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Rise and Fall of Delhi Sultanate in India (1206-1526): An Analysis

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Abstract: *The Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) of India played a pivotal role in shaping the political, social, and economic landscape of the Indian subcontinent. Established by Qutbuddin Aibak in 1206, the Sultanate saw the rise of several dynasties including the Mamluks, Khaljis, Tughlaqs, Sayyids, and Lodi. This study analyses the factors which contributed to the rapid expansion and eventual decline of the Delhi Sultanate. It highlights how military prowess, administrative innovations, and religious policies enabled the Sultans to consolidate power over vast territories. However, internal weaknesses, administrative inefficiencies, economic turmoil, and external invasions, including Timur's raid and Babur's conquest in 1526, accelerated its downfall. The study also explores the impact of Mongol threats, shifting alliances, and rebellions that weakened central authority. Furthermore, it assesses the socio-cultural legacy of the Sultanate, including architectural advancements, Persian influence, and the integration of Islamic and Indian traditions.*

Key Words: Delhi Sultanate, Political Instability, Military Expansion, Economic Decline, Mongol Invasions, Administrative Policies, Cultural Synthesis, Islamic Rule, Indo-Persian Influence, Mughal Conquest

Introduction

For many reasons, the golden age of the Delhi Sultanate during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388) has always intrigued historians and students of Indian history. The historical questions, of why and how the Muslim (Turko-Afgan) rule could have been established and flourished in India with relative ease; and why and how the exalted empire fell down to dust; have been the focus of a series of debates among historians and political thinkers. The rapid rise and fall of the Sultanate also looks thought-provoking for many social scientists, including political theorists (Hoyer, 2017). The political culture of the Tughlaq and early Sayyid period, the patterns and processes of disintegration of Tughlaq-Bahmeeni polity, the socio-cultural synthesis of the Delhi Sultanate, administrative system, powers and jurisdiction of royal officials, modus operandi of the authority in peripheries, and the causes of the politico-economic crises of the empire are a few aspects, among others, that

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engaged the attention of the contemporary as well as the modern historians since the sultanate period itself.

After the successful completion of its establishment, the Delhi Sultanate grew within a short period to be a great and powerful empire. It was not only a powerful political organization but brought in its command extensive area including almost the total territory of the country. The emergence and development of the Sultanate, its character and role in the contemporary global discourse of development as well as their social ramifications have always engaged the attention of contemporary Muslim chroniclers, as well as European travelers and scholars (Ramesh, 2018). To a certain extent, they had romanticized the rock and dark sides of the Sultanate regime and portrayed Leeds or Alexander in Life's pictures of the Empire. Some of the early British historians and political thinkers, on the other hand, took the fall of the Sultanate to the dust as an example of the betrayal of the 'Indo-Arian' subjects towards the country and their 'dethroning' the Islamic minorities (Asif, 2017).

Foundation of the Delhi Sultanate

Of all the enduring and significant bequests that the illustrious House of Seljuk has imparted to the vast tapestry of Islamic history, it can be said that the soldiers who fought valiantly in its formidable standing army represent the most fragmented yet politically potent aspect of that legacy. When the Seljuks achieved their monumental triumph in the year 1055, seizing Baghdad, which served as the illustrious capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, they found themselves in control of a dispersed and sprawling empire comprising numerous marginal territories that encircled the prominent Iranian Plateau (Karim, 2014). These diverse provinces extended from the eastern reaches of Khorasan, traversing all the way to Syria in the west, and stretching down to the holy cities of Mecca and Yemen in the south, while also encompassing the southern Caucasus region in the north.

Over the subsequent few decades, the Seljuks embarked on a campaign of conquest, successfully subjugating territories that belonged to other Muslim realms as well as the Byzantine Empire, thereby acquiring a remarkable and eclectic collection of varied ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups (Yeganehfarzand, 2017). Their strategic utilization of a diverse array of ethno-linguistically distinct slave soldiers as the predominant military force responsible for both conquering and maintaining control over these multifaceted lands resulted in diffuse and discordant impacts on the eventual nature and administration of the newly subjugated polities. It is indeed these very slave soldiers, along with their descendants, who played a pivotal role in precipitating the eventual fragmentation of the Seljuk Empire, primarily due to the political empowerment and burgeoning independence fostered by the continuous training and education provided to Mamluk soldiers (Hannun, 2021).

It was within the scope of these military forays and efforts that he began to settle the Turkic peoples into the fertile plains of the Indo-Gangetic region, with the aim of bolstering his Muslim and Mamluk following in the northern parts of India (Chavan et al., 2014). The multitude of invasions launched by various Turkic and Mamluk principalities led to a range of diverse yet profound impacts on the societal structures and cultural landscapes across the extensive and varied terrains of India during the transformative 13th and 14th centuries. Certain groups of people responded to this turbulent environment by migrating en masse in either a western or eastern direction, seeking refuge from the rampant banditry and violent internecine gang warfare that often trailed behind the sultans and their formidable armies. (Sloat, 2017)

The Ghurid Invasions and the Establishment of the Slave Dynasty

The history of the Delhi Sultanate starts with the invasions of India by the Turkic warlord Muhammad of Ghur in the early thirteenth century and the subsequent establishment of the Slave Dynasty by his Mamluk generals. These invasions had a number of significant impacts on the Indian political landscape and set the stage for subsequent fragments and the rise of ensuing Muslim successor

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states. Muhammad of Ghur launched a series of devastating campaigns against the existing Hindu kings (Ramesh, 2018). His forces looted and destroyed numerous towns and cities, ears were "filled with the harrowing cries of the helpless and unarmed people", and the land was left without cultivation. The Ghurids relied on "the destructive method of looting". Wantonly razing towns and cities and assassinating populations was a form of punishment against those who opposed them that terrified many other local kingdoms into submission (Dawson, 2014).

After a number of failed military expeditions, these policies were forced to conclude treaties with the Ghurids; some ultimately lost territory. The Ghurids were unable to establish direct administrative control over their northern land. Given their smaller military capabilities and the remoteness of the region from the Ghurids' stronghold, these local kingdoms attempted to remain independent. As a result, the Ghurids began employing strategies to overcome resistance (Husseini, 2021). On the coercive side, they built fortresses to dominate central locations, extract tribute from surrounding towns, and maintain and intimidate restive local rajas. They granted estates in fief to their principal supporters, including the rajas who assisted them during the conquest of the land. Finally, the Ghurids used marriage alliances as a diplomatic strategy; Muhammad married off his brother to the daughter of the ruler of a powerful local kingdom, and many of his *Mamluk* generals married into high-ranking families (Auer, 2014).

The Ghurids' newly acquired lands were divided among the generals, who established a network of regional principalities throughout the north. Among them, Qutbuddin Aibak emerged as the most powerful and ambitious. His rise to power was aided by the patronage of the Ghurid ruler. After Ghayasuddin's death, Aibak carved out an independent domain centered on Delhi. In this way, the Mamluk governors sanctioned by the Ghurid sovereigns were able to establish the Sultan, an elite Muslim successor (Manohar, 2017).

Consolidation and Expansion under the Khalji Dynasty

Emerging as one of the most notable royal families following the fall of the Western branch of Saljuks, the Khalji dynasty had to struggle to consolidate their highly disputed authority during the initial years. Considerable credit goes to Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji, also known by the name Alauddin Khalji who, in particular, was useful in securing power for himself and his family. Due to his assumption of power through treachery, he sought to remove a source of competition within the could-be-political elite (Boyd, 2018). His numerous military campaigns also played a critical role in extending the boundaries of the Sultanate. Hence, for various reasons, he is highly notable in the annals of the Delhi Sultanate.

In the realm of sheer conquest, it was the Khaljis' campaigns and early Tughlaqs' campaigns that allowed Sultanate rule to stretch to its furthest geographic points. The Khaljis' impressive show of power was what first allowed Sultanate expansion as far south as the Vindhyas. Although no ruler would ever again hold all of this territory at one time, the Khaljis nonetheless had bequeathed a vast, and difficult-to-govern empire to their successors (Das, 2018). It was the bounds of roughly this empire that served as a template for the Sultanate map from then onwards. It was not until the exploits of the second Tughlaq, Firoz Shah, that the Sultanate armies ventured across the Vindhyas again (Sloat, 2017). This made Sultanate rule fundamental in the identification of Hindu territories as locations wholly separate from and "other" than Muslim ones. The Khalji and early Tughlaq frontiers combined with claims of authority over the Deccan and Deep South served to firmly establish the Sultanate's identity and authority in a physical as well as more abstract political sense.

The governance of such an expansionist regime was a difficult but not unmanageable task. The Delhi Sultanate's administrative complexity remains an area ripe for further study. Nonetheless, under the Khaljis' there did exist an impressively elaborate series of mechanisms for maintaining order (Guptha et al.2018). Perhaps the most striking of these are the numerous innovations credited to Alauddin. The market law and his regulation of grain prices are only two examples of the many.

Together, however, these have the effect of a sweeping overhaul of market management and intermediation in order to ensure the maximum possible benefit for the state. At the same time, a deliberate weakening of the nobility is also made clear in the chronicler's portrayal of these same policies and events (Sofi, 2017). That social change in this era was anything but limited to the nobility is exemplified by Alauddin's economic policies: dramatic interventions in the realm of production and consumption that had far-reaching implications for hundreds of thousands of his subjects.

Alauddin Khalji and His Administrative Reforms

During the thirteenth century, the esteemed Sultanate of Delhi found itself under the rule of five notable kings hailing from three distinct dynasties. Among these rulers, only AlauddinKhalji distinguished himself by ruling for an impressive span of 20 years; he was the second in terms of duration and indeed the most formidable of all five kings. (Datta, n.d.) His reign commenced against a tumultuous backdrop marked by numerous rebellions, with his authority being vehemently rejected in several regions, particularly the areas corresponding to modern-day Rajasthan. At that particular juncture, upon the death of the influential Balban in 1286, the Delhi Sultanate teetered on the brink of disarray and anarchy. However, the prevailing situation underwent a transformation with several Indian governors, especially in the eastern and southern regions, declaring their independence. In response to these burgeoning demands for autonomy, successive measures were implemented to quell any aspirations for freedom (Shihadeh, 2017). A pivotal policy decision ensued, aimed at the annexation of these rebellious independent states, which consequently led to prolonged conflicts with Rajput leaders, notably with Rana Hammir of Mewar, recognized as the staunchest opponent of Khalji's regime.

Simultaneously, Alauddin Khalji adeptly introduced a myriad of administrative reforms that fortified the empire, establishing a stronghold that ensured his successors were seldom confronted with similar rebellious factions during their respective initial periods. His political foresight was exemplified by the strategic appointment of competent and trustworthy army chiefs, the deployment of high-born Rajputs emerging from the Mewati lineage to man the crucial north-west frontiers under the command of Jallani, and the imposition of direct control over newly annexed territories (Mugloo, 2014). Such policies found effective implementation in succeeding reigns under Bahalul Lodi and Shershah Suri. Khalji excelled in ensuring the loyalty of his essential generals by employing diverse methods, which resulted in the most significant functions being placed in their capable hands. To mitigate the potential for other disturbances, measures to augment the salaries of soldiers were adopted, and recruitment drives for young and able-bodied individuals were systematically organized for military service (Osmani, n.d.). Although discerning the significance of military supplies, he pioneered the Timuri policy specifically aimed at military personnel. Recognizing the need for resources for these initiatives as well as for broader administrative functions, a series of financial and strategic measures were either enacted by Khalji or carried forth by his successors, all of which proved highly effective in the long term.

Once Khalji successfully established a formidable army, he shifted his focus to addressing the myriad of administrative requirements expected of a capable commander and sovereign ruler. His strategies concerning administration were characterized by foresight and thorough planning, remarkably showcasing a balance of realism while simultaneously bordering on revolutionary practices for that era (Rahman, 2017). Unlike his predecessors, who were relatively complacent relying solely on the peaceful collection of revenues sourced from various means, Khalji chose a more aggressive approach to governance. For instance, Balban believed that safeguarding trade was a sufficient measure for the assurance of revenue supply. Conversely, Khalji transcended these limitations by not only safeguarding the revenue supply but also taking proactive steps to inhibit drastic spikes in the prices of essential commodities through a variety of measures (Lee, 2020).

In his efforts, Khalji instituted a novel role of chief market supervisor, delegating adequate power to stabilize prices while forming attempts to regulate the market dynamics effectively. After creating necessary conditions and frameworks, merchants were systematically issued permits enabling them to procure raw materials or finished products. In instances where the raw materials posed a threat of consumption by others, preemptive destruction was authorized to manage excessive demand and curtail rising prices. The government undertook the establishment of stores and warehouses across various localities, ensuring that essential items were supplied at consistent and fair prices (Mukherjee, 2014). The Emperor routinely issued directives on the Fixity of Price, intended to maintain order and stability in commerce. Recognizing that these procedures might infringe upon various rights, Khalji strived for both direct and indirect mechanisms to temper such violations. The unrestricted monetary expansion caused predominantly by war expenditures on the northern front was meticulously controlled by minting a significant quantity of *tankas* with heightened weight, executed with diligence to prevent tampering by functionaries. At the same time, measures were also instituted to reclaim tankas from bandits, thereby ensuring their circulation could be effectively regulated (Kyo, 2022).

With respect to relationships with the Dakhini Kingdoms, an offensive plan was conceived against the Dakhini Omar Khilji; however, a delay occurred as he successfully coaxed the governor into relinquishing the pivotal fort of Devagiri. On a related note, Devagiri underwent a series of tumultuous transfers of power, changing hands approximately half a dozen times within a notably brief time frame (Devagiri et al., 2020). Authentic information regarding the administrative advancements at the subordinate levels of the Delhi Sultanate remains scarce. Nevertheless, it is evident that rebellious activities were suppressed without significant violence, and the administrative framework gradually expanded, reflecting the firm grip of the Delhi Sultanate across the entire territory. Generally, these operations were successfully executed by the *mamalikdar* appointed at the local level by the overarching central authority alongside others responding to conjuncture demands (Sultan, 2018).

The center of the empire actively sought to recover dues that were not customarily collected within feudal contexts. A critical aspect of this endeavor involved expeditions undertaken by the *Qazis* aimed at subjugating local powers such as Mewati leaders, while simultaneously ensuring the protection and safeguarding of their own lives through the appointment of dedicated personal guards (Han et al., 2020). These multifaceted efforts, directed towards stabilization, enabled the Delhi Sultanate to withstand various challenges arising from both internal and external fronts. For a significant period, it successfully engaged in top-level financial maneuvers, thereby achieving relative stability. The resultant administrative reforms facilitated the emergence of a full-time class dedicated primarily to emphasizing stability, an essential ingredient for the growth and flourishing of trade as well as burgeoning industries (Hayat, 2018). Through systematic extortions, the Sultans amassed considerable wealth while mercantile traders profited immensely from the lucrative sales of goods such as cloth, *shankh* (seashells), camphor, and the highly sought-after coral all perceived to possess miraculous attributes, as well as various amulets. These activities yielded substantial economic benefits and contributed to the vibrant tapestry of the era's commerce.

The Tughlaq Dynasty and its Challenges

The Tughlaq Dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate, founded by Ghayasuddin Tughlaq, began its reign over India in 1320 AD. The dynasty is widely remembered by history for a number of reasons. The rule of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, the most notable member of the family, is indeed infamous. There were several Kings in the family who ruled briefly, some for little more than a year, but none made any significant or noteworthy changes to the political structure of the time (Ahmad, n.d.). Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, the second Khilji ruler, sat on the throne of Delhi in 1321 AD at the age of twenty. He ruled over the Sultanate at a time when the Empire's strength had peaked, but internal and external political chaos was rampant. Khurasan, Sindh and Multan were regularly under attack. The

political milieu in which Tughlaq's reign began was tough, but as far as he was concerned, fulfilling the ambition of his forefathers was an easy task (Taimoor, 2021).

Muhammad always claimed that his intention behind expanding the Empire along the southern coastline was not for wealth or territorial gain but to contain the frequent attacks that were often launched from that coast. Most of his plans for administrative restructuring were centered on the need to cut down the time spent on the processes. Such a procedural tool was intended to boost the efficiency of the central government and greatly reduce time lags, and indeed, anticipate the time lags that hampered performance. Many of his plans were visionary and well ahead of their respective eras (Islahi, 2011). However, one must also acknowledge that the processes so envisioned were not realistic, feasible, or sometimes even practicable. In terms of administration, the Tughlaqs faced challenges that were unprecedented in history. Revolts, both foreign and domestic, the idea of currency experimentation several times, an unstable economic condition, and a decline in military performance all had drastic negative impacts on the role of the administration. At the same time, however, one must not overlook that they were also the first to introduce several significant policy and administration innovations (Garfias & Sellars, 2017). Thus the problem was neither black nor white; it was both. This chapter delves into this mix of advancement and contradiction. Ultimately, such complexities helped set the stage for incorporating the government capabilities of others into Tughlaq's own administration and governance.

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq: Reforms and Failures

The Delhi Sultanate was founded as a new purposeful Islamic political entity in the northern Gangetic plains of India at the end of the 12th century C.E. The Sultans as military commanders of their standing armies had to operate in alien non-Islamic social and cultural environment. The Sultanate had formed as a separate and distinct identity but it remained an alien ruling group within a predominantly Hindu society. (Kalsotra, n.d.) The rulers depended for their sustenance and support on a small number of old Hindu landed families and their village-based power structure. There was a tension between the aspirations and pretensions of the rulers and the reality of politics on the ground. It was within the frame of these contradictions that the rise and fall of the Delhi Sultanate is to be analyzed (Aggarwal & Singh, 2017).

After the passing of Iltutmish, there was an interregnum of three months and the *Chihalgan* (the forty notables) managed to put on the throne a little boy, Raziya (1236-40). She was overthrown and put to death by a group of Turkish nobles led by her half-brother and confined-paranoiac Muizuddin Bahram on October 14, 1240. This was the sign of things to come. Having disposed of four Sultans within a year, the nobles offered the Sultanate to Ghiyasuddin Balban (1266-87). He was the first Sultan in India to have gone through a full circuit of military experience. With this objective, he annexed Bengal, Gwalior, Lahore in 1296, and Rai Bareli before his death in 1296 (Azim Islahi, 2006). Balban warded off internal revolts but his campaigns involved a huge expenditure. The provinces acquired in annexation, damaging aggression, declined to yield any revenue because of guerrilla resistance. On the other side, huge manpower and other resources were declining. Burdened with many problems, the Delhi Sultanate was soon after Balban's death.

The Lodi Dynasty and the Arrival of Babur

The last ruling dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate was the Lodi Dynasty (1451–1526), founded by Afghan noble, Bahlul Lodi who made himself master after the Sayyid Dynasty had crumbled. Unlike the Turkic and Persian rulers before them, the Lodis were Pashtun (Afghan) and thus unlike the previous rulers of the Sultanate. Lodi, Bahlul concentrated on strengthening his military, expanding his territory, and consolidating power. In this period, northern India was brought under his control and he conquered Jaunpur, Gwalior, and Bihar. Bahlul remained stable through alliances with local chieftains and a decentralized governance system that left the region's rulers with some autonomy. The period of his rule laid the foundation for the

Lodi Dynasty, although the inherent weakness of the decentralized administration eventually caused its downfall. After the death of Bahlul in 1489, his son Sikandar Lodi became the king to centralize powers and strengthen the empire even more.

Sikandar Lodi (1489–1517) is the most famous Lodi ruler whose name has been associated with efficient and economical administration, and reform in economic matters, including patronage of Persian culture and literature. He shifted the capital from Delhi to Agra and turned it into a prominent city. During his reign, the Sultanate was made more economically stable by efforts to improve agriculture, standardize revenue collection, and promote trade networks. Sikandar's strict policies on non-Muslims, including the temple demolitions, alienated the Hindu population and the Rajput kingdoms. While his administrative successes were impressive, he was not able to unify the disparate communities and power centers and this resulted in regional unrest. His son Ibrahim Lodi ruled on his death in 1517, but he was immediately followed by internal strife. Ibrahim was unlike his father in that he could not keep control of his nobility as his nobles, Afghan nobles and Rajput leaders rebelled against him. Many regional governors were displeased with his autocratic rule, and the Sultanate's structure was weakened, making it susceptible to external threats.

The Lodi Dynasty and the Delhi Sultanate came to an end when Babur arrived. Ibrahim Lodi's oppressive rule also prompted the formation of alliances against him, partly because of his growing discontent among Afghan nobles. Babur, a descendant of Timur (Tamerlane) and Genghis Khan, was invited by Lodi nobles who were dissatisfied to enter India. The historic First Battle of Panipat between Babur's artillery and advanced warfare-equipped army and Ibrahim Lodi's much bigger force took place in 1526. It was a critical turning point in Indian history not only because it ended the rule of the Lodi Dynasty but for the fact it would lead to the rise of the Mughal Empire that would rule India for the next three centuries. On the battlefield, Ibrahim Lodi was killed and the Delhi Sultanate ceased to exist with his death. The reason for the Lodis' fall was mainly due to internal dissensions, their failure to innovate militarily, and above all Babur's strategy that marked the start of a new era of centralized and imperial rule under the Mughals.

Ibrahim Lodi and the Battle of Panipat

Ibrahim Lodi ascended to the throne of the Delhi Sultanate in the year 1517, following the death of his father, Sikander Lodi, who had previously held the position with a measure of authority and stability. Throughout the seven-year duration of his reign, Ibrahim undertook significant and strenuous efforts aimed at consolidating his power and strengthening his control over his domain (Roy, 2020). However, his rule was by no means an easy or straightforward undertaking; the region of Rajputana remained unsubdued and resistant, his Afghan nobles exhibited disloyalty and unreliability, and the northwest frontier was under constant threat from outside forces. When Babur, a formidable contender, successfully crossed the Indus River, Ibrahim's response was to undertake an invasion of Punjab, during which he managed to capture the important city of Lahore.

Nevertheless, at the pivotal Battle of Panipat, his capacity to lead as a military commander proved to be insufficient and lacking (Sinaga et al., 2021). The Sultanate of Delhi, during this period, was at best characterized as a loose conglomeration of competing kingdoms, held tenuously together by the personal power and influence of the ruling Sultan of Delhi. Ultimately, the outcome of the Battle of Panipat resulted in the irrevocable downfall of the House of Lodi, leading to a fragmentation of the entire sultanate, which inadvertently assisted English efforts toward conquest and increased their influence in the region. (Angelis Gianmarco, 2019)

Panipat was destined to emerge as a pivotal battlefield, a place of immense importance that would ultimately witness not only the dramatic decline of the Sultanate but would also serve as a defining moment marking the establishment of Mughal rule throughout the vast and diverse landscape of India. (Vashishta, n.d.) In this extraordinary confrontation, which would be

immortalized in the annals of history, every conceivable aspect of warfare, from strategy to troop morale, seemed to turn unfavorably against the formidable Sultan's army. However, the emotions of panic and despair were sentiments that simply did not align with the temperament of the determined Afghan Sultan.

From the very first glimmer of dawn, as the sun gradually began its ascent over the distant horizon, illuminating the landscape with its warm glow, until the slowly vanishing hours of the day grew dim, he valiantly led countless cavalry charges again and again, embodying remarkable resilience and an indomitable spirit. It was noteworthy and often highlighted in chronicles of the battle, that the impressive contingent of 50,000 warriors under the Afghan Sultan fought with ferocity, strength, and valor that could easily have convinced any observer they were an army twice their actual size as if they were indeed a formidable force of 200,000 strong marching resolutely into the fray (Singh, 2014).

Babur's advantage in this fierce and brutal engagement did not rest solely on the sheer numerical strength of his forces, which, though significant, was not the only factor in play. Rather, it was the incredible unison with which his troops acted, exhibiting a harmonious coordination that profoundly testified to the exceptional skills and superior generalship that Babur possessed throughout the engagement (Babar et al.). Amid the heat and throes of battle, he proved to be fleeter of foot than his adversaries, demonstrating tactical acumen and remarkable quickness. Even though he found himself surrounded on three separate occasions during the fierce fighting, he consistently managed, through sheer will and tactical brilliance, to return to his designated station within the protective trenches he had meticulously established around his encampment. Each time, his strategic insight allowed him to regroup and re-strategize, ensuring his position remained defensible against the overwhelming odds (Krepinevich, 2014).

Even in the face of a numerically superior enemy, the Sultan's resources were not sufficiently ample to sustain heavy losses without incurring significant and adverse consequences that could spell disaster for his entire campaign. For every soldier standing resolutely in the well-formed ranks of the Afghan army, there were often far more horses, which, from a distance, could tirelessly wear down the opposing forces over a considerable period of time, contributing to the relentless pressure applied. Yet, Amirzadah's tendency to linger in hesitation became a significant folly, one that ultimately proved contagious among the troops and diminished their fighting spirit (Ratnasari et al., 2018). There were some among them who, in these various sorties and engagements, might hesitate and falter instead of rallying determinedly after their commanding chiefs, which ultimately weakened their collective response and diminished their resolve in the face of the ongoing combat and relentless struggle that unfolded with an intensity around them. This wavering could easily be perceived as a weakness, one that the Mughal forces sought to exploit, leading to crucial turning points in the battle that would alter the course of history (Tyler, 2021).

Factors Contributing to the Decline of the Delhi Sultanate

The fall of the Delhi Sultanate is complex to identify due to a variety of reasons. There is a tragedy and a paradox that a regime that survived for more than two hundred years became nothing after it. At first, it had been established based on different religions and cultures and that was also its strength. Even if the Sultanates enriched the Indian wealth by the endless coming of foreign and Muslim-*Kafri* (*kafri*: own religion as well as infidel/dharma) who spent a lot in their stay, the sources of their financial base were foreign. Besides, the effort to maintain religious harmonization was also a source of delays and weakness for them. These two negating characteristics, usually caused troubles but complemented each other until a certain scale (Rahman et al., 2016).

However, when the negative factor overcomes the positive one, it quickly destroys. These negative factors are varied and interrelated. They can be seen in detail from multiple internal categories. The internal traits are also intricate and dovetail with each other. The administrative inefficiency and corruption disease started when the sultanates

succeeded in an independent and closed environment, and then collapsed The following foreign interest has been analyzed as the leading causes of collapse (Syros, 2021). However, those points are to be seen bit-by-bit, part-by-part in integrally complementary and supplementary. This study attempted to confirm the historical factuality of the studies above with newly reading several main historical and statistical sources *(Kurani et al., 2021)*.

While Al-Azhar Tafsir has thoroughly explored and meticulously broken down the numerous threats posed by the term "Ajalkum" through multiple literal interpretations as well as various metaphorical reductions, Al-Misbah Qur'anic interpretation has focused its dedicated attention and narrowed its extensive analysis solely to the literal perspective of the term (Kaprawi et al.2018). A detailed and illuminating investigation has been conducted towards understanding the practical implementation and conceptual depth of the "ajal" concept as mentioned in Al-Qur'an, particularly in the intricate context of the decline and eventual collapse of Muslim local empires or Sultanates that were historically found in the regions of Bali and Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan. This comprehensive examination sheds light on the significant and complex ties that exist between the theological concept and the historical events that unfolded in these areas, bringing forth a clearer understanding of how these interpretations shaped and were shaped by the socio-political dynamics of the time. (Datta, n.d)

Economic Factors

The Delhi Sultanate, once the largest and most formidable political power in the Indian Subcontinent and the central arsenal of the Islamic polity in South Asia, failed to maintain itself throughout the 14th and early 15th centuries. Several historical narratives have already been constructed around the rise and fall of the Delhi Sultanate, but perhaps no in-depth economic analysis has been conducted. This paper seeks to delve deeper into the narrative that portrays economic factors as pivotal in the decline of the Sultanate. Taking the year 1350 as the turning point where the Delhi Sultanate had begun losing its power and dominance, the next century was a story of fall and fragmentation (Husain, 2014). The last quarter of the 14th century was among the darkest periods of Delhi Sultanate politics with instability, jealousy, and disquiet. Given the narrative of the rise and consolidation policies of the Sultanate, the supposed prolonged political stability and successful economic measures are of particular interest. Policy errors, a deteriorating financial situation, and social difficulties that generated a severe political infrastructure can be seen here (Islahi, 2011). Among all the factors inflicting decay, the following are the elements of concern: (1) Economic instability truly played a partial role in Delhi's gradual paralysis with social unrest, military setbacks and political fragmentation; (2) Economic issues matched as an outcome of the decadence of Sultanates and in part served to trigger her capitulations; and (3) Undeniable interactions between economy and other sectors of the society impelled economic health a medium through which sociopolitical stability needed maintenance. In that broader scope, a financial downturn was a risky hazard to moments of success, as it was able seriously to wane Delhi Sultanate's ethical and diplomatic core.

In the first quarter of the 14th century, Sultan Ghayasuddin Balban attempted to implement a series of measures aimed at stabilizing the country and restoring the waning authority of the crown, which had suffered significant disintegration following the tenure of his predecessors. While others before him failed in their endeavors—ineffectively and sometimes with fatal consequences—it is conceivable that his perceived hostility towards the prevailing socio-religious ethos exacerbated the situation. Over the subsequent three decades, the central government, supported by its army and bureaucratic apparatus, alongside orthodox *Ulema's* and *Mashaikh*, as well as recruited Christian mercenaries, intensified a widely criticized regime of taxation administration. This approach sparked significant grievances among the general populace, igniting uprisings that were not only massive but also notably widespread and concerning.

A critical element contributing to this ongoing cycle of dissatisfaction was severe economic mismanagement. While the treasury was alleged to overflow with funds, a staggering number of pretenders continued to emerge, creating a chaotic political environment. The oppressive taxation policies, coupled with associated issues such as the alarming depletion of resources and expansive extortion practices were particularly burdensome. The introduction of tightly controlled, and at times, extremely unpopular taxes only worsened as the decades unfolded. Landlessness became a rampant issue; moreover, the prohibition of wastelands rendered entire districts unproductive, leading to a further escalation of fiscal pressures that forged a vicious cycle of deprivation and resentment among the populace (Geva, 2017).

Despite the Sultan's efforts to procure just and compassionate treatment for his neighbors like granting hikes in the watercourses of saturated districts and providing specific groups with cooking rights all of these protective measures ultimately failed to alleviate the endangerment faced by the peasantry. His inability to improve matters merely laid the groundwork for an even bleaker period within Delhi's rural economy (Naucke, 2018). Furthermore, the Sultan's insatiable craving for bullion and the extensive acquisition of oriental luxuries compounded the chronic economic crisis during a time when available currency supplies were rapidly depleting.

The primary sector fell into a state of stagnation, with reports suggesting that much of the land lay untended, contributing to the decline of agricultural productivity. Additionally, the pricing developments in the agro-diet, shaped by the inexorable conjuncture of the century, failed to reflect the inflationary trends observed across the remaining parts of the Middle East. Attempts to impose undue levies on composite goods proved counterproductive, and later attempts at imitation of the main currency yielded largely disappointing outcomes, leaving little to be gained from fixed duties during a period when most staples engaged in foreign trade suffered severe depreciation (Kumar & Abraham, 2021).

India's legendary wealth, characterized by an abundance of plundered silver, gold, and gemstones, had become a proverbial drain on Islamic mints, diminishing their economic vitality. Muslim sources continuously refer to Christians as the seventh enemy, a sentiment that has been interpreted as an additional pretext to disguise the chronically weak counterfeiting issues and the resultant epidemic circulation of European cash (Seth, 2018). All these factors played a significant role in complicating the economic landscape of the time, leading to unrest and dissatisfaction among the populace (Makai, 2018).

Administrative Weaknesses

The Delhi Sultanate faced a myriad of challenges throughout its intricate and multifaceted journey during both the impressive rise and the eventual decline period. The formidable resilience of the Sultanate can be attributed primarily to its highly efficient and effective administrative units, which played an indispensable and crucial role in maintaining governance and order across the region. This well-structured administrative system enabled the Sultanate to effectively rule over an expansive territory that was home to a diverse, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious population, adding layers of complexity to its governance. (Chauhan, 2014). However, this fascinating era was notably marked by various persistent problems and critical issues that arose within the intricate administrative units and mechanisms, significantly complicating the governance process and adversely impacting the overall stability of the Sultanate over time.

While discussing the administrative weaknesses of the Delhi Sultanate, the focus of the discussion will be from bad governance to the Sultanate's fall. At the individual level, a king is a person like any other person. So like the other persons, the people in power were found to be corrupt, inefficient, and unable to rule people efficiently. With the passage of time, the Sultan and his ways of administration had been corrupted. There are many kinds of corruption flourished in the different levels of administrative units, including the Sultan. The whole administrative system and its

function became corrupt and failed to provide essential services to the inhabitants. Moreover, due to corruption, many officials did not care about the pleas and complaints of the people. Thus, the people lost confidence in the administration (Chakraborty, 2014).

There were many systematic failures such as the centralization of the government, the supremacy of the Persian-speaking noble, the centralized military system, etc. With the growing corruption, the whole system of administration was affected and malfunctioned. Because of the above problems, Delhi, the capital city, was affected. As a result, the other part of the Sultanate was bereft of good governance which resulted in visiting ruination to the inhabitants. Thus, the ways of the Sultan's administration were not adapted if not they would not be cracked. Along with the Sultan, the Sultanate was governed by the nobles too (Mtuwa & Chiweza, 2014). They were also corrupted and responsible for the Sultanate's fall. They engaged in in-fighting among themselves and local rulers and were on the verge of rebellion. The in-fighting wasted their money and man which was urgently required for better administration. Along with this, it also made the Sultan weak both administratively and militarily. All the above-mentioned causes affected the military preparation of the Sultanate. For the above reasons, the Sultanate lost the confidence of the people (Dhital et al., 2014). On the other hand, it sowed the seed of anarchy in the Sultanate which resulted in visiting devastation to the internal security.

Conclusion

By its very nature, historiography tends to engage in the organizing of historical facts, putting them into various boxes, and attempting to categorize and make sense of the incredibly intricate, complex past filled with myriad events and influences. However, the box typically marked “event” is often ill-suited, inadequate, and profoundly insufficient to encompass the full breadth and depth of history that unfolds across the ages, teeming with influences and moments that intertwine in ways that are often beyond simple categorization. Founded on an intricate distillation of vast quantities of raw and unrefined historical information, any summary or attempt to encapsulate an event is inevitably a somewhat thin layer of condensed shadows cast by the intricate, multi-dimensional reality with which it diligently engages. This tendency to condense often distorts, traduces, or completely misrepresents the often tremendous complexity of various events, myriad motivations, social dynamics, and the external pressures that continually shape and mold the ever-evolving past itself.

Because of the broad, sweeping strokes inherent in synthesis, where numerous influences and details are simplified for the sake of understanding, the complexities and nuanced understandings are almost always “dumbed down” to achieve easy comprehension and conceptualization by a reader, who may not fully grasp or appreciate the underlying nuances and subtle intricacies involved in the historical narrative that is being examined. A significant phenomenon, or momentous historical event, cannot help but lose many of its unique characteristics, salient features, and rich details when it is slotted into a generalized, overly broad category that fails to account for the distinct particulars, the rich context, and the intrinsic intricacies that make it what it is, profoundly differing from other phenomena.

Furthermore, the nature of a summary is usually linear in its presentation; yet events in history do not neatly follow linear patterns or trajectories; they often spiral, overlap, and influence one another in multifaceted, intricate ways that collectively speak to a deeper understanding of historical causation, coinciding developments, and interconnectedness, thus resisting simplistic narratives. Moreover, many facts and interpretations within the field of history are frequently disputed among historians and scholars, leading to the existence of multiple perspectives that often stand in stark contrast to one another sometimes these perspectives can be mutually exclusive, leading to a rich tapestry of discourse. At times, overtly contradictory viewpoints emerge, presenting challenges to fully comprehend or reconcile the various interpretations, which invites ongoing, enduring debates in the historical field.

The present exercise concerning the rise and fall of a medieval Indian sultanate is a profoundly rich and truly multifaceted topic that is abundant in layers and ripe for deep exploration and rigorous analysis, revealing endless interpretations and discussions. By thoughtfully setting this historical narrative against the monumental scale, vast complexities, and overarching narratives of the Mongol conquest of the Old World, we can observe a highly complex, multilayered, and far-reaching event that presents itself deceptively as a singular occurrence; this juxtaposition starkly highlights the significant limitations of this inherent distorting process that frequently occurs in the practice of historiography, which continuously seeks to encapsulate the nuances, multifaceted nature, and depth of historical events through oversimplification and categorization. Hopefully, this undertaking will help to capture a measure of wonder and awe at the richness and simultaneity of history itself, enabling us to gain some perceptive understanding of history's essential fluidity, which is characterized by its constant change, myriad interpretations, and endless reinterpretation over time as we continue to uncover, explore, and navigate its profound depths and intricate landscapes that define the human experience.

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