprises <i>Bar</i> and <i>Burah Gohains</i>
Rauza	Tomb

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Sub-section 8.3.1
- 2) See Sub-section 8.3.2
- 3) i) ✓ ii) x iii) ✓ iv) ✓

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 8.3.3
- 2) See Sub-section 8.3.3
- 3) a) 1205 b) 1281 c) 1342 d) 1460-1474 e) 1357-1389

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 8.3.4
- 2) See Sub-section 8.3.4
- 3) See Sub-section 8.3.5
- 4) a) Rai Sandhya b) *Buranji* c) Niladhvaj d) Mao-Shan sub-tribe of the Tais e) Bahmani ruler Muhammad Shah III

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Sub-section 8.4.1
- 2) See Sub-section 8.4.1

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) See Sub-section 8.4.2
- 2) See Sub-section 8.4.2
- 3) See Sub-section 8.4.2

Check Your Progress-6

- 1) See Sub-section 8.4.3
- 2) See Sub-section 8.4.3

Check Your Progress-7

- 1) See Sub-section 8.5.1
- 2) See Sub-section 8.5.3

8.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Yazdani, G., (1929) *Mandu: The City of Joy* (Oxford: Printed for the Dhar State at the University press, by J. Johnson).

8.10 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ahom Kingdom of Assam

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UanQqD7nPXg>

Jaunpur: Seat of the Sharqi Sultanate | History Daily

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYtQ7T1HCb0>

The Medieval Metropolis of Malwa

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgZKR4KMUOk>

Gujarat Sultanate – Architecture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16461szDdwU>

Pandua: The Lost Capital of the Sultanate of Bengal

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHmOAJ0nypI>

