

# A Study of the Military Personnel's, Recruitment, Muster and Training of Delhi Sultanate

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Army of the Sultanate consisted with the regular and irregular troops of the Sultans, Wali, Muqti and nobles. The Sultanate army had lost soldiers war-horses and war elephants in constant warfare. Consequently, the Sultans compelled to employ new soldiers, war horses and elephants in their army. They generally held muster once in a year and periodically during the wars in order to maintain discipline in the army. They trained their soldiers though military and hunting expeditions. We shall now discuss in this chapter military personnel or composition, recruitment, muster and training.

The army of Delhi Sultanate can be broadly classified into three categories – troops in the direct employment of the Sultans<sup>1</sup>; The troops maintained by *Wali*, *Muqtis* and small nobles and volunteer troops called *Ghazis*.<sup>2</sup> During the reign of Firoz Tughluq troops were broadly divided into two groups or sections known as *Wajhi* (regular) and *gair wajihi* (irregular). The permanent army under the Lodis called<sup>3</sup> *Khasa-Khails* or *Wajihi*. The Soldiers in permanent service and Sultan's body guards called *jandars*, were largely recruited from slaves.<sup>4</sup> Along with regular soldiers, the army of Sultans also consisted irregular soldiers who were employed for a short at the time of war, particularly volunteers.<sup>5</sup> Able-bodied slaves were often imparted military training before they were sold to some Sultan or noble. Such slaves were skilled in the art of war. Therefore, the Sultans imported slaves from Central Asia, Abbysynia and Rum.<sup>6</sup> They belonged to different races, Turks, Taziks, Afghans, Khaljis and Mongols. Under the Lodis the whole of complexion of the army was changed from 'Turk' to 'Afghans', yet the Turks were also present in the Lodi army.<sup>7</sup> The Hindu soldiers too were freely enrolled in the Sultanate army. Most of the Hindus were employed in the infantry and were called *paiks*. For

example the army of Raziya Begam was composed mainly of mercenaries from the Khokhars and the Jat tribes of Koh-I-Jud region (salt range in the north-west of Punjab) when she marched to recapture the throne.<sup>8</sup> Likewise when Alauddin Khalji, then the *Muqti* of Kara and Manikpur, marched against Devagiri in 1295, there were 2000 *paiks* in his infantry corps.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Muhammad bin Tughluq had large number of the Hindus in his army.<sup>10</sup> The Hindu *Paiks* or *piyada* were also enrolled in considerable number in the infantry of Lodi Sultans.<sup>11</sup> The soldiers of central army along with the sultan's *Jandars* were recruited and assigned salary by *Ariz-i-Mamalik*.<sup>12</sup>

Alauddin and Muhammad bin Tughluq had in their service 50000 and 20000 Turkish slaves respectively.<sup>13</sup> Similarly Firoz Tughluq had 40000 slaves, mostly archers in his service.<sup>14</sup> The Lodi Sultans also had good number of slaves in their regular armies called *Khasa-i-khail*.<sup>15</sup> Besides the *hasm-i-qalab* troops, the Sultans also had troops posted under the *muqtas* in various *iqtas* of the stltanate. The bulk of Sultanate army was composed of these troops and summoned by the Sultans on the eve of battles. Malik Bakbak, *Iqtadar* of Badaun under Balban had a force of 4000 horsemen.<sup>16</sup> In 1227, Iltutmish summoned the forces from the *iqta* of Tabarhinda (Bhatinda) during the Uchh campaign.<sup>17</sup>

And though we have no information about the exact number of the troops of the Ghazi Malik. Muqti of Lahore and Dipalpur under Alauddin. He had considerable number of troops in his command.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M.T.N., P. 634; B.T.F.S., PP. 101-6.

<sup>2</sup> A.B.M. Habibullah, Foundation, P. 263.

<sup>3</sup> I.H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, PP. 110.

<sup>4</sup> A.T.F.S., P. 135, I.H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, P. 111-112.

<sup>5</sup> B.N. Puri, History of Indian Administration, P. 98. A.B.M.

Habibdulla, PP. 263-66. Peter Jackson, Sultanate, P. 239.

<sup>6</sup> H.K. Naqvi, Urban Dynamism, P. 162, A.T.F.S., P. 159. For more details about Sultanate slave import see Chapter 4, PP. 14.

<sup>7</sup> K.S. Lal, Striking Power, PP. 87-88-108.

<sup>8</sup> M.T.N., P. 647. B.T.F.S., P. 149. I.H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, P. 121.

<sup>9</sup> B.T.F.S., P. 149.

<sup>10</sup> U.M.A, P. 117.

<sup>11</sup> I.H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, P. 121.

<sup>12</sup> Narayan Sarkar, The Art of War, P. 58.

<sup>13</sup> A.T.F.S., p. 159.

<sup>14</sup> A.T.F.S. P. 158.

<sup>15</sup> I.H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, P. 111-2.

<sup>16</sup> B.T.F.S., P. 101.

<sup>17</sup> M.T.N., P. 613;

<sup>18</sup> B.T.F.S., P. 200. F.T.F., P. 208.

The provincial troops maintained by the Muqtis were a part of the Sultan's army, but in a decentralized state like that of the Sultanate, authority over them was necessarily limited. In practice, the provincial force was the Muqti's own;<sup>19</sup> details of its maintenance was his own concern and the central *ariz-i-mamalik* could exercise little interference. The latter's jurisdiction over them commenced only when the specified quota was called up from the province; he was then to hold a review and checkup of their number and equipment.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to central troops (*hasm-i-qalab*) there were the troops of the other muqtis and nobles in their respective regions. Muhammad, Wali of Sind and Multan and Bughra Khan, Wali of Samana, Sunam, Dipalpur and all other subordinate territories had 17 or 18 thousand horsemen under their command.<sup>21</sup>

Third type of soldiers of army of the Sultans consisted of volunteer militia who joined the army at times of battles. They paid no salary but a share 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the plunder under Alauddin and Muhammad bin Tughluq, and 4/5 under other Sultans.<sup>22</sup> According to Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, the volunteer or *ghazi* soldiers were of three types, who participated in wars, glazed horses and other animals and served the ghazis. They participated in the wars against 'infidels' in the name of Islam.<sup>23</sup>

It is noteworthy that Fakhr-i-Mudabbir describes a military review early in the Iltutmish's reign and mentions a body of infantry troops which had voluntarily joined the Sultanate troops.

In 1259, when Hulaku's envoys were received in Delhi, the royal army consisted a large number of volunteers who joined the royal army with their own horses and equipments.<sup>24</sup>

According to Firishtah, "Alauddin Khalji In the battle of Siri in 1298, employed, 12,000 volunteers in his army who commanded by Nushrat Khan".<sup>25</sup> Afif refers to volunteer soldiers at the time of Firoz Tughluq's second expedition to Lakhnauti (Bengal) in 1365, when a large number of mercenaries gathered at Delhi and joined the army as volunteers.<sup>26</sup> The main purpose of these troops was to obtain a share from the war booty, as such they used to fight with full energy in the battles.

The organization of army by the nobles or commanders was made on a decimal basis. But Sultanate literature contains meager information about the gradations in

ascending order were *khass-i-khail*, *sipahsalar*, *amir*, *malik* and *khan*. It is notable the title of *sipahsalar* could devote only a centurion with a hundred troops under his command, it connoted the commander-in-chief and was used by Qutbuddin Aibak.<sup>27</sup> Under Kaiqubad (1287-90) the nature of decimal system becomes more clear. Bughra Khan, wali of Bengal, in his last advice to his son, Kaiqubad, describes the military grades. A *khass-i-khel* had ten under him; a *sipahsalar* directed ten *sar khails*; an *amir* commanded the *sipahsalar*s; a *malik* had authority over ten amirs and a *khan*'s forces contained at least those of ten *maliks*.<sup>28</sup>

Although Bughra Khan in his advice to Kaiqubad mentions *amir-i-hazarah* and *amir-i-sada* but in real sense these institutions introduced in India by the Mongol invaders of Central Asia in 1292 A.D. during the reign of Jalauddin Khalji. These institutions later played a prominent part in the military organization of Muhammad bin Tughluq.<sup>29</sup> Dirk H.A. Kolf alludes, "during the reign of the Tughluqs in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Sanidi, an African, and a bacheliya chief one *hazari*, were appointed to be joint Muqtis at chunar".<sup>30</sup>

But Shihabuddin Umri and Al-Qalqashandi, mention only four grades of nobles, the *khan* commands ten thousand *sawars*, *malik* one thousand *sawars*, *amir* one hundred *sawars*, and the *isfahla* less than hundred *sawars*.<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that only *khans*, *maliks* and *amirs* were included in the cadre of nobility because officers in lower rank like *Sipahasalar*s and *sarkhails* did not have the privilege of approaching the Sultan.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, the Lodi nobles had to maintain contingents according to their rank and *iqtas* or cash allowances assigned by the Sultans for the maintenance of their families and contingents.<sup>33</sup> The three *khan* nobles of Bahlol held the ranks of 12000, 12000 and 15000 *sawars*.<sup>34</sup> The prominent *Khan* nobles of Sikandar had the high ranks of 12,000, 15,000, 20,000, 45,000, 30,000, 60,000, 1500 and 50 80 wards. The two *Khan* nobles of Ibrahim Lodi held the ranks of 12,000 and 6000 *sawars*.<sup>35</sup>

But the ranks held by the *maliks* and *amir* are not found in any Lodi source of information. The only information regarding one rank of *malik* is that Daud

<sup>19</sup> I.H. Siddiqui, Perso-Arabic, P. 185.

<sup>20</sup> A.B.M. Habibullah, Foundation, P. 264.

<sup>21</sup> B.T.F.S., PP. 110-11-12.

<sup>22</sup> K.K.F., PP. 190-218-244. B.T.F.S., PP. 200-3-4;.

I.H. Quraishi, The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, Delhi, 1971, P. 99.

<sup>23</sup> F.A.H., P. 266.

<sup>24</sup> A.B.H. Habibulla, Foundation, pp. 265-6.

<sup>25</sup> F.T.F., P. 186.

<sup>26</sup> A.T.F.S. P. 100.

<sup>27</sup> B.N. Puria, Indian Administration, P. 97.

<sup>28</sup> I.H. Quraishi, Administration, P. 153.

<sup>29</sup> Satish Chandra, Historiography, P. 83. B.T.F.S., PP. 147-18-201.

<sup>30</sup> Dirk, H.A., Kolf, Naukar, Rajputand Sepoy (The Ethno History of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850, New York, 1990, P. 117).

<sup>31</sup> U.M.A., PP. 118. Al-Qalqashandi, Subh-ul-asha, Eng.tr., Muhammad Zaki, Arab Accounts of India (during the fourteenth century), Delhi, 1981, P. 100.

<sup>32</sup> K.S.Lal, Khaljis, P. 171.

<sup>33</sup> I.H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, P. 122.

<sup>34</sup> Medieval India, ed., Vol.4, Aligarh, 1977, P. 46.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, PP., 54-56-7-8-9-60-61.

Lodi was promoted to his high rank by Sultan Sikandar in 1505 A.D.<sup>36</sup> It appears from this discussion that the bulk of Sultans army was recruited and maintained by these nobles of different ranks. But one should also kept in mind the words of K.S. Lal who opined that the number of contingents of the nobles did not indicate the exact numerical strength of the contingents but only a gradation.<sup>37</sup>

Like the soldiers, the nobles were trained in military organization and such a training was mainly an individual enterprise. A noble learnt about military organization from the early ruler's military organization which imparted and instructed from time to time by the Sultans to him. Besides, some Sultanate works on military trained the nobles for military organization.

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<sup>36</sup> I. H. Siddiqui, Some Aspects, P. 123.  
<sup>37</sup> K.S. Lal, Khaljis, P. 171.

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