

BOOK REVIEW

THE FRONTIER POLICY OF THE DELHI SULTANS, by Agha Hussain Hamadani, Islamabad, National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1986, Pp. 220, Price Rs. 150.00.

This is a welcome addition to the already scanty literature on the Muslim History of Indo-Pakistan. It is indeed disheartening to observe that our research scholars, since the very birth of Pakistan, have not paid sufficient attention to this epoch-making period when the foundations of Muslim settlements in the Subcontinent were placed on a permanent footing, which had had indelible effects on the ultimate fortunes of the Muslims. Our researchers presently are devoting all their talents on the British period with their main choice on the Pakistan Movement with the consequence that the Muslim period is being thrown in cold storage. Is it because of their ignorance of the Persian language that our most fruitful period of history is being neglected?

The book under review deals with an original subject not yet dealt with by any scholar and its reflections and conclusions would continue to dominate until some scholar digs out new material hitherto unknown to us. Mohammad Ghorī to whom the main credit goes for a permanent Muslim colonisation in this Subcontinent started an era of conquests into India and under his instructions Qutb al-Din Aibak (1206-10) established himself at Delhi and made it a springboard for making further conquests into India. With Delhi as the headquarter of the infant Muslim state, the latter became exposed to the variable political forces in Central Asia, which were obsessed with the vision of prevailing over the fertile Indo-Gangetic plain. Aibak at the very outset devised his frontier policy to meet these challenges. Iltutmish (1211-36) followed various strategies, that of compromise, of non-involvement and of advance as parts of his overall policy in the North Western Frontier

of his Empire. Balban established his reputation as a saviour of the frontiers of the Delhi Empire from the onslaughts of the Mongols. He kept Halaku Khan in good humour; he maintained friendly and diplomatic relations with him and thus shielded his Empire from the barbarity of the latter. Constant fear of the Mongol invasions framed his Mongol policy; unlike Aibak or Iltutmish who had undertaken larger conquests into the Indo-Gangetic valley, his was an unaggressive policy. For fear of the Mongol invasions he very rarely went out of his capital; he re-organized his army, improved its organisational efficiency by spreading a net work of easy means of communications. He built new forts, repaired old ones and his forts were situated on the routes of the invaders in perfect preparedness, fully garrisoned and well-equipped.

Balban's Mongol policy was vastly improved upon by Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Khalji, whose most glorious achievement was that the Mongol problem which was once a bugbear for the Sultans of Delhi had finished altogether and perfect tranquillity prevailed throughout the kingdom.

Sultan Ghias al-Din Tughluq (1320-1325) before assuming kingship was the warden of Marches under 'Ala' al-Din Khalji and had already earned a name for his thwarting the Mongols and certainly he has had a lion's share in crushing the Mongol invasions and ushering in peace and prosperity throughout the kingdom.

The frontier problems of Muhammad Tughluq (1325-1351) had not been so grave as had been the case under his predecessors. A peculiarity of his frontier policy was to maintain friendly and diplomatic relations with the rulers of Central Asia. The frontier policy of Firuz Tughluq (1351-1388) not only created terror amongst the Mongols, but also crushed the refractory Umara within the Empire. These factors also deterred the Mongols from invading India any more. Thus our author implicitly negatives the myth prevailing in our textbooks that Firuz Tughluq had bought off the Mongol invasions.

Unfortunately Firuz Tughluq was succeeded by imbecile successors and the downfall of his vast Empire was hastened due to party factions between his medley of slaves, Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul and the Lodi Amirs.

Peshawar Region which was the home of the Ghakkars and other tribes of Koh-i-Jud, served as a sort of buffer state between the Mongols and the Delhi Empire. Ghakkars generally were in

league with the Mongols and often exploited the situation by aiding the Mongols and sharing the loot as well. Strangely enough they were never crushed by the Delhi Sultans. Though sometimes they did bear the fury of the Sultans owing to the refractoriness, yet they managed to remain independent. Iltutmish was a worldly wise man and never wished to extinguish the Ghakkars altogether in the hope that with the passage of time they would be automatically weeded out by the hordes of Mongols and he was destined to be correct in his assessment. The conditions of anarchy prevailing after the demise of Firuz Tughluq quickened their greed for wealth and they invited Amir Timur to invade the Delhi Sultanate. The Amir in his *Malfuzat* has elevated himself to the rank of a Ghazi by invading the Delhi Sultanate (1398). After the annihilation of the Delhi Sultanate his troops sacked relentlessly the three cities of Delhi, viz., Siri, Jahan Panah and the old city of Delhi and carried on a wanton slaughter of its inhabitants (mostly Muslims) for three consecutive days. This invasion not only eclipsed the Delhi Empire but also shattered for ever the rising ambitions of the Ghakkars. Timur's advance not only finished off their political ambitions but also dealt a staggering blow on the Delhi Empire. For the first time the entire area fell under the control of the Central Asian Empire built by Timur and thus the mention of frontier problems for policy was weeded out from the annals of the Muslim history of Indo-Pakistan.

It is indeed suggestive to imagine that some of the Sultans of Delhi were mighty conquerors and with their inestimably vast resources in men and money they could have easily finished off the Mongols in their very homes in Central Asia and why they followed an unaggressive and merely a defensive policy towards the Mongols. The reasons are not far to seek and can better be imagined than described. It was futile for them to leave a comfortable country of salubrious climates like India in order to chastise the unruly, uncivilised Mongols.

The rise of Mongols in Central Asia had had a deep impact on the fortunes of the Muslims in India. Emergence of Mongols in Central Asia divided the Turks among themselves. Some of them were forced to leave their homes and hearths and were driven towards India for the sake of permanent settlement in this rich land. The Timurid Empire now claimed conquest over the Delhi Sultanate as a matter of right as was subsequently asserted by

Babar while founding the Mughal Empire in India.

Taken all in all the book under review is a welcome addition to our knowledge and the National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research deserves compliments for having undertaken the publication of this very useful monograph.

—Ifitikhar Ahmad Ghauri