

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF
THE AFGHAN PERIOD (1451-1557) IN NORTHERN INDIA:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ITS LOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL
STATUS

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE ^{M. PHIL.}~~PH.D.~~ DEGREE

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THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE AFGHAN PERIOD (1451-1557) IN NORTHERN INDIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ITS LOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL STATUS

by ALEXANDER MILO

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to formalize and to analyze critically the historiography of the "Afghan period" in northern India. We have attempted to examine whether interpretative frameworks offered by historians since the 16th century can be corroborated by the historical remains extant.

We have differentiated between two sets of historiographical assumptions put forward by two distinct groups of historians - the "medieval" and the "modern".

Medieval historians - who composed their works in the 16th and 17th centuries - interpreted the Afghan period by reference to a network of mutual obligations among different sections of the society, which interrelationships were regulated in harmony with traditional Muslim precepts of government. An additional element determined the course of events, namely God's direct intervention within the field of history.

We have found the explanatory principles of medieval historians to be logically self-contradictory, and empirically irrelevant ^{for}, the understanding of the political culture of our period.

Modern historians - who have been publishing their works in and since the 19th century - believe that the political dynamics of the Afghan period could be perceived within a framework of an intermittent struggle between exponents of two political programmes; tribally-oriented individuals, who struggled against supporters of a plan to erect a secular state governed by an impartial centralized bureaucracy headed by an autocrat.

It seems to us that modern historians' interpretative scheme cannot be corroborated by the extant historical evidence; it also fails to explain the political instability of the Afghan period.

Our historians appear to have been more interested in their own ideas about the period, than in the understanding of its political features.

Owing to the peculiar nature of the historical evidence surviving from the Afghan period, the latter's political system and its political dynamics remain obscure.

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ABBREVIATIONS*

- A - 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, The Tarikh-i Sher Shahi, 1964.
- Ain - Abul Fazl, The 'Ain-i Akbari, 1877.
- AN - Abul Fazl, Akbar-Nama, 1878.
- B - Bada'uni Muntakhab al Tawarikh, 1828.
- BN - Babur's Memoirs translated by A.S. Beveridge 1921.
- EI^I - The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1927-1938.
- EI² - The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, 1960-
- F - Firishta, Tarikh-i Firishta 1864.
- IESS - International Encyclopedia of ^{the} Social Sciences, 1968.
- K - Kabir, Afsanah-i Shahan
- N - Ni'matullah, Tarikh-i Khan Jahani, 1960**
- TD - 'Abdullah, Tarikh-i Da'udi, 1954.
- TA - Nizam al-din Tabaqat-i Akbari, 1927-31.
- WM - Rizqullah, Waqiat-i Mushtaqi
- Y - Yadgar Ahmad, Tarikh-i Shahi, 1939.

* For full details of the works see the appended Bibliography. Roman numerals following any abbreviation refer to different volumes of the same work. Arabic numerals refer to page numbers.

** All the references are made to the first volume of Ni'matullah's work.

INTRODUCTION: DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS
OF THE BASIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

This thesis attempts to present an analytical and critical exposition of the ways in which historians have interpreted the political culture of the Afghan period since the 16th century.

Afghan period

The term "Afghan period" is used to denote that period in the history of northern and eastern India in which various parts of this area were ruled by members of two Afghan dynasties - the Lodis and the Surs. Both Bahlul, who founded the Lodi dynasty, and Sher Shah, with whom originated the Sur dynasty, claimed to have been descendants of Afghans who migrated from the area of Roh into India.*

The Afghan period may be divided into two distinct phases. The first lasted from 19 April 1451**, when Bahlul Lodi ascended the throne of Delhi¹ till 20 April 1526, when a grandson of Bahlul, the Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, was

* For ^{the} Afghan origins of Sultan Bahlul Lodi see: F.I.173; for the Afghan origins of Sher Shah see N. 261-262.

** Throughout this thesis the hijri dating system has been converted into the Gregorian calendar.

1. Explanation of the reference system: following the system of references utilized by social scientists, we have noted in each reference only the name of the author, the year in which his work appeared and the page number. Full bibliographical details are given in the appended bibliography, which is arranged in alphabetical order by authors. If a specific writer published more than one work, his writings appear under his name in chronological order of their publication. In the event more than one work of the same writer was published in any one year, the items published are differentiated by Latin letters following the year of publication.

killed at the battle of Panipat while fighting the invading forces of the Timurid* Babur.² The second phase of Afghan rule may be dated from 1535, when the founder of the new Afghan dynasty, Sher Shah Sur, ascended the throne,³ and lasted until 1557, when a nephew of Sher Shah, the Sultan Muhammad⁴ Adil Shah, was killed fighting a rival for his throne, Ghiyas al-din Bahadur Shah.⁴

The Lodis, the first Afghan dynasty to rule in northern India, included three Sultans: Bahlul, who died on the 16 of June 1489;⁵ Sikandar, who ascended the throne on the 17 July 1489⁶ and ruled till his death on the 21 November 1517;⁷ and Ibrahim, who ruled from the 22 November 1517 till 20 April 1526.⁸

Bahlul and Sikandar respectively established their rule after a protracted war with their main rivals, the Sharqi dynasty, who ruled over eastern India. The two rulers of the Lodi dynasty succeeded not only in defeating militarily their adversaries but also in annexing the territories over which the latter had ruled. Bahlul Lodi occupied the capital of the Sharqi kingdom, Jaunpur, in 1479, and Sikandar conquered Bihar from the last representative of the Sharqi dynasty, Husain, in 1494.⁹ The second member

2. Pandey, 1956, p. 57 and p. 211.

3. Farid, 1976, p. 115-121.

4. Roy, 1968, p. 12.

5. Pandey, 1956, p. 93

6. Pandey, 1956, p. 110.

7. Pandey, 1956, p. 152.

8. Pandey, 1956, p. 65 and p. 211.

9. Majumdar et al, 1960 pp. 813-818.

* The Timurid dynasty is also described as "The Mughal dynasty".

of the Lodi dynasty enlarged his kingdom by conquering the Hindu forts of Mandrail, Narwar, Hatkanat and Dholpur.¹⁰ Although the last Lodi Sultan, Ibrahim, succeeded by 1518 in annexing Gwalior,¹¹ his reign witnessed a series of revolts led by his amirs, one of whom, Bahadur Khan ~~Muhani~~, created in Bihar an independent sultanate, proclaiming himself a ruler under the title of Sultan Muhammad.¹² Another amir, Daulat Khan Lodi, appealed for help against his sovereign to the Timurid Babur who invaded India and defeated Ibrahim at the battle of Panipat on the 20 April 1526.

The supporters of the Lodi dynasty attempted to recover the throne by aiding the brother of Ibrahim, Mahmud, who proclaimed himself sultan and fought the Timurids. Mahmud Lodi and his followers were defeated by the forces of Babur in the battle of Qanauj on 13-14 March 1528.¹³ Although Mahmud Lodi attempted to re-organize his forces and to continue the struggle against the Timurids he was again defeated on the 6th of May 1529 at the battle of Gaghra.¹⁴ Babur's death in 1530¹⁵ led Mahmud Lodi to yet another war with Babur's son and successor, Humayun, and yet again he was beaten at the battle of Daurah in 1531.¹⁶ Since 1531 Mahmud Lodi gave up his attempts to recover the

10. Hameed-ud-din, 1960, pp. 139-154.

11. Majudar et al, 1960 pp. 813-818.

12. Siddiqi, 1970, pp. 284.

13. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 30.

14. Roy, 1968, p.5.

15. Roy, 1968, p. 6.

16. Roy, 1968, p. 7.

throne of his ancestors and retired to Patna, where he died circa 1542/3.¹⁷

Sher Shah Sur, the founder of the second Afghan dynasty, built his base of power in Bihar, whose ruler Jalal ud-din Nuhami^N, a son of Sultan Muhammad Nuhami^N, he succeeded in evicting by 1530.¹⁸ From around 1533 Sher Shah became involved in a series of wars with the ruler of Bengal, Sultan Ghiyas al-din Mahmud Shah, whom he forced to pay a tribute after the former's defeat in the battle of Surajgarh.¹⁹ Sher Shah's growing involvement in Bengal resulted in renewed hostility between him and the Timurid Humayun. The struggle between them ended in Humayun's defeat in the battle of Chausa on the 26 June 1539.²⁰ A second victory of Sher Shah over Humayun at the battle of Qanauj on 17 May 1540²¹ resulted in the flight of Humayun from India. Until his death on the 22 May 1545²² Sher Shah continued to expand his empire capturing the Sultanate of Malwa in 1542/3, of Multan in 1543 and of Rajputana in 1544.²³

Sher Shah was succeeded on the throne by his son Islam Shah who died on the 30 October 1553.²⁴ Firoz Shah, Islam Shah's son and successor, was murdered after a short

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- 17. Banerji, 1938, p. 47.
 - 18. Pandey, 1963, p. 35.
 - 19. Siddiqi, 1969a, pp. 172-187.
 - 20. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 57.
 - 21. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 63.
 - 22. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 94.
 - 23. Pandey, 1963, pp. 56-61.
 - 24. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 151.

period of reign and the throne was occupied by Sher Shah's nephew, Muhammad ⁶Adil Shah. The rule of the latter witnessed a quick disintegration of the Sur empire which came to be divided among various contestants. ⁶Adil Shah's situation was further complicated when on the 12 November 1554 the Timurid Humayun re-entered India.²⁵ ⁶Adil Shah's wazir Hemu was defeated at the battle of Panipat on 5th November 1556²⁶ and Delhi was re-occupied by the Timurids. Adil Shah survived till 1557, when he was killed by a rival sultan.²⁷

Although Muhammad ⁶Adil Shah left a son, Sher Shah the second, the latter was no more than a contender fighting a losing battle against the victorious Timurid Akbar, Humayun's son.²⁸

Historians' interpretations of the Afghan period

Historians have shown an interest in the Afghan period since the 16th century. Whilst recounting the history of the Lodi and the Sur dynasties they have also attempted to interpret the events which had occurred between

25. Rahim, 1957, p. 234.

26. Rahim, 1957, p. 239.

27. A summary of the history of the Lodi period is provided by Hameed ud-din 1960 pp. 139-157. a summary of the history of the Sur period written by J.N. Chandler, 1974, pp. 68-103. was

28. On the fate of the Afghans after 1607 see Rahim, 1961.

1451 and 1557. These historians may be divided into two distinctive groups in terms of a commonly shared set of interpretative assumptions.

Medieval historians

The first group, to whose members we shall refer as "medieval historians", consists of authors of chronicles written in the 16th and 17th centuries. These works were written by Muslims in the Persian language.

The earliest extant account of the Afghan period is the Tawarikh-i-Daulat-i-Sher Shahi, which was allegedly composed as early as 1548 by Hasan⁹ Ali Khan Bahadur who claimed to have been "an intimate companion" to the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur and his chief sadr.²⁹ This work is known only in fragments discovered by the historian Rushbrook Williams in 1921. The work as extant contains a biography of Sher Shah Sur and copies of that ruler's "orders"

.³⁰

Rizq-Allah Mushtaqi's Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi, written in 1572³¹, is the first extant Persian work which contains an account of all the members of the Afghan dynasties which ruled over northern India in 1451 to 1557. Rizq-Allah was born in 1495/6 and died in 1581/2. He was a descendant of a family which had lived in Delhi since the reign of 'Ala

29. Imam³ud-din, 1960, p.2.

30. Roy, 1952 p. 53.

31. Siddiqi, 1969,c, p. 281.

al-
 ud-din Khalji (who ruled in the period 1296-1316).³² Rizq-Allah's grandfather, Firuz, participated in the military campaigns of the first Lodi Sultan, Bahlul, and wrote a poetical work on this subject. Firuz's poem is not extant.³³ Rizq-Allah's father, Sa'ad Allah, served under Mian Zain al-din, Sikandar Lodi's governor of Agra.³⁴ Rizq-Allah himself was acquainted with Mian Husain Farmuli and with his son Mujib, as well as with Taha Farmuli, Mian Husain's brother. These members of the Farmuli family played an important part in the reign of the last ruler of the Lodi dynasty, Ibrahim.³⁵ Rizq-Allah was associated with men of learning and piety.³⁶ His work was written at a time when the second Afghan dynasty to rule India was no longer in power, having lost its throne to the Timurids.

'Abbas Khan Sarwani probably composed his Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shahi, known also as Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi, between 1579 and 1586.³⁷ The book was written, as Ambashthya suggests, on the orders of the Timurid ruler Akbar.³⁸ It was to contain a full description of the Afghan rule in India, but in its extant form the work is mainly an account

32. Siddiqi, 1969c p. 279.

33. Hameed-ud-din, 1962 p. 45.

34. Rahim, 1961 p. 41.

35. Hameed-ud-din, 1961d p. 317.

36. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 17.

37. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 19.

38. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 19.

of the reign of Sher Shah Sur. The author, Abbas Khan Sarwani, was an Afghan. His grandfather, Shaikh Bayazid Sarwani, was a chief of the Sarwanis in Roh and had once visited Sher Shah Sur. ⁴Abbas Khan Sarwani's father, Shaikh ⁴Ali Sarwani, served under Islam Shah Sur. ⁵Abbas Khan Sarwani entered the service of the Timurid Akbar, who appointed him to the mansab of 500 horses and allowed him to inherit the jagir of his father. At a later period 'Abbas Khan Sarwani lost favour with Akbar; his jagir was taken from him. The reasons for the break are unknown. Subsequently he entered the service of Mir Sayyid Hamid. His new patron died in 1586. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's activities after 1586 have not been recorded.³⁹

The Afghan period is described in considerable detail in four general histories of Muslims in India: the Tabaqat-i Akbari of Nizam al-din; Muntakhab-al Tawarikh, written by Bada'uni; Abul Fa'iz's Akbar-Nama and Firishta's Gulshari Ibrahimi. Nizam ud-din's full name was Khwaja Nizam ^{al}ud-din Ahmad. He was born circa 1551 and died in 1594. He was the son of Khwaja Muqim Haravi, an official of Babur the first Timurid sultan to rule in India. In a later period Khwaja Muqim served as a wazir to Mirza 'Askari, Babur's son. Khwaja Muqim ended his life whilst serving under Babur's grandson, the emperor Akbar. Nizam ^{al}ud-din held a number of important posts under Akbar. He was a bakhshi of the province of Gujarat and later became a bakhshi of the whole empire. The Tabaqat-i Akbari may be described as a general history of Muslims in

39. Imam 'ud-din, 1964, pp. 11-12.

India since the reign of Sabuktigin, the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, who ruled between 977 and 997, until the period of Akbar's rule. It was completed in 1593.⁴⁰

The author of Muntakhab al-Tawarikh was ⁴Abd al-Qadir Bada'uni. He was born in 1540 and died after 1596. His father, Muluk Shah, served under Akbar. Bada'uni was in the service of the jagir-dar of Patiali, Husain Khan, between 1565 and 1573/4, when he forfeited Husain Khan's patronage. In 1575 he was introduced to Akbar and was appointed to the post of imam for prayers on Wednesdays, which post brought him a grant of 1000 bighas of land in lieu of salary. In 1678/9 he left the court and in 1591/2 his land grant was cancelled by Akbar.⁴¹ Muntakhab al-Tawarikh is a general history of Muslims in India from the period of Sabuktigin to the reign of Akbar. It ends with the year 1595/6.⁴²

Abu'l Fa³gl, the author of Akbar-Nama, was born in 1551 and was assassinated in 1603. His father, Shaikh Mubarak, was associated with the Mahdavi movement of Shaikh Ala' i. Abul Fa³gl was introduced to Akbar in 1574, Originally appointed to the mansab of 20, he was successively promoted to the mansab of 1000 (in 1586), then of 2000 (in 1593) and finally to the mansab of 5000 (in 1601). In 1586 he was made a co-governor of Delhi and in 1597/8 he

40. Prasad, 1938 pp. 769-94 and Berthels EI^I (Nizam ud-din).

41. Mukhia, 1976 pp. 89-108.

42. Hardy EI² (Bada'uni).

was sent to Deccan to partake in the military operations of the Mughals.⁴³ Akbar-Nama is a history of Akbar and his forefathers. Abu'l Fadl did not succeed in completing it;

he was assassinated in 1603.⁴⁴ The third part of Akbar Nama, known as Ain-i Akbari, contains the regulations of Akbar, as well as information on the administrative, social and religious aspects of the empire under Akbar, with occasional remarks on the regulations of Akbar's predecessors.⁴⁵ Akbar-Nama contains a relatively detailed description of the activities of Sher Shah Sur and his successors.

Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi, known as Firishta, was the author of a general history of Muslims in India - the Gulshan-i Ibrahimi, known also as Tarikh-i Firishta. Firishta was born about 1572 and died about 1623/4. He lived in India, but not within the empire created by the Timurids. He was in the service of a ruler of Ahmadnagar, and in 1589, when the sultan under whom he served was assassinated, he was forced to migrate to Bijapur. Firishta then entered the service of the ruler of Bijapur. The Tarikh-i Firishta is extant in two recensions. It is a history of Muslims in India from Sabuktigin onwards.⁴⁶

Apart from the above mentioned accounts of the Afghan period incorporated in the general history of Muslims

43. Mukhia, 1976 pp. 41-59.

44. Imam^ud-din, 1960 p. 7.

45. Nur-ul-Hasan, EI² (Abul Fadl)

46. Hardy, EI², (Firishta).

in India, there are four works extant which are devoted specifically to the Afghan sultans of northern India. These are: Ni'matullah's Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani; Abdullah's Tarikh-i-Da'udi; Ahamad Yadgar's Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Lodi wa Suri; and Muhammad Kabir's Afsana-i-Shahan.

Ni'matullah, the author of Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani, was a son of Khwaja Habibullah al-Haravi, who was in the service of the emperor Akbar.⁴⁷ Ni'matullah himself served, after 1576, as the librarian of one of the nobles of Akbar, ⁹ ^اAbdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. Later he entered into the service of the Timurid emperor Jahangir, Akbar's son, whom he served as a "historiographer" (نویس و ت ق ل ه). In 1608, for reasons unknown, Jahangir dismissed Ni'matullah who then entered the service of one of Jahangir's nobles, Pir Khan Khan-i-Jahan Lodi.⁴⁸ The Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani was written by Ni'matullah at the request of Pir Khan Khan-i-Jahan Lodi and was completed with the help of Haybat Khan Kakar in 1613.⁴⁹ The Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani is a general history of the Afghans since the days of Adam till Khwajah Utman, one of the Afghans who ruled in parts of Bengal at the beginning of the 17th century.

'Abd-Allah's Tarikh-i-Da'udi revolves around the activities of the Afghans in India since Bahlul Lodi till

47. Roy, 1958a, p. V.

48. Imam[^]ud-din, 1960, pp. 20-22.

49. Roy, 1958a, p. V.

the reign of Muhammad 'Adil Shah Sur. Its author's biography is unrecorded.

Ahmad Yadgar, author of the Tarikh-i Salatin-i Lodi wa Suri, describes himself as a son of a wazir to Mirza Askari, himself a son of Babur. Yadgar claims that the theme of his book was suggested to him by D^{aud} Karrani, an Afghan ruler of Bengal who reigned between 1572 and 1576.⁵⁰ The narrative of Ahmad Yadgar's composition coincides with the period described in 'Abdullah's Tarikh-i-Da'udi.

Muhammad Kabir, the author of Afsana-i Shahan, was a grandson to Shaikh Khalil-Allah Batni Haqqani and to Shaikh 'Ali Batni Hazaini. Shaikh 'Ali Batni served under Sher Shah Sur and later became a recluse.⁵¹ The immediate reason for Kabir's decision to write his Afsana -i Shahan was the death of his son. The bereaved father composed his book to console himself.⁵² The work consists of anecdotes centred around the activities of the Lodi and the Sur sultans.

Modern historians

The second group of historians who have attempted to provide an interpretation of the Afghan period consists of British, Indian and Pakistani authors, who have been publishing works in English since the 19th century. We

50. Beveridge, 1916 pp. 287-9.

51. Askari, 1965 p. 184.

52. Siddiqi, 1966a, p. 58.

shall refer to this group of historians as "modern historians". Modern historians have utilized some of the works of the medieval historians as a source of information and as a basis for their own interpretation of the Afghan period.

The first modern attempt to interpret the activities of the Afghan Sultans was made by ^uMont Stuart Elphinstone in his History of India, published in 1841.* Subsequently the Afghan period has been analyzed within the general framework of the history of India by the following historians: W. Erskine, in his History of India under the Two First Sovereigns of the House of Taimur: Baber and Humayun, published in 1854; E. Thomas, in The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi, published in 1871; T. J. Wheeler, in A Short History of India, which appeared in 1880; H. G. Keene, in History of India, published 1893; S. Lane-Poole, in Medieval India, 1903; V.A. Smith, in The Oxford Student's History of India, 1908; and L.F. Rushbrook Williams in An Empire Builder of the 16th Century, Babur, published in 1918.

In 1918 appeared the first monograph wholly devoted to one of the Afghan rulers, namely K. R. Qanungo's Sher Shah. R. C. Temple enthusiastically reviewed the work in 1922.⁵³

* The first relatively full description was written by A. Dow in his History of Hindustan, published in 1768. However the latter's account of the Afghan period was but a translation of Firishta's account.

53. Temple, 1922 pp. 160-164 and 179-191.

Since 1921 the Afghan period has continued to be interpreted as part of the history of Muslims in India, and especially as part of the history of India under the Mughal dynasty. Side by side with works of general nature there have appeared monographs and articles devoted to the analysis of the reigns of a number of Afghan Sultans and to specific subjects of importance to the understanding of the Afghan period.

Of the works which perceive the Afghan period through a prism supplied by the history of Muslims in India the following may be mentioned: G. Dunbar's A History of India; this work was published in 1935; W. H. Moreland's and A.C. Chatterjee's version of the Afghan period is contained in their book A Short History of India, published in 1936, R.C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri and K.K. Datta presented their interpretation in An Advanced History of India, 1947*. A. L. Srivastava's The History of India and K.A.N. Sastri's Advanced History of India were published in 1966 and in 1970 respectively.

Reference to the Afghan period is also made in the works of historians predominantly interested in the early Mughal period. As Sher Shah Sur succeeded to evict the second emperor of the Mughal dynasty, Humayun, creating for a period of fifteen years an Afghan empire in northern India, modern historians attempted to gauge the implications of the reign of the Sur dynasty on the later phases of the Mughal reign.

* It was reissued in 1960.

The first to describe the Surs' rule as a prelude to the Mughal experiment was S. M. Jaffar in his The Mughal Empire, which appeared in 1936.* In 1938 S. K. Banerji published his Humayun Badshah, which treats with the relation between this monarch and Sher Shah Sur. Ishawari Prasad deals with the Sur period in his The Life and Time of Humayun, published in 1955. Sher Shah Sur's reign as a preamble to Akbar's reforms has been studied by V. D. Mahajan in India since 1526, published 1958, by A. L. Srivastava in Akbar the Great, 1962; and by A. B. Pandey, in Later Medieval India published in 1963.

Historians who have been interested in the administrative aspects of Muslim rule in India have included in their general interpretations on that subject references to the achievements and the failures of the Afghan Sultans. The first to do so was R. P. Tripathi in his Some Aspects of Muslim Administration, published in 1936. Following this work appeared P. Saran's The Provincial Government of the Mughals, 1941; I. H. Qureshi's The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, 1942; S. R. Sharma's Mughal Government and Administration, 1951; and I. Habib's The Agrarian System of Mughl India, published in 1963. S. C. Misra dealt with the welfare activities of the Muslim kings in general and

* P. Kennedy's A History of the Great Moghuls, which appeared in 1905, was only a summary of the Persian sources covering the Afghan period. This summary was based on H. Elliot's and J. Dowson's History of India as Told by Its Own Historians. Kennedy's work does not attempt to interpret the Afghan period.

with those of the Afghan Sultans in particular.⁵⁴ I. H. Siddiqi has devoted his attention to the clarification of the functions of the shiqqdar⁵⁵, and M. Rahim to that of spies in the service of Afghan rulers.⁵⁶ Both Siddiqi and Rahim have attempted to show how these two functions developed during the medieval period in India.

Some historians have focused their attention on the interpretation of the Lodi period only. A. B. Pandey was the first to published a book wholly devoted to the first Afghan dynasty to rule Delhi. It appeared in 1956 under the title The First Afghan Empire in India. N. B. Roy translated and annotated Ni'matullah's Tārikh-i Khan Jahani. Roy's copious notes to this translation amount to an interpretation of the Afghan period as a whole. This publication appeared in 1958. Hameed ud-din put forward his version of the Lodi period in 1960. This interpretation was included in the collective work composed under the editorship of R. C. Majmdar entitled The Delhi Sultanate. In 1961 appeared the long-delayed book of A. Halim, History of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra. Although written as early as 1938 it could not be published until 1961.* Hameed ud-din returned to the subject of the Lodi dynasty in three articles he published in 1961.⁵⁷

54. Misra, 1957c 33-39.

55. Siddiqi, 1963b 10-32.

56. Rahim, 1963 328-41.

* In the preface to his History of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra, 1961, A. Halim mentions the tribulations he had undergone until his book was published. The 1961 version is not the original 1938 work as the manuscript was corrected in 1941.

57. Hameed-ud-din, 1961a; 1961b; 1961c.

In the same year appeared I. H. Siddiqi's essay on the Lodi nobility.⁵⁸ K. S. Lal has devoted a large part of his The Twilight of the Sultanate, published in 1963, to the interpretation of the activities of the sultans of the Lodi dynasty. I. H. Siddiqi continued to express interest in the Afghan period and his books and articles dealing with this period have been appearing regularly since 1963. The most recent interpretation of the Lodi period can be found in the collective work edited by M. Habib and K. A. Nizami entitled A Comprehensive History of India. The chapter describing the Lodi period has been contributed by K. A. Nizami. The volume was published in 1970.

A number of modern historians have revealed interest in the activities of individual Afghan Sultans. Thus Hameedud-din and A. Halim have written an article devoted exclusively to the interpretation of the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi,⁵⁹ while Q. M. Ahmad and Hameed ud-din turned their attention to the reign of the last Lodi ruler, Ibrahim.⁶⁰ The rule of the founder of the second Afghan dynasty to govern northern India, Sher Shah Sur, became a very popular subject with modern historians. Since 1921 when K. K. Qanungo's monograph about Sher Shah was published, three more books have appeared treating exclusively with this Afghan ruler. In 1925 Zulfiqar Ali Khan published

58. Siddiqi, 1961, pp. 114-136.

59. A. Halim, 1938, pp. 308-12; Hameed-ud-din, 1961c pp. 1-14.

60. Ahmad, 1945, pp. 361-75; Hameed-ud-din, 1961a pp. 125-51.

his Sher Shah Suri. In 1965 K.R. Qanungo returned once more to this subject and reinterpreted Sher Shah's activities in his Sher Shah and His Times. The most recent study to date of the first Sur sultan is I.H. Siddiqi's History of Sher Shah Sur, which appeared in 1971. Apart from books a large number of articles was published which analyzed various aspects of the reign of Sher Shah. R.P. Tripathi's article was published in 1922. It dealt with the question of Sher Shah's administrative reforms.⁶¹ W. H. Moreland in 1926, P. Saran in 1931 and S. C. Misra in 1952 discussed the revenue system of Sher Shah.⁶² Sher Shah's bureaucratic system has been analyzed by S. R. Sharma in 1936, by P. Saran in 1938 and by H. N. Sinha in 1940.⁶³ Sher Shah's reign is fully discussed by W. Haig in volume IV of the Cambridge History of India published in 1937. The most recent analysis of Sher Shah's rule has been made by J. N. Chaudhuri, who contributed a chapter to a collective volume edited by R. C. Majumdar. The book appeared in 1974 under the title of The Mughal Empire. Both Imam ud-din and B. P. Ambashthya who have translated Abbas Khan Sarwani's Tarikh-i Sher Shahi in 1964 and in 1974 respectively have discussed in their notes to the translations various aspects of Sher Shah's reign.

61. Tripathi, 1921-2 pp. 126-46.

62. Moreland, 1926 pp. 447-52; Saran, 1931 pp. 136-48 (reissued 1952 pp. 67-89); Misra, 1952, pp. 232-38.

63. Sharma, 1936 pp. 581-605; Saran, 1938 pp. 337-45; Sinha, 1940 pp. 166-69.

Sher Shah's relations with the Sultanate of Bengal are analyzed by I. H. Siddiqi.⁶⁴

In contrast with Sher Shah, his successors Islam Shah and Muhammad 'Adil have attracted far less scholarly attention. Their respective reigns have been discussed by W. Haig in 1937, by M. Rahim in 1961 and by J. N. Chaudhuri in 1974.⁶⁵

Finally, works dealing with the Afghan period as a whole should be mentioned. The problem of the basic characteristics of the Afghan monarchy in India has been taken up by S. M. Imam ud-din in 1958⁶⁶ and by I. H. Siddiqi in 1969.⁶⁷ The so-called jagir system during the Afghan period has been studied by S. M. Imam ud-din in 1961⁶⁸, and the issue of land grants distributed by Afghan has been analyzed by I. H. Siddiqi in 1972.⁶⁹

Critical and analytical analysis of the historiography
of the Afghan period

Our aim in this thesis is to expound, clarify and analyze critically the conceptual framework of both medieval

64. Siddiqi, 1969a pp. 172-82.

65. W. Haig, 1937 pp. 45-69; Chaudhuri, 1974 pp. 68-103.

66. Imam ud-din, 1958 pp. 268-75.

67. Siddiqi, 1969b.

68. Imam ud-din, 1961 pp. 259-65.

69. Siddiqi, 1972 pp. 14-44.

and modern historians of the Afghan period.

It would appear that neither the medieval nor the modern historians of the Afghan period have been conscious of the assumptions on which they have based their interpretations of the activities of Afghans in northern India in 1451-1557. Both groups seem to have assumed that they have succeeded in re-creating the Afghan period as it happened. Modern historians, though aware of the possible bias in the medieval sources for the Afghan period*, have offered their own theoretical framework for the interpretation of the Afghan period as self evident and objective, the theoretical assumptions of which do not need verbalization.

This work aims at the exposition and reconstruction of the theories and concepts utilized by the two groups of historians in their effort to understand the significance of the Afghan period. Each of the sets of ideas propounded by historians of the Afghan rule in northern India have been subjected to tests of logical and empirical criticism. We have attempted to establish the logical interrelationships among various concepts used to explain the period under consideration and then to subject each of the theories employed to an empirical examination, with a view to establishing whether the theories offered by each group of historians explain all the known facts related to the Afghan

* A considerable effort on the part of modern historians has been devoted to the assessment of the reliability and of the validity of the works of medieval historians. The results of their analysis will be presented in Chapter of this thesis.

period. We have further attempted to examine whether the interpretative frameworks utilized by both groups of historians can be corroborated by historical evidence surviving from the Afghan period as included in the works of medieval historians, in numismatic evidence, in inscriptions, in extant documents, archaeological remains⁷⁰, and in literary sources other than the chronicles written by medieval historians.⁷¹

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70. Numismatic evidence for the Afghan period was collated by H. N. Wright (1936). The relevant inscriptions can be found in Ahmed (1960); Ahmed (1973); Rahim (1965a); Quraishi (1923/4); Hasan (1919/20); Ambashthya (1957). For archaeological remains see Brown (1942); Desai (1972); Nath (1975 and 1976). A sanad of Sher Shah is extant. It is reproduced by Jalal ud-din (1978).
71. The literary remains relevant to the Afghan period include among others historical works which refer to activities of Afghans only in so far as those are relevant to the purpose of these histories. Therefore they treat the Afghans in an incidental and rather marginal way. Thus the first Timurid sultan to rule northern India, Babur, left a memoir, known as Babur Nama which provides information on northern India in the last years of Ibrahim Lodi and on the activities of the Afghans after Ibrahim's death. Jauhar Aftabchi, in his Tadhkirat al-Waqi'at informs us about the relationship between Sher Shah and Humayun, and so does Mirza Haidar Dughlat in his Tarikh-i-Rashidi. Occasional reference to the Afghans in the period under our concern is contained in Gulbadan Begam's Humayun Nama. Some anecdotes about Sher Shah are contained in Ibrahim Nur ud-din bin Tauliq Shirazi's Tadhkirat al-Muluk. Afghan rulers are mentioned occasionally in the literature devoted to the description of the deeds of Muslim saints. Sheikh Hamid Jamali in his Siyar l'Arifin, written before his death in 1536, refers to Bahlul, Sikandar and Ibrahim Lodi (Latif, 1977 pp. 67-72). Afghan rulers are mentioned in Shaikh Rukn ud-din's Lata'if-i-Quddusi, composed in 1537 (Digby, 1975), and in Shaikh Abd Haqq Dihlawi's Akhbar al-Akhyar written circa 1618. Fragmentary information about the activities of the Afghans may be derived from surviving letters of an Afghan saint Abdal Quddus Gangohi (Digby 1965 and 1975) and from the memoirs of Datu Sarwani, an Afghan soldier active in the

Political Culture

The attempt to reconstruct the underlying assumptions of historians' interpretation of the Afghan period as undertaken in this work, is confined to one aspect only of the theories examined; namely that of the political culture.

Following L. W. Pye we have defined the term "political culture" as: "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity." Political culture, claims Pye: "is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system."⁷²

"Political process" is defined, after B.M. Gross, as: "the activities of people in various groups as they struggle for - and use - power to achieve personal and group purposes."⁷³

71. Cont/.....
16th century India (Digby, 1975). Corroborative evidence for the theories offered by historians attempting to explain the Afghan period may be derived from references to the Afghan Sultans in poetical works of Malik Muhammad Jayasi (Sharma, 1932). All Persian works relevant to the Afghan period are listed by Marshall (1967 and 1976).

72. Pye, 1968, p. 218.

73. Gross, 1968, p. 265.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE AFGHAN PERIOD AS PERCEIVED BY MEDIEVAL HISTORIANS

The aim of this chapter is to reconstruct the theoretical frameworks which were utilized by medieval historians in their interpretation of the political culture of the Afghan period.

As the authors of the chronicles describing the Afghan rule did not set out explicitly the theoretical concepts employed by them in the interpretation of the Afghan period,* and as they did not attempt at presenting a general evaluation of the Afghan rule as a whole, we must endeavour to deduce the theoretical assumptions underlying their works from the way they chose to narrate events which took place, and deeds of individual and groups who had been politically active during the period of 1451 to 1557. Medieval historians' selection of material, the decisions they had to make as to which events were important enough to be included in their narratives, and the contents of the commentary accompanying their works, may point to the sort of interpretative techniques which they had utilized in order to understand the Afghan period.

* The term "theoretical concepts" refers to such terms as sutan, amir, fakir, 'ulama; to their mutual obligations for interrelationships as well as to forces hypothetically operating within the field of human activity such as astrology, determinism, God's will etc.

Characteristics of the Works of Medieval Historians

Medieval historians present us with a picture of a series of events which took place in the Afghan period - the activities of individual sultans, their amirs, the learned, the saints, the faqirs. They report on the deeds of groups of people - soldiers, peasants, traders, and on their relations with those who made political decisions. The narratives of our historians include anecdotes about various individuals, stories of wars, revolts, conquests, and of the way the Afghan Sultanate was governed. Apart from descriptions of behaviour and interrelationships between politically active personalities, medieval historians attempt to provide explanations as to why certain individuals had acted in a certain manner at a particular point in time, what they had tried to achieve and what they had attempted to prevent from occurring.

An additional level in the chronicles written by medieval historians consists of an attempted interpretation of specific historical events through reference to supernatural interference within the field of human activity.

Although not all of the medieval historians who had dealt with the Afghan period recounted the same anecdotes and provided the same explanations for the events they had described; and although some of them did not narrate at all the events appertaining to the rule of a particular sultan, all seem to have shared the same conceptional and theoretical framework within which they have analysed the

behaviour of politically active individuals throughout the Afghan period.

The number of explicit disagreements among medieval historians over historical facts is very small. We have found only two instances in which ~~none~~ historian expresses disbelief in "facts" as given by another chronicler; there is no overt reference to the historian criticized and the disagreement is voiced regarding facts said to have taken place. Thus Nizam al-din denies the report of another historian or historians whose names are not mentioned, according to which the occupation of the creator of the Lodi dynasty, Bahlul, before his accession to the throne of Delhi, had been that of a trader. Nizam al-din suggests instead that perhaps one of Bahlul Lodi's ancestors might have been a merchant.¹ No explanation is offered by Nizam al-din as to why he had decided to reject the tradition of Bahlul's being a trader prior to ascending the throne of Delhi. In the other instance, Abbas Khan Sarwani explicitly denies the truth of the story whereby Sher Shah had conquered the fort of Rohtas from its Hindu raja using a strategem of concealing his armed followers in litters whilst claiming that these were his womenfolk seeking asylum in the fort; the story further says that once the litters were allowed to enter the fort, Sher Shah's soldiers jumped out and, aided by the surprise effect of

1. TA.I. 295.

their sudden appearance, succeeded in overcoming the forces of the Hindu raja and conquered the fort. ¹ Abbas Khan Sarwani does not mention the names of the historians who believed that this story was true (one of them was Nizam al-din²) but he stresses that he himself had heard from Muzaffar Khan Sarwani and from Shaikh Muhammad Sarwani that the anecdote was not true.³ In addition we have found one instance where a historian appeared to be explicitly concerned about the selection of facts to be included in his work and where he indirectly took issue with other writers whose chronicles contained certain incorrect information. This was where Nizam al-din was writing about the reign of the second Sultan of the Lodi dynasty. As many things ascribed to Sikandar Lodi were, in his words, exaggerations (اُغْرَاف) Nizam ^{al}-din decided to put on record only these events which seemed to him near the truth or soundness (سَنَت)⁴.

There is only one example of a major disagreement among historians in their evaluation of a particular subject (in distinction from disagreements concerning facts, which point was referred to above). That is the manner in which Abul Fa¹zl's interpretation of the character and achievements of Sher Shah Sur differs from that of other medieval historians. Abu'l Fa¹zl's harsh judgement

2. TA. II. 100.

3. A. 110-111.

4. TA.I. 335; repeated TA.I. 338.

according to which Sher Shah showed arrogance (سرک), evil disposition (بد نهادی) toward his father and was strife mongering (انگیزی) toward the emperor Babur, that he was devoted to robbery (دزدی) and murder, and that he oppressed (مظلومات) his subjects⁵, stands in contradiction to the judgement passed on this ruler by other historians, who, like Nizam al-ud-din, saw him as a stern and just ruler, devoted to the well-being of his subjects.⁶

Subject to the few apparent differences among the chronicles of medieval historians concerning events and their appraisal, there does not appear to be any significant disparity in the types of anecdotes recorded about rulers, nobles, Muslim saints and wander makers. We do not suggest that all the anecdotes related by our historians necessarily reflect the objective reality as it had occurred and that they therefore should be taken at their face value. Some of the stories, for example that about Sikandar Lodi who ordered that the idols he had taken in the Hindu fort of Nagarkot should be turned into meat hooks to be used by butchers⁷, or the one claiming that Sher Shah had to fight Rai Puranmal of Raisin because the latter had imprisoned

5. AN.I. 148 and 146.

6. TA.II 107.

7. Y.47.

Muslim women and turned them into dancing girls (or into harlots)⁸, could merely be, to use S. H. Hodivala's term - "wandering myths", i.e. the same stories which were told and retold by different medieval historians with reference to different individuals of Muslim rulers⁹. We know that Sikandar's orders in connection with the idols and meat hooks had been ascribed by other Muslim historians to the sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (ruled 1324-51)¹⁰; Rai Puranmal's mistreatment of Muslim women was also ascribed to his father, Rai Silhady Poorbya, who was attacked for the same reasons as those ascribed to Sher Shah, by the ruler of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah.¹¹ Even the stratagem used by Sher Shah to capture the Hindu fort of Rais~~an~~, utilizing soldiers disguised as women, was not original and had been already used by the ruler of Khandesh, Nasir Khan Faruqi (died 1432) in his conquest of a fort in the Deccan¹². Yet even if some of the stories do not necessarily reflect events as they happened in reality, they could be still used by us in order to arrive at the historiographical assumptions of medieval historians who chose to include this category of anecdotes in their narratives.

Although we believe that some of the materials included in the chronicles of medieval historians, even if

8. Qanungo 1921 p. 286.

9. On the concept of "wandering myths" see: Hodivala, 1957, p. 468.

10. F.I.148 and Hodivala 1957, p. 468.

11. Qanungo 1921 p. 286.

12. Briggs 1909 (vol. II) p. 116.

not necessarily literally true, may be utilized to uncover the latent interpretative framework of our historians, we do not intend to suggest that all the stories thus assembled may be interpreted in that way. Much of the surviving material was probably recorded because it seemed to be entertaining and could possibly be considered by our historians to possess some entertaining^{ment} value. They could have thought that their future readers might be intrigued when told about strange and unusual events such as the manner in which Bahlul Lodi was born. We are told by Firishta that Bahlul's mother was killed in an accident when the roof of the house in which she lived collapsed. She was then in the last stages of her pregnancy and Kala Lodi, Bahlul's father, had to extract the yet-unborn child from the womb of his dead mother.¹³ A prospective reader might be attracted by the story of how Bayazid Lodi, the eldest son of Bahlul Lodi, had to fight an army of Naurang Khan, which was under the command of the latter's mistress, wearing the clothes and armour of a man; it was only after the initial defeats were overcome that the son of Bahlul could claim victory over the valiant lady¹⁴. Romantic stories might have been considered likely to capture the attention of prospective readers, who might also have found interest in the love affairs of sultans and their nobles. An example of this type of story is the one about Farid Sur

13. F.I. 173.

14. The issue whether this story reflects some true event is discussed by Pandey, 1956, p. 90. The anecdote was recorded in ५. 18-20.

(the future sultan Sher Shah), who when still a youth, fell in love with a Hindu girl. This romance was interrupted by the girl's father whom Farid, in self defence, had to kill. The girl immolated herself and Farid became so upset that he had thoughts of committing suicide.¹⁵ Sher Shah's biographer 'Abbas Khan Sarwani found it necessary to tell his audience of how Sher Shah decided to delay the conquest of the Hindu fort of Kalinjar having heard that a beautiful Hindu girl resided there. Sher Shah feared that the girl would be killed by the Hindu raja of the fort if he decided to proceed with taking the fort.¹⁶ Ahmad Yadgar relates that Bahlul Lodi married the mother of his future successor, Sikandar, for romantic reasons - ~~she~~ she was a beautiful Hindu girl, the daughter of a goldsmith, and Bahlul built a residence ~~for~~ for her which was like a paradise.¹⁷ Bada'^{uni} thought it interesting to report the love of Islam Shah Sur for one of his amirs, Daulat Khan Ajara.¹⁸ Amirs allegedly used to maintain a great number of beautiful women in their harems.¹⁹ We are told by Bada'uni that Sher Shah devised an intriguing way to weaken the resistance of the Timurid emperor Humayun: to distract Humayun's attention from proper attention to state affairs he sent beautiful women to entertain the Timurid. Sher Shah's strategem appears to have succeeded.²⁰

15. Roy, 1952 p. 54.

16. A. 201.

17. Y. 17.

18. B.I. 413-414.

19. Elliot and Dowson, 1872, p. 475.

20. TD 123-124 and Siddiqi 1969b p. 56.

Apart from stories of romance, medieval historians record, for what we believe may have been the amusement of their readers, unusual feats connected with the main pre-occupation of amirs and sultans - war. Shaikh Sikandar Sarwani, one of the supporters of Bahlul Lodi, was described as an unusually good archer. On one occasion, while engaged in the defence of Delhi against the forces of the Sharqi ruler of the Jaunpur who were besieging it, he shot an arrow so successfully that it first pierced the water bag, then penetrated the ox which carried the bag, and only then struck the ground²¹. Medieval historians make references to the great amount of booty which could be collected following a successful raid. ^{-A}Rizqullah Mushtaqi reports that when the rai of Champaner and his soldiers fled from their camp, the Muslims took Hindu soldiers' boots which were studded with gold; when melted the studs were transformed into 20,000 gold coins²². An unusual trophy was sought for by both ^fAzam Humayun Sarwani and by Sher Shah - it was a white elephant. These creatures of wonder were possessed by the rai of Gwalior and by the rai of Jharkand²³.

Medieval historians are fond not only of noting their heroes' military and amorous problems and achievements; they also delight in reporting unusual objects in the

21. Y.II and Pandey 1956 p. 68.

22. WM 41a-b and Siddiqi 1969b p. 133.

23. Y.84 and Y. 191-194.

possession of amirs. Thus Muhammad Tahir Farmuli was said to have ordered a set of ear rings to be prepared for his lady. These were in the shape of lotus flowers inside which was a pair of artificial wasps, which flew out of the flowers when the lady, while wearing the ear rings, moved her head, and flew back again into the lotus flowers when her head was still²⁴. Muhammad Tahir Farmuli also had in his possession three artificial pearls which neither Tahir's sovereign, Sikandar Lodi nor his jewellers could tell from true pearls.²⁵

Medieval historians like to record unusual forms of behaviour, which seemingly appealed to the imagination of their audience. Thus Sikandar Lodi is said on one occasion to have made strange gestures. These were described to Sikandar's swazir Mian Bhua, who was able to interpret each of them correctly, thus earning the appreciation of the sultan²⁶. An Afghan amir, Ladhan Lodi spent daily the sum of 2500 tankas on roses²⁷.

Historiographical assumptions of medieval historians

Medieval historians offer a multi-dimensional framework of reference through which they explain the discrete

24. TD.47 and Hameed-uddin 1961 p. 32.

25. TD.46 and Hameed-uddin 1961 p. 32.

26. TA.I.340.

27. Elliot and Dowson, vol. IV, 1872, p. 475.

deeds of individuals who were politically active throughout the Afghan period. In some instances they interpret political processes by reference to a network of duties ascribed to each individual according to his place within society; occasionally an attempt is made to understand the behaviour of individuals through the indication of certain fixed personality characteristics they are alleged to have possessed. Yet another type of explanation was based on the assumption that supernatural forces could intervene within the field of human activity and determine the fate of the individual or individuals.

In the following sections we shall describe specific categories of individuals - the rulers, nobles, the learned, Muslim saints, and faqirs; persons who according to the view held by medieval historians, had to fulfil certain fixed functions within the society they lived in in order to preserve its stability and who through their interactions formed the political culture of the Afghan period.

The sultan - his obligations and his characteristics

A very large proportion of medieval historians' accounts of the Afghan period centers on the personality and activities of the sultans and their relationships with specific sections within the community of their subjects. The underlying common assumption is that a ruler has certain obligations to fulfil towards all of his subjects in general and towards the Muslim community in particular. From medieval historians' accounts of the reigns of different Afghan sultans we can derive the prescribed obligations

of the rulers toward different categories of their subjects - the peasants (میت), the soldiers, the amirs; their duties and norms of behaviour toward important sections within the Muslim community - the learned (لک), the shaikhs and the faqirs. We can also deduce from extant narratives what was supposed to be the ideal form of government and what norms of behaviour were considered to make for a badly-governed society. Anecdotes included in the description of the Afghan sultans enable us to understand what were the expected quintessential personality characteristics of good and bad rulers.

Rulers' obligations towards the Muslim community

The most important duty of the sultan as a Muslim ruler was to ensure the enforcement of the holy Muslim law - (شرع). Sikandar Lodi, says the historian Ni'amatullah, zealously enforced the shar'²⁸. Sher Shah emphasized, according to his biographer⁴ Abbas Khan Sarwani, the overriding importance of religion and prayer (عکر) in the proper management of the state affairs (امور ملک)²⁹. To promote further the cause of Islam a ruler had also to build mosques and provide them with appropriate staff composed of khatibs, imams, and floor sweepers. This obligation was fulfilled by Sikandar Lodi³⁰.

28. N.212.

29. A. 205.

30. N. 217.

Both Sher Shah and his son and successor Islam Shah built mosques and provided the appropriate religious staff in every caravansarai they had ordered to be erected³¹. The proper performance of rulers' duties included the attempt to purify Islam from non - Muslim practices which had been introduced into it. Sikandar Lodi is said to have prohibited the annual procession of the standard of Mas'ud Ghazi and forbade women from visiting tombs of the saints³², presumably because these two practices included displays of unorthodox behaviour. The same ruler had also ordered to stop the display of ten replicas of Husain's tomb, perhaps because it was a way to exhibit a pro shi'a - and thus anti-sunni sentiment. Sikandar Lodi prohibited the worship of the smallpox divinity, the goddess Sitala³³. Islam Shah had to punish Shaikh Ala'i, who had been accused of claiming to be a mahdi and an innovator (مبتدع)³⁴. Sher Shah was reported by ^{Bada'uni} ~~Bada'i~~ to have planned to fight the Mughals (to whom he refers as Qizilbachis) as they attempted to prevent Muslims from their practice of visiting Mecca (the hajj obligation) and tried to interfere with religion (دین)³⁵. The prohibition on keeping dancing girls (پا تران), imposed by Islam Shah on his amirs might

31. B.I 384 and TA.II.106.

32. N.217.

33. WM 7b and Lal 1963 p. 187.

34. B.I.395 and B.I. 400.

35. B.I. 370.

have emanated from that ruler's wish to force his nobles to stop underlying immoral, anti-Islamic practices³⁶. Rulers were expected to punish individual Muslims who attempted to apostasize. Sikandar Lodi ordered the arrest of Ahmad Khan Lodi, when it was brought to his knowledge that the latter apostasized. (از دین اسلام برگشته)³⁷. Sultans had a duty also to prevent non-Muslims from acts of blasphemy against Islamic beliefs. Sikandar Lodi sat at a judgement of a brahmin who proclaimed that "Islam is true and also his own religion is right." The brahmin was offered a choice of either converting to Islam or being put to death. As he refused to accept Islam, he was promptly executed³⁸.

To ensure the freedom of the Muslims to proclaim their faith and to lead a pious life according to Islamic precepts, the ruler had an obligation to fight the infidels, whenever these attempted to oppress the Muslims. Thus, Sher Shah attacked Rai Purnamal of Raisen^{سے} the latter had in his harem Muslim women and forced them to sit among the dancers (or harlots) (یا تران)³⁹, and as he had put in fetters Muslim families⁴⁰, and had caused much

36. B.I. 384.

37. N. 208.

38. N. 213-15.

39. B.I. 366-67.

40. A.182.

suffering to Sayyid families residing in Chanderi⁴¹. As the obligations of Sher Shah Sur toward the Muslim community ranked before other actions, the sultan had to break his oath to Rai Puranmal, to whom he had promised his life when he had negotiated for Puranmal's surrender of his fort of Raisen. When Puranmal gave in, Sher Shah intended to keep his promise, but the Muslim women, said to have suffered at the hands of that infidel, demanded that Sher Shah would punish Rai Puranmal. Being a pious man (دیندار) Sher Shah accepted the request⁴² hoping that such a stern punishment would act as a deterrent to other Hindu infidels and prevent them from oppressing Muslims⁴³. Islam Shah asked the rebel amir Khwass Khan to join him and to abandon his quarrel with his sovereign as a Hindu rana was attacking Muslims and imprisoning Muslim women and children⁴⁴.

Fighting infidels seemed to medieval historians to have been an act of Muslim piety by the rulers and one of a sultan's obligations. War against Hindus is described as a "holy war" (جہاد) or a "raid against infidels)" (غزوا)⁴⁵. Being killed while fighting infidels was considered to be an act of testifying to the truth of Islam (شہادت); the successful destruction of an infidel turned a Muslim ruler into a "holy warrior" (غازی)⁴⁶,

41. Y. 191-194.

42. A.190-191

43. A.183.

44. Y. 254-5.

45. B.I.367.

46. A. 201.

Sher Shah confided to his amirs that he planned to suppress the infidel zamindars who had polluted Islam in Delhi, had destroyed mosques and had built their temples in place of Muslim places of worship.⁴⁷ Sher Shah also planned to *cleans* *Hind* from the thorns of unbelief⁴⁸. Sikandar Lodi waged war against various Hindu rulers with the aim of destroying polytheism (*شُرک*)⁴⁹. The same ruler ordered the heathen temples in the Hindu forts he had occupied to be destroyed⁵⁰, and prohibited Hindus from public display of their customs - such as ceremonial bathing and shaving at Mathura⁵¹. While fighting in the cause of God (*فی سبیل اللہ*) against a land occupied by infidels (*بِلاد کفار*) Sikandar Lodi ordered their forts to be occupied and mosques to be built within their walls,⁵² thus subjecting non Muslims to Muslim rule. Sher Shah, willing to follow pious precepts of government, ordered the destruction of the Hindu fort of Qannauj and the erection of mosques in the conquered territory.⁵³ Having captured the Hindu fort of Gwalior Ibrahim Lodi took the local god, a bronze bull, to a place of public display, presumably to humiliate the infidels.⁵⁴

47. A. 194.

48. B.I. 370

49. N.208.

50. B.I. 319-20.

51. N. 217

52. N. 216.

53. A. 219.

54. N. 245.

Apart from sultans' general duties toward the Muslim community - defending it against infidels' attacks, erecting mosques, prohibiting heresies and innovation to spread among the orthodox (sunni) Muslims and suppressing the power of infidels within the domains under their authority, the ruler had to follow a set of prescribed customary practices toward specific sections within the Muslim community - the learned, the saints, the faqirs.

Rulers' obligations toward the learned

Anecdotes related by medieval historians suggest that one of the customary obligations of Sultans toward the learned (*lbr*) was to ask for their advice when in doubt as to what course of action to take so as not to transgress against the provisions of the holy Muslim law (the shar'). Sikandar Lodi asked for the advice of Mian^A Abdallah of Ajodhan whether it was permitted by the Muslim law to destroy a water tank used by Hindus for their religious purposes. The scholar advised him that it was forbidden to destroy water tanks of ancient origin. Despite Sikandar Lodi's wrath, the 'alim did not withdraw his ruling.⁵⁵ Another occasion on which Sikandar Lodi is said to have sought the advice of the learned was that concerned with the brahmin who proclaimed that Islam was true and that his own religion was right. Following the advice of the learned the Sultan offered him the choice either of converting to Islam or of facing execution.⁵⁶ Sher Shah Sur, when in a dilemma as

55. Y. 31; N. 217.

56. N. 215.

to whether to keep his promise to Rai Puranmal of Raisen to preserve the latter in life if he surrendered the fort of Raisen, asked for the advice of the learned among whom was Shaikh Rafi^{al} ud-din. The Shaikh's advice (فتوى) was that promises given to infidels do not have to be kept.⁵⁷ Islam Shah asked for the advice of Shaikh Badh Tabib Danishmandi regarding the accusation made by Mian 'Abdullah Sultanpuri against Shaikh 'Ala'i and about Mian 'Abd^Aullah Sultanpuri's judgement (فتوى) that Shaikh 'Ala'i should be executed. Shaikh Badh Tabib Danis^hmandi concurred with the fatwa of Mian 'Abd^Aullah Sultanpuri.⁵⁸

Rulers were expected to hold the learned in great respect and to show them due deference. When Sikandar Lodi came to attend the lectures of Shaikh Abdullah, he used to sit quietly in the corner, fearing lest his presence should interfere with the lecture; the lecture having been concluded all the present used to mix freely among themselves, without demonstrating special deference to the sultan.⁵⁹ Islam Shah held Mullah 'Abd^Aullah Sultanpuri in such a great esteem, that he allowed the learned to sit on the sultan's own throne.⁶⁰ Islam Shah's great respect of the learned was reciprocated by them, as they appreciated his learning and his piety.⁶¹ Various anecdotes in the medieval

57. A. 191.

58. TA.II. 117-118.

59. B.I. 324.

60. B.I. 416.

61. B.I. 416.

histories describe the extremes to which Sultan's were supposed to go in their appreciation of the value of the learned and in their own self deprecation when in presence of the learned. Islam Shah was described as having expressed a wish to sacrifice himself in order to save Shaikh Ansari on an occasion when both were attacked by an elephant. Islam Shah claimed that there were nine lakhs of Afghans like him and only one Shaikh Ansari and that therefore the life of the Shaikh was much more valuable than that of the Sultan.⁶² Sikandar Lodi was said, according to Muhammad Kabir's story, to have praised his imam Mian Badh Haqqani for having on one occasion begun prayers without waiting for the sultan's arrival.⁶³ Bahlul Lodi is reported to have listened to requests of the learned while on his way to perform his daily ablutions.⁶⁴ Islam Shah allegedly used to rise from his throne to greet the learned.⁶⁵ 'Abbas Khan Sarwani reports that Sher Shah used to pay high regard to the learned.⁶⁶

One of the signs of deference paid by the sultans to the learned was the expression of the rulers' wish to spend time in the company of the scholars. Bahlul Lodi⁶⁷, Sikandar Lodi⁶⁸ and Sher Shah⁶⁹ are said to have constantly

62. Askari, 1963, pp. 198-199.

63. Askari, 1963, p. 192.

64. WM⁴a and Lal, 1963, p. 160.

65. Rahim, 1961, p. 80 and K. 150b

66. A. 226.

67. TA.I. 299.

68. B.I. 324.

69. A. 201.

sought the company of the learned.

Finally the sultan's duty toward the learned was expressed through his obligation to provide for their material needs. Sikander Lodi gave pensions (و ظا ئف) to the learned and distributed money to students (طالبا علم)⁷⁰. To express their gratitude for services performed sultans used on special occasions to award the learned. Thus Sikandar Lodi distributed presents among the learned who advised him on how to pass judgement on the brahmin who refused to convert to Islam, after having abused it.⁷¹ Sher Shah gave land grants (مدد مباحی) to imams⁷².

Rulers' obligations toward the saints (مشائخی)

Muslim saints were individuals believed to have possessed miraculous powers. The main duty of a Muslim ruler toward the mashaikh was expressed by signs of deference and respect paid to them. A ruler could choose one of the saints and become his disciple, while the saint acted as his spiritual guide. Nizam al-din reports that Sher Shah was a disciple (شیص) of two Muslim saints - Shaikh Khalil and Shaikh Badh Tabib Danishmandi⁷³. To show their respect sultans visited the saints. Before his accession to the throne of Delhi Sikandar Lodi went to visit Shaikh Sam^{sa}uddin and asked for the saint's blessings⁷⁴.

70. N. 224.

71. N. 215.

72. A. 225-6.

73. TA II. 101 adn TA 11.117.

74. N. 218.

The same ruler was fond of visiting those who reputedly could perform miracles (کرامات)⁷⁵. Sher Shah used to visit Shah Muhammad of Delhi and to take off that saint's shoes as a sign of great respect⁷⁶. Bahlul Lodi, visiting the place of residence (the khanqah) of Shaikh Sama^{al-}uddin, placed the shaikh's carpet prayer on his head - as a sign of reverence⁷⁷.

Great respect was paid not only to the living saints, but to the dead saints as well. Sultans used to pray by their tombs. Bahlul Lodi, before attacking the forces of Husain Sharqi of Jaunpur, went to pray at the tomb of Qutb^{al-}uddin Bakhtiyar Kaki⁷⁸. Sikandar Lodi went to visit the tomb of Shaikh Saif^{al-}uddin Yahya Muneri⁷⁹.

The saints formed a part of the sultans' entourage. Sher Shah is said to have been fond of the company of a mashaikh, and of taking his meals with them⁸⁰.

Rulers' obligations toward the faqirs

Faqirs, as well as saints, acquired the fame of being able to perform miracles (karamat). They were renowned for their unusual forms of behaviour as well as for their supernatural powers. Rulers' obligations towards these individuals consisted of supplying their means of

75. B.I. 322.

76. B.I. 292.

77. Latif 1977, p. 68.

78. TD 19 and Halim, 1961, p. 39.

79. N. 184.

80. A. 210.

livelihood and of showing them deference in all circumstances, as according to our narratives faqirs manifested magical powers to avenge themselves on people they had reason to dislike. Ni'matullah records that Sikandar Lodi used to supply faqirs with clothes and with shawls, to distribute among them money and food every Friday and to give them other presents twice a year.⁸¹ In addition Sikandar Lodi used to distribute money to the faqirs on special occasions, for example ^{برہ} his visit to the tomb of Shaikh Saif-al-din Yahya Muneri⁸². Ibrahim Lodi handed out pensions (^{و ظائف}) to faqirs; he also allocated to them land grants (^{مرد معاشی}) and other presents.⁸³ Bahlul Lodi, probably to demonstrate his respect, allowed faqirs to join in his retinue.⁸⁴

Sultans were expected to tolerate displays of unusual behaviour by faqirs, as the latter were apparently capable of proving, through their supernatural powers, that disobedience to their demands was punished. When Sikandar Lodi tried to burn the beard of Shaikh Hasan, who had fallen in love with him, he found that he could do no harm to the faqir's person. At a later date, when the Sultan ordered that the same Shaikh Hasan be imprisoned, the faqir materialized in the bazaar, although the locks of the prison remained unbroken.⁸⁵ When Islam Shah

81. N. 216-217.

82. De, 1927, p. 364.

83. N. 235.

84. TA.I. 299.

85. Y. 29 and Pandey, 1956 pp. 101-102.

ordered a faqir to be scourged and later threatened to burn him, the faqir predicted that the Sultan would himself burn to death. According to the testimony of Ni'matullah, this prophecy came true.⁸⁶

Rulers' duties toward their subjects

In addition to their obligations with respect to the Muslim faith and the various sections of the Muslim community, Sultans were expected to fulfil certain duties towards all their subjects. These obligations consisted of ensuring justice, peace, stability and welfare to all the population under their rule. This programme is well expressed in Nizam ^{al} ~~ad~~-din's epigram "the government is founded of justice" امرات بر عدل است a sentiment attributed by this historian to Farid Sur (the future Sultan Sher Shah).⁸⁷

Nizam al-din praises Bahlul Lodi for his devotion to the cause of justice (عدل ; داد)⁸⁸. Sikandar Lodi engaged in deciding disputes (خسومات)⁸⁹. Sher Shah is said by Bada'uni to have created a "just kingdom" (الملك العادل)⁹⁰ and Abbas Khan Sarwani claims that

86. Dorn, 1965 pp. 169-170.

87. TA.II. 87.

88. TA.I. 299.

89. N. 223.

90. B.I. 363.

he showed a sense of justice both toward the Muslims and toward the infidels (کفر)⁹¹. Bahlul Lodi engaged in attending to the petitions of his subjects.⁹² Both Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Sur are said by medieval historians to have implemented policies ensuring justice for weak and strong, preventing the strong from oppressing the weak. "The strong and the weak were equal in Sikandar's eyes" says Ni'amatullah,⁹³ adding that Sher Shah "cut short the hands of the oppressors".⁹⁴

Throughout his beneficial rule Sikandar Lodi ensured "tranquility and peace" (امن و امان)⁹⁵. Sher Shah succeeded in eradicating robbery to such an extent that "an old man holding a golden plate could lie asleep wherever he wished, the thieves or evildoers did not have the strength and daring to steal the plate."⁹⁶ The poet Muhammad Jayasi gives an idyllic description of Sher Shah's reign by saying that the personal safety of each individual was so great that "not even to a crawling ant does anyone dare to give pain".⁹⁷

To ensure the safety of their realm rulers strove to prevent "revolts", "disturbances" and "civil wars"

91. A. 206.

92. F.I. 179.

93. N. 215.

94. N. 337.

95. N. 212.

96. B.I. 363.

97. Shireff, 1944 p. 12.

(فتنه)⁹⁸. Islam Shah asserted that he became a sultan in place of his older brother, 'Adil Khan, who was the recognized heir to the throne (ولي عهد) of Sher Shah, as the latter was far away, and in order to prevent a possible fitna.⁹⁹

Rulers are depicted as ensuring the welfare of their people in their acts of liberality. Sikandar Lodi gave money to deserving people,¹⁰⁰ so have Bahlul¹⁰¹ and Ibrahim Lodi.¹⁰² Sher Shah was celebrated for his acts of generosity (سخوات),¹⁰³ and for his charitable works (خیرات)¹⁰⁴. He is praised by Abbas Khan Sarwani for having decided to distribute the jizya (poll tax collected from the non-Muslims) among the poor.¹⁰⁵ Sultans are praised not only when they distribute gifts, but also when they refrain from collecting money from their subjects. Sikandar Lodi did not claim for himself a treasure recovered by one of his subjects. On another occasion he ordered the governor of Sambhal to return a treasure to the man who had found it, after it was taken away.¹⁰⁶ The same ruler refused to take additional taxes

98. On "fitna" see EI² (L. Gardet).

99. TA.II. 107.

100. N. 216.

101. De, 1927, p. 338.

102. F.I. 188.

103. A. 124.

104. A. 216.

105. A. 226.

106. Y. 35-36.

from a jagirdar even though the latter discovered that his land grant was worth more than the sum for which it valued originally.¹⁰⁷ Sher Shah's generosity was so great that, to use Muhammad Jayasi's words, "the poverty fled before him".¹⁰⁸

One accepted way of ensuring the material welfare of sultans' subjects was through keeping grain prices at a low level, especially during periods of famine. Both Sikandar¹⁰⁹ and his son Ibrahim Lodi are praised for having ensured low prices throughout their reigns¹¹⁰. Both Sher Shah and his son Islam Shah are said to have hoarded grains and distributed them at a cheap price during famines¹¹¹.

Sultans were seen as protectors of the rights of certain weaker sections of the population. Thus Sikandar Lodi¹¹², Sher Shah¹¹³ and Islam Shah¹¹⁴ attended to the affairs of the peasants (میت) and prevented their oppression. Sher Shah ordered his soldiers to refrain from plundering the peasants' fields even though these lay in the territory of an enemy against whom he was campaigning at that time. He ordered compensation to be paid when fields were plundered against specific orders to the contrary.¹¹⁵ Abbas Khan Sarwani maintains that Sher Shah always took an interest in the conditions of the peasants' life and tried to improve agriculture (کاشت) for their benefit¹¹⁶.

107. TD. p. 46 and Pandey, 1956 p. 226.

108. Shireff, 1944 p. 14.

109. N. 212.

110. On this subject see Richards 1965 pp. 45-67.

111. K.136a and 144b and Askari 1963 p. 195.

112. N. 215.

113. TA.II. 107.

114. AN.I.336-7.

115. A.223-4.

116. A.33 and 79.

Both Sher Shah and his Afghan predecessor Ibrahim Lodi are said to have paid special attention to the conditions of the army¹¹⁷. Sher Shah used to hear soldiers' complaints personally¹¹⁸.

Both Sher Shah and Sikandar Lodi are described by medieval historians as being devoted to the well being of their subjects. Sikandar Lodi, says Ni'matullah, considered his subjects (خلافت) as a trust given to him by God (و ديته الهى)¹¹⁹. Sher Shah tells us Nizam al-din toiled all his reign for the good of his people (خلافت)¹²⁰.

Personal mode of rule

To ensure the proper functioning of state affairs, sultans were expected to conduct personally the business of the government and to supervise the actions of their officials. Sikandar Lodi dismissed an official who deprived a sayyid of his land grant¹²¹ and either executed or exiled anyone who turned from the path of obedience¹²². Sher Shah executed his own cousin when the latter was found

117. TA.II. 108 and N. 249

118. A.29.

119. N. 215.

120. TA.II. 107.

121. WM IIb and Siddiqi 1969b pp. 148-9.

122. WM 8a-b and Siddiqi 1969b p. 33.

guilty of misappropriation¹²³. The same ruler used to punish his disloyal servants¹²⁴. Even small offences brought severe and exemplary punishments. A camel driver who, by taking one corn from a green field disobeyed Sher Shah's orders not to plunder sown fields, was tied to his camel upside down and had his hands cut off¹²⁵. On one occasion Sher Shah ordered the execution of a censor of morals (muhtasib) for taking a bribe.¹²⁶ Islam Shah used punish amirs who had disobeyed their orders. He used to punish the families of the rebellious nobles as well¹²⁷ and to execute amirs who seemed to him to be too powerful¹²⁸.

To control his officials, a ruler had to build and to maintain a network of spies, through which information was gathered on the activities of his subjects. Both Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah were credited by medieval historians with having created and run a powerful and efficient spy system¹²⁹. Sikandar Lodi's spy system was so well organized that he was informed even about the minutest and quite trivial incidents. We are told that on one occasion one of the amirs of Sikandar Lodi, Masnad-i ⁹Ali Bhikan Khan slept on the roof of his house. As it began to rain, he had to transfer his cot into a room.

123. Roy 1952 pp. 60-1.

124. A.108.

125. Siddiqi 1969c p. 293.

126. Tripathi 1950, p.60.

127. B.I. 385.

128. TA.II. 114-115.

129. N. 219 and A. 228.

No servant seemed to be available and so Bhikan Khan had to perform the task himself. Next day Sultan Sikandar Lodi was able to relate to Bhikan Khan the previous night's events¹³⁰.

Rulers exercised control over every activity, even seemingly minute ones, within the domains under their authority. When Sikandar Lodi's army was campaigning he sent orders twice a day instructing his soldiers where to camp and what to do¹³¹. Sher Shah forced the servants of his harem to mark their horses (غل)¹³². Sikandar Lodi performed in person the task of inspecting his soldiers' equipment¹³³.

Stern punishments awaited anyone accused of transgressing against their duties irrespective of whether the crime perpetrated was major or minor and without regard to other factors, like the age of the culprit. Sher Shah ordered that both hands of a child who did not return a switch of a quiver found to its original owner be cut off¹³⁴. The same ruler threatened a zamindar with execution should he not find a horse thief.¹³⁵

Rulers were expected to be continually occupied with the affairs of their subjects. Sikandar Lodi used to hear complaints and to read the daily price lists (رُخ)

130. WM 15a and Siddiqi 1969b p. 31.

131. N. 222.

132. Ambashthya 1974 pp. 794.

133. N. 211.

134. Roy 1954 p. 224.

135. Roy 1958b p. 259.

as well as the description of daily occurrences as these had been recorded in "the book of daily transactions" (روزنامہ) ¹³⁶. Sher Shah is also described as "constantly working" ¹³⁷.

Personal intervention in disputes between subjects is another trait with which historians characterize Afghan rulers. Often the latter's intervention was expressed through dramatic stratagems aimed at discovering the guilty party. Thus Sikandar Lodi forced a man who claimed that he had given his brother's ruby to his sister-in-law, to admit his lie, using the following device: as the brother claimed that he had witnesses who could prove that he had actually transferred the ruby in question into the hands of his sister-in-law, the sultan ordered both brothers and the witnesses as well as the sister in law to mould a likeness of the ruby in wax. Neither the witnesses nor the woman could perform this task; the two brothers however did comply with Sikandar's order. The sultan had then concluded that the disloyal man robbed his brother and bribed witnesses to testify falsely against his sister-in-law so as to put the blame on that innocent woman ¹³⁸. On another occasion, Sikandar Lodi succeeded in proving by analogy that a man entrusted with a sealed purse containing gold coins replaced the contents of the purse with silver coins. The sultan found a tailor who could open a purse and then stitch it again so as the fact that the

136. N. 215 and N. 222.

137. TA.II. 103.

138. De 1927, p. 389-391.

purse had been opened would not be recognized. To prove his point Sikandar gave his garment to the suspected culprit telling him that it was intact, while in fact it had been damaged. When the culprit discovered the damage, he took fright and asked the tailor to repair the damage. When the now apparently intact cloth was returned to Sikandar, the man was forced to admit his guilt¹³⁹. When two peasants living in two different villages equally distant from the scene of a certain crime refused to admit which of them was guilty of perpetrating it, Sher Shah ordered that a tree should be cut down in the exact spot where the crime took place. One of the two peasants demonstrated undue curiosity and came to know about the command shortly after it was given. Sher Shah then concluded that this man was guilty of the crime, as it would be impossible for him to be aware of an order to cut down a tree and to remain ignorant of the crime, the latter being a matter of far greater importance.¹⁴⁰

Medieval historians ascribe to some of the Afghan Sultans the intention of instilling awe in the hearts of their subjects through the maintenance of pomp and ceremony. Skiandar Lodi's commands (farman) were handed into his amirs who, probably as a sign of respect, placed them on their heads. The commands were then read aloud from a specially erected platform in the presence of other amirs, who listened to the contents of the mandates while

139. Lal, 1963 p. 277.

140. Roy 1958b, p. 255.

standing on their feet.¹⁴¹ Islam Shah's farmans were read every Friday in a specially erected tent in which the sultan's shoes and quiver were also displayed.¹⁴² In contrast to the pomp displayed by Sikandar and by Islam Shah, Bahlul Lodi is described by Firishta as a humble ruler, who refused to sit on his throne in the presence of his amirs.^{143*} Sher Shah, says Abbas Khan Sarwani, declined to sit in the presence of his amirs, until one of them, Isa Khan, explained to him that according to the laws of kingship (قانون ملکی) the Sultan should be seated when his amirs are present in his court.¹⁴⁴ Apparently Sher Shah did comply with the advice given to him, but he continued to permit his amirs to use royal symbols of power, such as red tents and elephants.¹⁴⁵ His successor Islam Shah on the other hand forbade the use of red tents and of elephants by the amirs.¹⁴⁶

Firishta contrasts the humble behaviour of Sikandar Lodi who refused to remain seated in the presence of his amirs and used to alight from his throne to receive

141. N. 222.

142. B.I. 385.

143. F.I. 179 and Pandey, 1956, p. 197 and p. 216.

144. A.140-141.

145. A. 175 and A. 186.

146. B.I. 384.

* A different view of Bahlul's manner is presented by Ahmad Yadgar, who maintains that on the occasion of his accession to the throne Bahlul ordered his amirs to place their heads at the foot of his throne and then stand up with their hands folded along their waists (Y.10).

them¹⁴⁷ with the stern display of pomp shown by his son and successor, Ibrahim, who ordered his amirs to stand with their arms folded on their waists while he remained seated on the throne.¹⁴⁸

Patronage of culture

Afghan sultans are represented by medieval historians as great patrons of culture. Sikandar Lodi was fond of the company of poets (شاعران). He demonstrated great respect for the poet Shaikh Jamali Kambu by personally meeting the latter when he arrived at the court for the first time¹⁴⁹. Sikandar Lodi invited poets from Arabia, Ajam (Persia) and from other parts of Hindustan to come to his court at Agra¹⁵⁰. He encouraged his nobles and his soldiers to take an interest in matters of culture and knowledge¹⁵¹. Both Bahlul Lodi¹⁵² and Sher Shah Sur are said to have shown interest in literature and poetry¹⁵³.

Personal characteristics of the rulers

From the way in which Afghan sultans are placed by medieval historians into the categories of successful and unsuccessful rulers it is possible to determine which personal characteristics were considered desirable in a ruler, and which objectionable.

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- 147. Rahim, 1961, p. 54.
 - 148. F.I. 188.
 - 149. B.I. 323.
 - 150. TD 36.
 - 151. N. 218-219.
 - 152. Ranking 1898 p. 475.
 - 153. A. 15.

Successful rulers displayed personal piety.

Bahlul Lodi, says Nizam uddin, was a devout person who used to pray often (مسلم)¹⁵⁴. Sher Shah is portrayed by his biographer 'Abbas Khan Sarwani as a pious man (دينار)¹⁵⁵. According to Bada'uni testimony Islam Shah never missed a prayer nor did he use intoxicants¹⁵⁶.

Personal humility and lack of pomp in everyday behaviour were probably considered to be in good taste. Bahlul Lodi, says Firishta, never rode a horse from the royal stable, never dined at home ^{and} went personally to visit sick amirs.¹⁵⁷ Sikandar Lodi displayed a dislike of pomp.¹⁵⁸

Wisdom formed part of a makeup of a good ruler. Ibrahim Lodi is described by Nizam ^{al}-din as being a sagacious (عيايت) man.¹⁵⁹ Sher Shah was said to have been intelligent (عقل ; فهم)¹⁶⁰ and to have shown "discernment" (تدبير)¹⁶¹.

Bravery was apparently another quality valued in a ruler. Both Ibrahim Lodi¹⁶² and Sher Shah¹⁶³ were said

154. TA.I. 299.

155. A.190.

156. B.I. 416

157. F.I. 179

158. Y. 60-62 and Lal, 1963, p. 185.

159. TA.I. 341.

160. A. 15.

161. B.I. 357.

162. TA.I. 341.

163. B.I. 357.

to have been brave (شجاع). Even the otherwise unremarkable Sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah displayed the quality of manliness (مردانگی) while fighting against a pretender.¹⁶⁴

Finally, lack of desire was considered by medieval historians to be a praiseworthy quality. Sikandar Lodi, says Ni'amatullah, never acted upon considerations of "desire".¹⁶⁵ (هوس نفي)

Whilst medieval historians share the image of the ideally good ruler in the form of an individual who is pious, brave, intelligent, who personally oversees the affairs of his subjects, observes the precepts of just government, is devoted to the maintenance of the shar' and to the welfare of his subjects, they attribute to bad rulers such negative qualities as laziness, love of luxury, lack of attention to state affairs and preference for life of sensual enjoyment and ease. The pretender Mahmud Lodi and the Sur Sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah share a common interest in the pursuit of their amusements (لہو)¹⁶⁶, a life of ease (عیشی)¹⁶⁷ and laziness (تنبلی), ignorance and lack of attention to their subjects.¹⁶⁸

164. B.I. 434,

165. N. 215.

166. A. 92; A. 45.

167. TA.II. 118.

168. A. 45; AN.I. 337; B.I. 418.

The political role of the learned and ^{of} the saints

In the political milieu of Afghan India the learned and the saints had important roles to fulfil.

Anecdotes recounted about the learned and the saints concerned with the latter's relationships with the Sultans and with the amirs, portray them as custodians of the holy Muslim law (shar') and as advisers to the rulers and to their nobles in matters related to the religiously appropriate conduct of life.

We have already noted specific instances in which the advice of the learned was sought in order to establish whether an intended action by a ruler was in accordance with the shar'. Thus Sikandar Lodi asked Mian ^AAbdullah of Ajodhan to rule whether it was permitted to destroy a water-tank used by Hindus for their ceremonial purification.¹⁶⁹ On another occasion Sikandar was advised by the learned how to punish a brahmin who claimed that both Islam and his own religion were true¹⁷⁰; Sher Shah sought the opinion of Shaikh Rafi⁶al-din on the question whether he could execute Rai Puran~~mal~~ of Raisen despite his previous promise to spare that infidel's life¹⁷¹; Islam Shah wished to know whether Shaikh Badh Tabib Danishmandi concurred with Mullah

169. N. 217.

170. N. 215.

171. Ranking 1898 p. 476.

^{-A}Abdullah Sultanpuri's opinion that Shaikh Alai['] was a heretic and an innovator¹⁷².

In addition to occasions when the advice of the learned was actively sought by the Afghans, there are on record accounts of rulers who were admonished by a particular saint or a learned man in whose view the sultan's behaviour departed from Islamic orthodoxy. Shaikh 'Alai['] refused to eat Islam Shah's food maintaining that the sultan had taken more food from the Muslims than he was entitled to according to the holy Muslim law.¹⁷³ Shaikh 'Abdullah^{-A} Niazi refused to greet Islam Shah according to the prescribed court tradition by virtue of which an individual had to prostrate himself before the sultan. Shaikh 'Abdullah^{-A} told Islam Shah that prostration was not a Muslim practice. As a result of this unsolicited interference, Islam Shah ordered Shaikh 'Abdullah^{-A} to be flogged¹⁷⁴. Sikandar Lodi was scolded by Haji 'Abdullah^{al-h} Wahabi for having shaved his beard, for having used intoxicants, for failing to pray and to fast according to the Muslim ritual.¹⁷⁵ The same ruler was prompted by his imam Mian Lad Danishmandi to prepare a list of all the instances in which the sultan had committed sins. Sikandar Lodi paid money in expiation for his religious misdeeds¹⁷⁶. Saints used to remind the rulers of their duties, Bahlul Lodi was warned by Shaikh Sama['] al-din that a

172. TA.II. 117-18.

173. B.I. 401.

174. B.I. 404.

175. Pandey 1956 pp. 152-53 and Halim 1963 pp. 101-102.

176. Pandey 1956 p. 158.

ruler's "Wrongful means and crooked ways should not be pardoned on the day of salvation"¹⁷⁷. Sher Shah was reminded by the learned and the saints that "there is no act of worship (عبادت) equal to war against the infidel. If one is killed one is a martyr and if one survives one is a warrior for the faith (gazi)¹⁷⁸. 'Abdul Quddus Gangohi, a Muslim saint, tells Sikandar Lodi that justice is part of a proper way of government. He says that "the operation of justice for a single day is better than sixty years of worship."¹⁷⁹ Mian Shaikh Bhua, a wazir of Sikandar Lodi offers an advice to his sovereign to the effect that he should nominate only such individuals to be officials who are not greedy (طمع) as otherwise they would oppress the peasants by demanding their expenses (مبلغ) from them.¹⁸⁰ 'Abdul Quddus Gangohi advised Sikandar Lodi not to cancel the stipends and : to serve the poor and look after the old, the poor, the learned and the saints.¹⁸¹

The learned not only advised the sultans on matters connected with the shar', they also used to voice their opinions on state affairs and actively participated in

177. Halim 1963, p. 78.

178. A. 201.

179. Digby 1975, p. 32.

180. TA.I. 341.

181. Digby 1975, p. 32.

purely political activities. Shaikh Raja Bukhari mediated between Ibrahim Lodi and the rebel forces led by Islam Khan Sarwani¹⁸²; Shaikh Khalil urged Sher Shah to fight against the Timurid Humayun¹⁸³; and Shaikh Zahid, the spiritual guide of Fath Khan Lodi, a brother of Sultan Sikandar, advised Fath Khan to reveal to his royal brother the existence of a conspiracy among Sikandar's amirs directed against the sultan the object of which was to place Fath Khan on the throne of his brother¹⁸⁴; Shaikh Said Farmuli acted as a political advisor^e to Sikandar Lodi when the latter was still a prince. Said Khan Farmuli's advice aided Sikandar to become an heir apparent to his father¹⁸⁵.

The saints and the learned acted as spiritual guides and as political advisers both to the rulers and to their amirs. Shaikh Alai^y was a preceptor of a noble of Sher Shah - Khwass Khan¹⁸⁶. Shaikh Sama' al-din reprimanded a rebellious amir of Bahlul Lodi, Ahmad Khan Mewati, when that amir abandoned Bahlul and joined the forces of Husain Sharqi of Jaunpur¹⁸⁷. Umar Khan Sarwani sought the advice and the blessings of Abdal Quddus Gangohi^{s al-} when he had quarreled with Nizam Khan, the future Sultan Sikandar Lodi¹⁸⁸;

182. TA.I.350

183. A131-132.

184. N. 188.

185. Y.31-32.

186. TA.II.116.

187. Siddiqi 1969b p.2.

188. Tripathi 1950 p.1.

the poet Jamal Kambu went to the court of Sikandar Lodi only after being advised to do so by his spiritual guide¹⁸⁹.

The amirs - their duties and personal characteristics

The obligations of amirs and their personal characteristics do not seem to be different from those ideally ascribed to the sultans.

It would appear from various anecdotes related by medieval historians concerned with the deeds of various amirs of the Lodi and Sur sultans, that one of the major obligations of the amirs was to demonstrate liberality toward the faqirs, the learned, and persons in need. Sikandar Lodi encouraged his amirs to give pensions to the faqirs and to the needy¹⁹⁰. Khwass Khan, one of the important amirs of Sher Shah, gave at Kalpi monies for the maintenance of a supply of mango and sugar cane for the poor arriving to the caravansarais¹⁹¹; Mian Zain al-din gave three hundred thousand tankas to religious charities. A'zam Humayun Sarwani distributed annually two thousand copies of the Qur'an free of charge¹⁹². Mian Zain al-din refused to collect outstanding debts in his favour which amounted to three thousand tankas. Furthermore he specifically forbade his children from collecting these

189. N . pp. 225-7.

190. N. 219.

191. B.I. 410.

192. Hameed-uddin 1961C p. 7.

debts, once he himself died¹⁹³. Khan-i Jahan Lodi used to give to every visiting learned and saint a village or a land grant¹⁹⁴; Khwass Khan, the father of Mian Bhua - the wazir of Sikandar Lodi, gave land grants in Nagarkot to the scholars. Though he distributed more than was originally ordered by Sikandar Lodi, the sultan approved his action.¹⁹⁵ Mian Bhua himself distributed stipends to the learned and to the saints¹⁹⁶, and so did Khwass Khan, a noble of Sher Shah.¹⁹⁷

Some Afghan amirs are represented as famous for their acts of generosity. Bhikan Khan Lodi distributed daily five hundred tankas to the faqirs¹⁹⁸; a noble of Sikandar Lodi gave to a father of a prospective bride the sum of one hundred thousand tankas, although the father himself had asked for thirty thousand only¹⁹⁹.

As pious Muslims, the amirs were also depicted by medieval historians as active promoters of the orthodox Muslim way of life. Daulat Khan Lodi, a hakim of Punjab, prohibited his subjects from drinking wine, eating pork, gambling and committing adultery.²⁰⁰ The amirs of Sher

193. WM 30b and Hameed uddin 1961c p. II.

194. WM 28b and Siddiqi 1969b p. 142.

195. WM 33a and Siddiqi 1969b p. 145.

196. WM 33b and Siddiqi 1972 p. 38.

197. AN.I.336.

198. Y. 58-59 and Pandey, 1956 p.243.

199. Y. 49 and Hameed ud-din, 1961 p. 32.

200. WM 34b and Siddiqi, 1969c p. 279.

Shah urged their Sultan to suppress the heretics (رافضی) of the Deccan²⁰¹. 'Abd^{al} Quddus Gangohi expected Umar Khan Sarwani to suppress the infidels who had established themselves at Radaoli²⁰².

Sometimes the amirs function in a way similar to that of the learned - they appear as advisers to their sultans on matters concerned with the proper management of the Sultanate. Khan - i Jahan Nuhani admonished Ibrahim Lodi and his amirs as they displayed greed to divide the possessions of the deceased Sikandar Lodi between Adil Khan Lodi and his brother Ibrahim. Calling this pact "shameful" (قبیح) he succeeded to persuade Ibrahim to abandon his plan.²⁰³ 'Isa Khan managed to influence Sher Shah to sit on his throne in the presence of his amirs, as such was the "law of the kingdom" (شئون ملک)²⁰⁴.

The same qualities which make a good Sultan appear also to make a good amir. Sa'id Khan Niazi was described as bold (شجاعت) and magnanimous (مہمانت)²⁰⁵. Daulat Khan, who was the patron of the future Sultan Sher Shah, was generous (مروت)²⁰⁶. 'Isa Khan Kakar possessed the quality of justice (عدالت)²⁰⁷.

201. A.I94.

202. Nur^{ul} Hasan, 1950 p. 51.

203. B.I. 326.

204. A. 140-142.

205. B.I. 379.

206. TA.II. 89.

207. A. 158.

Several anecdotes describe the brave and honourable exploits of amirs. Malik Fir^uḥ Lodi (an uncle to Bahlul) pretended not to recognize the dead body of his son, till he was told that the youth, who had fought bravely, fell in the battle.²⁰⁸ 'Isa Khan Kakar refused to ask Bayram Khan, the regent for the Timurid Akbar, for any favours, despite the fact that once he had saved Bay^rram Khan's life and later found himself in a state of poverty.²⁰⁹ The Afghan Kala Khan refused to accept payment for services rendered to Bahlul Lodi, even though he sustained wounds while fighting on behalf of the Lodi Sultan. He claimed that he had not come to sell his wounds.²¹⁰ It appears that brave deeds were performed for their own sake and were thought to be an end in themselves.

Some of the amirs, like the^y royal masters, acted as patrons of learning. Mian Bhua, Sikandar Lodi's wazir, compiled a textbook on medicine, known as Tibb-i-Sikandari. Mian Tahir Farmuli distinguished himself as a learned man and displayed proficiency in poetry.²¹¹

Having analyzed the duties and mutually-obligatory interrelationships among various categories of individuals politically active throughout the Afghan period, we shall now proceed to describe the factors thought by medieval historians to have influenced the political culture and the

208. F.I. 173-174.

209. A. 16.

210. A. 7.

211. Pandey, 1956 pp. 155-6.

political process in the period under consideration.

The supernatural dimension

Medieval historians seem to have accepted the possibility of a direct intervention of supernatural forces in the development of historical process. Humayun, the second Sultan of the Timurid dynasty, believed, according to the testimony of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, that during his battle with Sher Shah Sur the latter was aided by a group of invisible (or mysterious men) (مردانِ خبیث).²¹² Badauni states that when Sher Shah attacked the Hindu fortress of Kalinjar a mysterious stranger encouraged the Muslim forces to fight. This man later disappeared and while the Muslim soldiers actually began their onslaught on the fortress, men from the invisible world (مردانِ خبیث) came to their aid.²¹³ Bahlul Lodi, records Ahamad Yadgar, prayed on the tomb of a saint and dreamt that a person appeared who gave him a stick to drive cattle away with. Bahlul took this to be a sign that he would win the battle against Husain Sharqi of Jaunpur.²¹⁴ Sher Shah believed that he would be successful in the coming war with Humayun

212. A. 155.

213. B.I. 373.

214. Y 16 and Pandey, 1956, p. 81.

if fortune (دولت) and luck (بخت) stood by him.²¹⁵

Supernatural forces could signal their disapproval of specific actions undertaken by rulers. When Shaikh Alai Mahdi died as a result of being scourged at Islam Shah's command, a strong wind began to blow signifying the near end of the Sur dynasty.²¹⁶

Supernatural forces could manifest themselves in places where events occurred. Visiting the battlefield of Panipat many years after the fight between Ibrahim Lodi's and the Timurid Babur's forces took place, Badauni could still hear the shouts of the combatants and the clamour of their weapons.²¹⁷

Another example of supernatural interference within the domain of human activity was given by Ni'matullah, according to whom Rai Man of Gwalior, though externally an infidel was inwardly a Muslim, and hence no Muslim ruler who attempted to conquer Gwalior was able to accomplish his plan. Only when he died did it become possible for the forces of Imbrahim Lodi to occupy the fort.²¹⁸

Medieval historians express beliefs in the magical powers and wondrous devices of certain individuals through the use of which their owners could achieve their aims. Sikandar Lodi is said to have possessed a magic lamp inhabited by two genii, who did whatever the sultan

215. A. 54.

216. B.I. 404.

217. B.I. 335-336.

218. N. 244.

ordered them to do.²¹⁹ According to the poet Muhammad Jayasi Sher Shah owned the ring of Solomon thanks to which he could command the genii.²²⁰

Bada'uni reports that Amir Abu Talib possessed a ring which could not be seen by bastards.²²¹ Farid Sur, the future Sultan Sher Shah, apparently believed that his stepmother, with whom he quarrelled, had certain knowledge of magic (سحر) and witchcraft (جادری) which enabled her to exert influence over Hasan Sur, the father of Farid.²²²

Probably one of the reasons for which the living and dead saints were revered was the belief in their ability to forecast and even to influence the future.

Bada'uni seems to summarize this attitude when he writes:

"one expects a shaikh to perform miracles".²²³ Both Islam Shah and his predecessor Sher Shah honoured the saint Shah Muhammad of Delhi believed to have been endowed with the

"science of invoking mighty names" (دعوت اسماء).²²⁴

Commenting on the saints' ability to predict the future

Ni'amatullah says: "the holy men (املا فناء) are the interpreters (ترجمان) of destiny (تقدیر). They can ensure either eternal felicity or eternal unhappiness.²²⁵

Rulers used to consult the saints to ascertain the future.

219. N. 220-222.

220. Shireff, 1944, p. 10.

221. B.I. 393.

222. TA.II. 89.

223. B.I. 392.

224. B.I. 392.

225. B. 219.

Islam Shah took the advice of Shaikh Muhammad who consulted the omens.²²⁶ Sikandar Lodi went to Shaikh Sama'^{al}ed-din on a pretence of taking an omen (تَنَاول) and tricked the saint into repeating twice the auspicious formula "may God prosper thee" which was interpreted by Sikandar Lodi as an omen of his future success.²²⁷ Shah Muhammad of Delhi foretold the future accession to the throne of Islam Shah²²⁸; a darwish forecast Sikandar Lodi's victory over his brother and rival to the throne Barbak Shah of Jaunpur²²⁹; a faqir greeted Sher Shah as the future sultan of Delhi²³⁰ and another holy man predicted that Bahlul Lodi and members of his family would occupy the throne of Delhi for three generations²³¹; Bahlul Lodi bought the throne of Delhi from a holy man before he actually ascended the throne²³².

Probably in direct connection with the belief that saints possessed supernatural powers there developed a custom for rulers and amirs to ask for their blessings before taking some politically important steps. Khwass Khan, an amir of Sher Shah, asked for the blessings of Shaikh Salim before attacking the forces of Islam Shah, against whom he had revolted²³³; Ibrahim Lodi demanded

226. B.I. 392.

227. B.I. 313.

228. B.I. 392.

229. N. 216.

230. Dorn 128, p. 98.

231. Y.4 and Pandey 1956, p. 43.

232. TA.I. 295.

233. Ross 1926/28 p. 719.

that the saint ^{al-}Abd~~ul~~ Quddus Gangogh~~i~~ bless his soldiers before the batttle of Panipat²³⁴. Blessings could apparently be obtained also through pilgrimages paid to the tombs of saints. Khwass Khan was widely believed to be a saint and his grave was regularly visited by people asking for favours²³⁵.

The saints could not only bring blessings; they could punish as well. Sayyid Hajj 'Abd^{al-}~~ul~~ Wahab took offence at Sikandar Lodi who had told his entourage that the Sayyid was too important in his own eyes and should the sultan wish so, one of his own slaves would be venerated and shown more signs of respect than the Sayyid. Sayyid Hajj 'Abd^{al-}~~ul~~ Wahhab was enraged by the comparison made between the prophet's descendant and a slave and predicted that Sikandar Lodi would choke to death. According to the testimony of the author of this anecdote Sikandar Lodi actually died in this manner²³⁶. The saint Abd^{al-}~~ul~~ Quddus Gangogh~~i~~ was said by his son and biographer Rukn^{al-}~~uddin~~ to have cursed two amirs of Sikandar Lodi - Haibat Khan Sarwani and Sa'id Khan Sarwani who wished to expel him from Radaoli. The two amirs were themselves exiled by Sikandar Lodi.²³⁷

Medieval historians apparently accepted the possibility of a direct and specific intervention by God in the

234. Digby 1975 p.II.

235. Briggs vol. II, 1909, p. 137.

236. Y.62-63 and Pandey 1956 p. 158

237. Nur^{ul} Hasan 1950, p. 51.

affairs of human beings. Bada'uni believes that Hemu, the wazir of Muhammad Adil Shah Sur, overcame the forces of Ibrahim Shah Sur a pretender who fought against the master of Hemu - as such was the divine decree (تقدير الهی) ²³⁸. Badaoni further claims that Muhammad 'Adil Shah Sur defeated the forces of the rebel Taj Khan Karrani as a result of heaven's (نیک) help to the sultan. ²³⁹; the same reason is put forward by Bada'uni to explain why Mahmud Khan Sur, a grandson of Sher Shah, did not succeed to the throne of Delhi as heavens did not help him (میانیت نداد) ²⁴⁰. Ni'amatullah believes that Sikandar Lodi succeeded in conquering the Hindu fort of Antargarh through the grace of God (محایت الهی) ²⁴¹. Nizam al-din believes that Islam Shah overcame the forces of his rebel brother 'Adil Khan with heaven's help (تائید الهی) ²⁴². Occasionally medieval historians seem to interpret historical events as being predetermined. According to 'Abbas Khan Sarwani God willed from eternity (در ازل) that Sher Shah should become a sultan ²⁴³. Bada'uni records that Shaikh Abdullah ^{-A} Niazi did not attempt to flee from the wrath of Islam Shah as he believed whatever was predestined (مقرر است) would happen ²⁴⁴. ^{Abul} ~~Abdul~~ Fa'iz explains that Sher Shah succeeded to conquer Bengal as such was God's wish (مشیت الهی) ²⁴⁵.

238. B.I. 427.

239. B.I. 421.

240. B.I. 367.

241. N. 201.

242. TA.II.110.

243. A.79.

244. B.I. 404.

245. AN.I.148 and 160.

Afghan rulers are reported by our historians to have trusted that God was on their side. Bahlul Lodi wrote to his relatives in Roh that God himself has granted Delhi to the Afghans²⁴⁶. Sher Shah expected to overcome Humayun's forces with the help of God's grace (لطف الله)²⁴⁷. Sikandar Lodi, tells us Ni'amatullah, fought against Husain Sharqi of Jaunpur "his heart being bound to God"²⁴⁸.

The strength in the belief in predestination and in the possibility of discovering the hidden secrets of the future may be gauged from the importance ascribed to astrology. Medieval historians report that Afghan rulers ascended their throne on auspicious days, these having been chosen by astrologers²⁴⁹. Astrologers seem to have been involved in fixing auspicious days for events other than ascending the throne, thus the day in which the foundations of the city of Agra were laid was determined by an astrologer²⁵⁰.

Historians' preoccupation with numerology i.e. their attempts to discover the hidden meaning contained in the years' chronograms may perhaps also point to a belief in the possibility of reading the future. Nizam al-din reveals that the year in which Sher Shah died corresponded

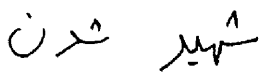
246. A.5

247. A152.

248. N. 183.

249. N. 141 and 171 and 229.

250. N. 200.

to the chronogram "death from fire"²⁵¹ and indeed Sher Shah died as a result of fire during the siege of the Hindu fort of Kalinjar. The chronogram of the year in which Shaikh Alai died corresponded to the sentence; "the mahdi has departed"²⁵², which somehow seems to prove what Badaoni apparently believed - i.e. that Shaikh Alai was indeed a mahdi. The chronogram of the year in which Ibrahim Lodi was killed at the battle of Panipat was found to mean "he was martyred (or "he testified the truth of his religion" ()²⁵³.

Family obligations

Medieval historians explain particular forms of individuals' behaviour through reference to their obligations toward the members of their nuclear family (fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters). Curiously enough they never speak of individual's duties to a family unit as such. Sons are expected to honour their fathers. When Farid Sur asked Ibrahim Lodi to transfer to him Farid's father parganas, the sultan refused to comply with the request, reminding Farid that "he is a base son who complains against his father"²⁵⁴. Apparently brothers were expected to share the possessions of the deceased father, although Farid refused to comply with this custom, maintaining that it was

251. TA.II. 107.

252. B.I. 419.

253. B.I. 336.

254. A. 42.

applicable in Roh but not in Hind.²⁵⁵ Jalal Khan Lodi, brother to Sultan Ibrahim, complained in a letter he wrote to Azam Humayun Sarwani that his royal brother coveted Jalal's possessions inherited from their father.²⁵⁶ Elder brothers were apparently accorded by custom more importance than the younger children. Nizam Khan Sur, the brother of Farid, objects when Sulaiman Sur, a younger brother, attempts to put on his head their deceased father's turban, which action probably signifies Sulaiman's claim to leadership ((يات)). Nizam Khan's argument was that the turban belonged to Farid as he was the eldest brother ((كن))²⁵⁷. Claims to seniority within a family might perhaps have been helpful in intra-family rivalries. Farid Sur's stepmother seemed to be aware of that factor when she demanded that Hasan Sur, her husband, should give a share of his property to their common younger children before his death, as otherwise Farid would, on his demise, dispossess them.²⁵⁸

Members of the same family were expected to defend each other in adversity. Thus Bahlul Lodi appealed to his relatives in Roh to come and aid him against the attacking forces of the Sharqis of Jaunpur.²⁵⁹ When Qutb Khan Lodi fell into Sharqi captivity, his sister Shams Khatun, who was a wife to Bahlul, reminded her husband that as long as Qutb Khan remained imprisoned Bahlul should neither eat

255. A. 46 and 50.

256. N. 236.

257. A. 42.

258. A. 32.

259. A. 5.

nor sleep.²⁶⁰ To retaliate (*عروض*) for the imprisonment of Qutb Khan Lodi Bahlul captured Jalal Khan, a relative of the Sharqi ruler and kept him prisoner.²⁶¹

When an amir of the Sharqi Sultan of Jaunpur, Dar^īya Khan Lodi, attacked Bahlul and besieged Delhi, Qutb Khan Lodi reminded him that "thy mother and sisters are shut up in the fort. It is not fitting that you should fight on the side of the stranger".²⁶² Sher Shah appeals to his soldiers' sense of responsibility for the fate of their families when he attempts to persuade them to back him in his struggle against Humayun. He warns his troops that should the Mughals be successful, they would enslave the families of the Sultan's supporters.²⁶³

The obligation to defend the family and its honour could lead to blood feuds (*دعوئی خون*) inherited by each successive generation of the contending families.

The Niazis and the Sambhalis who had begun their feud in the time of Sher Shah's reign continued it through the rule of Islam Shah.²⁶⁴ This blood feud began when Azam Humayun Niazi suppressed an attempted revolt of Allah-Dad Sambhali.²⁶⁵

The importance of the obligations of individuals

260. TA.I. 304.

261. N. 152.

262. TA.I. 301.

263. A. 152.

264. B.I. 388.

265. A. 232.

to the members of their families may perhaps be appreciated from the use of nuclear family metaphors to describe close personal relations between individuals not biologically related. Bahlul is said to have treated all the Afghans as his sons (فرزندان).²⁶⁶ Farid Sur addressed Muhammad Khan of Chaund, a supporter of his stepbrother Sulaiman Sur, as "uncle" (عم).²⁶⁷ Jalal Khan Lodi, the rival to the throne of Sultan Ibrahim, addressed Azam Humayun Sarwani as "uncle and father"²⁶⁸. Sikandar Lodi treated Shahzada Daulat Khan of Ranthambor as his own "son"²⁶⁹.

Obligations arising from agreement between individuals

From certain situations related by medieval historians we can deduce that individuals were expected to observe their obligations to other people or having failed to do so suffer the consequences. Jalal Khan Lodi complains to Azam Humayun Sarwani that his brother, the Sultan Ibrahim, had refused to comply with the stipulations of a certain agreement (عهد)²⁷⁰. Ni'matullah refers to the people who revolted against Ibrahim Lodi as "ungrateful"

266. N. 145.

267. TA.II. 92.

268. N. 236.

269. B.I. 322.

270. N. 236.

(²⁷¹حق ناشانر) and "faithless" (²⁷¹حرام نمکر). The same interpretation (²⁷¹حرام نمکر) is used by Nizam al-din when he describes the revolt of the Niazis against Islam Shah²⁷². In contrast to those who were "ungrateful" Jalal Khan, the patron of Hasan Sur, Sher Shah's father, is described by Nizam al-din as a person who "is grateful" (²⁷³شاکر) for Hasan's services. Sikandar Lodi expressed surprise when his own brother Barbak Shah revolted. "What have I done that you behave thus toward me?" he enquired²⁷⁴. The rebellion of Khwass Khan and his associates against Islam Shah was motivated by the amirs' anger at the sultan for having violated an agreement to which both the sultan and the amirs were parties²⁷⁵. Azam Humayun Sarwani refused to take part in a conspiracy against Ibrahim Lodi arguing that he had pledged his life to his sultan²⁷⁶. Sher Shah appealed to the ruler of Bengal not to attack him, reminding the sultan that he had never oppressed him²⁷⁷.

Individuals were expected to honour their pledges not only to the people with whom the agreements were made, but also to their descendants. Sher Khan (the future sultan) appealed to the ruler of Bengal not to violate his treaty with Sher Khan's ward, Jalal al-uddin Nuhani, the sultan in Bihar, as the grandfather of Jalal uddin had friendly

271. N. 250.

272. N. 250.

273. TA.II.112.

274. Y. 37 and Pandey 1956 p. 118.

275. TA II 109.

276. Siddiqi 1969b, p. 129.

277. A.60.

relations with the ruler of Bengal.²⁷⁸ When Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of Punjab, asked for Mughal intervention in the internal affairs of the Afghan sultanate, Ibrahim Lodi rebuked him for being ungrateful and reminded him that he had won his position thanks to the kindness of Ibrahim's father²⁷⁹.

Personal motives

Certain instances of political behaviour of individuals living in the Afghan period are explained by medieval historians through reference to some personal motive existing or assumed to have existed in the individual in question. Ambition, revenge, honour and hope for material benefits are among the motives ascribed ^{to} Afghans as a mode of interpreting their behaviour.

Jalal Khan Lodi appeals to ⁹ Azam Humayun Sarwani to help him against Sultan Ibrahim with the argument that it is ²⁹ Azam Humyun's honour (هيا) and obligation (د) to come to the aid of Jalal in his struggle²⁸⁰. Bahlul Lodi asks his Afghan relatives from Roh to help him against his foes for the sake of their prestige (حميت)²⁸¹. Farid Sur appeals to Afghans to come and help him to defend the honour of their women which had been endangered by the activities of Farid's brother Sulaiman²⁸². Afghan soldiers

278. A. 60.

279. Y.92 and Roy 1958a p. 46.

280. N. 236.

281. A.5.

support Sher Khan in his struggle against the ruler of Bengal out of their regard for their own honour (حرام) ²⁸³. Islam Shah fights the rebel Haibat Khan Niazi as such an action is consistent with sultan's own sense of honour ²⁸⁴ (نلسوسى). The same ruler refrains from punishing one of the rebels against himself as he feels ashamed (شرم) to do so - the rebel being elevated to his high position by Islam Shah himself ²⁸⁵. Sher Shah's ambition to be an "important man" (كلان) is referred to by Nizam ^{al-}uddin to explain the former's betrayal of the pretender Mahmud Lodi and his transfer of allegiance to the Timurid Humayun ²⁸⁶. The motive of personal revenge (انتقام) is cited by 'Abbas Khan Sarwani to explain the activities of Farid Sur against his own brother ²⁸⁷ and again to provide one of the reasons why Sher Shah attacked Rai Puranmal of Raisen. The latter, tells us 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, had failed to aid Sher Shah's son, Qutb Khan Sur, while he had fought the Mughal forces ²⁸⁸. Hope for material benefits provides an explanation for some of the activities of individuals. To explain the reasons of the amirs who decided to divide the kingdom of Sikandar Lodi between two of his sons, Ni'amatullah resorts to the argument that

282. A. 53.

283. A. 60.

284. TA.II.112.

285. B.I. 411.

286. TA.II.98.

287. A.53.

288. A.183.

the deed was perpetrated because of the amirs' regard for their own gain (فائده), benefit (منفعت) and out of selfish considerations (خود سری)²⁸⁹. When Bahlul Lodi wished to attract the help of the Afghans of Roh, he promised them that the future conquests would be divided among the Afghans as among brothers²⁹⁰. Farid Sur promised to distribute jagirs among Afghans should they come to aid him against his brother Sulaiman²⁹¹. Sher Khan's quarrel with the Nuhanis was explained by 'Abbas Khan Sarwani as emanating from Sher Shah's failure to give part of the booty obtained in a war against Bengal to the Nuhanis²⁹². The Niazis fought against Islam Shah hoping to conquer his possessions; they are quoted by Bada'uni as saying "the kingdom is not inheritable; he who conquers-possesses".²⁹³

Summary

The question posed in this chapter was in what ways did medieval historians interpret the activities of individuals recorded as politically active in the Afghan period.

We have described a multi-dimensional framework through which this interpretation was performed. Political process and political culture were interpreted by medieval

289. N. 224 and 230.

290. A.5.

291. A.53.

292. A.61.

293. B.I. 381.

historians as emanating from several sources; the duties and mutual obligations among sultans, amirs, the Muslim saints, the learned; the duties of Muslim rulers to preserve "justice" and the holy Muslim law, the obligations of the saints and of the learned to advise their rulers on issues of proper government. Additional levels of explanation were provided by medieval historians through their reference to the supernatural dimension, perceived as actively interfering within the realm of human activity, through recourse to individuals' obligations as to their nuclear family as it would appear to be and other individuals whom they might have been bound by agreements and finally through reference to personal motives such as desire for honour, expectation of gain, or ^{for} revenge for exhibiting a specific form of behaviour.

THE SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL HISTORIANS' HISTORIOGRAPHY OF
THE AFGHAN PERIOD

Conservative outlook

One of the major features of medieval historians' historiography of the Afghan period is the fact that most of its elements were not an original creation of our historians but an accepted inherited method of interpreting historical events as practised within the Muslim world long before medieval historians began writing their accounts of the Afghan sultans. The duties of the ruler, the role of the learned, the importance of the saints and the intervention of supernatural forces within the domain of human activity were ideas of long standing ^{which} had been developed by Muslim philosophers both in the Indian subcontinent and outside it.

Without acknowledgement of their sources medieval historians seemingly accepted and perpetuated the ideas developed by such Muslim thinkers as Nizam al-Mulk (lived 1018/19-1092¹); al-Ghazali (lived 1058/9-1111²), Nasir al-din Tusi (lived 1201-1274)³ and the Indo Muslim thinkers Diya al-din Barani (lived circa 1285-1357)⁴.

In the following sections we shall attempt to

-
1. On Nizam al Mulk see: H. Bowen 'Nizam ul-Mulk' EI¹; Nizam al Mulk's Siyasat-Nama was translated by H. Darke.
 2. On al-Ghazali see: W. M. Watt 'al-Ghazali' EI²;
 3. On Nasir al din Tusi see R. Strothmann 'al Tusi' EI¹; Nasir al'din's work on politics was translated by G.M. Wickens.
 4. On Diya al din Barani, see: P. Hardy, 'Diya al-din Barani' EI²; Barani's political work was translated by A.U.S. Khan.

summarize the traditional assumptions of Muslim historiography as developed by Muslim thinkers who preceded our medieval historians.

The "pious sultan" theory^{*}

It seems that by placing much value on the duties and personal characteristics of various Afghan sultans, medieval historians followed many of the traditional assumptions made withⁱⁿ Muslim political theory of the importance attached to the ruler as the mainstay of a social order which social order enabled the Muslims to live their lives according to the precepts of the holy Islamic law.

Muslim political philosophers developed an ideology, named by orientalist^s as ^{the} "pious sultan theory", which sought to justify the powers of local Muslim potentates after the loss of political cohesion in the 'Abbasid caliphate.

* This section is based on the works of orientalist^s whose attention has focused on the analysis and clarification of the traditional Muslim political philosophy as it had been developed up to and including the 14th century. In particular see: Aziz Ahmad, 1962; L. Binder~~x~~, 1956; Chejne, A.6., P. Hardy, 1960; A.K.S. Lambton 1954; 1956-7; 1962; 1968; 1971; 1974; R. Levy, 1957, B. Lewis, 1974; I.H. Qureshi, 1960; E.I.~~J~~. Rosenthal, 1948; H.K. Sherwani, 1945; A.H. Siddiqi, 1935; I. Siegman, 1964; W.M. Watt, 1963-4; 1968; 1973.

A Muslim ruler was entitled to claim Islamic authority as long as he followed a certain pattern of behaviour. He was considered by Muslim thinkers to have been appointed by God and endowed by him with wisdom and with justice. He had no need for further legitimation;⁵ his task was to ensure the maintenance of social order and of the shar'.⁶ A sultan's duty was perceived mainly as that of maintaining an ideal social order, one in which harmonious relations of society in a divinely ordered system were upheld. Perfect equilibrium between different members and classes in the society were understood as "justice". Justice, thus defined, was the basis for any enduring kingship⁷, and it was thought that kingship might endure even if based on non-Muslim religion but that it would be destroyed once justice was abandoned.⁸ Still, the ruler had to maintain the right religion (i.e. the sunni orthodoxy), side by side with his attempt to preserve the social order. Both "religion" (دین) and "justice" (عدل) were the pillars of the sultanate.⁹

The holy Muslim law provided rules of conduct necessary for man's welfare. These rules of conduct were

5. Lambton, 1968, p. 209.

6. Lambton, 1974, p. 417.

7. Lambton 1971, p. 442.

8. Lambton, 1971p, 424.

9. Lambton, 1968, p. 205.

furnished by God - or that was the traditional Muslim belief.¹⁰ Islam as a system of outward conduct expressed itself in the shar', which was based on the Qurān, the traditions of the utterances and of the behaviour of the Prophet and of his Companions. The authoritative interpretation of the shar' was contained in Muslim jurisprudence (fiqh), arrived by consensus (ijma') of the learned (ulama), who acted as representatives of the Muslim community (the umma)¹¹. The Muslim community was based on the shar'. The historical development of the Muslims was divinely guided. The continuity of the divine guidance was guaranteed by the consent (ijma') of the learned.¹² The internal structure and the organization of the Muslim community was defined and secured by a common acceptance and a common submission to the divine law.¹³

The sultan, according to the "pious sultan" theory, was not expected to interfere in the sphere of the shar', but to follow its injunctions, thus maintaining the loyalty of his Muslim subjects¹⁴. By maintaining order in the state the sultan provided conditions in which Islamic institutions could operate and the Muslims were free to fulfil their true destiny¹⁵. Limited by the shar' the sultan was to

10. Kerr, 1961, p. 21.

11. Rosenthal, 1948, p. 1.

12. Gibb 1947, p. 26.

13. Lambton, 1974, p. 405.

14. Lambton, 1968, p. 205.

15. Lambton, 1968, p. 207.

conduct the day-to-day business of government, organizing the military, financial and the administrative machinery¹⁶. As long as a ruler preserved Islam and society, Muslims had to obey him even if he was a sinner, an ignoramus, or an evil doer.¹⁷ Any effective authority, irrespective of the way in which it was obtained or the manner in which it was exercised, was considered by Muslim political thinkers better than anarchy.¹⁸ Order and unity came to be regarded as the highest political values.¹⁹

As it was believed that a ruler should follow certain specified forms of ideal behaviour and should abstain from evil doing, an educational literature was developed in which a prospective or actual sultan could be taught how he should rule. This type of manual for government ^{was known as} the "mirror for Princes" writings. A ruler who wished to maintain justice was advised to intervene personally whenever an abuse of justice occurred. He had to hold a public court and to act as a judge at least twice every week.²⁰ The sultan had to supervise his officials lest they overtaxed his subjects. He had to provide famine relief²¹, and finally see that the peasants, the most vulnerable of his subjects, should not be oppressed.

16. Cahen, 1970, p. 531.

17. Kerr, 1966, p. 50.

18. Lewis, 1974, p. 163.

19. Lewis, 1974, p. 163.

20. Darke, 1960, p. 10.

21. Darke, 1960, p. 14 and 23.

The safety of peasants was assured if the ruler made himself accessible to them, meeting them in person, hearing their complaints against his own officials and his assignees.²² It was thought that a ruler, wishing to preserve and to develop good qualities of character, should associate himself with the learned and those who have good moral qualities, for example unselfishness²³. All subjects should be answerable to the sultan for their misdeeds; even if they were mighty and strong they should not oppress the weak²⁴. Rulers should show liberality, distributing gifts and presents²⁵. Sultans should behave in a way fit to their status and take part in the necessary court ceremonies²⁶. As defenders of Islam, sultans should promote learning and persecute the infidels²⁷, consult the learned before deciding what course of action should be taken²⁸. If they wished to rule effectively they had to be continually informed about the state affairs, keeping an eye on their officials through a network of spies²⁹. Officials should be of good social descent³⁰, and rebels should be punished severely.³¹

22. Darke, 1960, p. 33.

23. Darke, 1960, p. 35.

24. Darke, 1960, p. 48.

25. Darke, 1960, p. 50.

26. Darke, 1960, p. 101.

27. Khan AUS, p. 5.

28. Khan AUS, p. 8.

29. Khan AUS, p. 31.

30. Khan AUS, p. 49.

31. Khan AUS, p. 59.

Rulers who follow the above mentioned directives were promised fame and success in this world and forgiveness of sins in the next.³² Should they disobey this good advice they were sure to fail and their dynasty was doomed to fall.³³ It seems obvious that medieval historians accepted the model of "pious sultan" as it had been developed by Muslim thinkers before them. The choice of material concerned with the exploits of sultans to be included in their narratives and the judgment of events expressed in their works appear to have been dictated by the traditional model of the sultan's role. Moreover, this traditional model of the sultan as guarantor of a just social order based on the injunction of the shar' was projected into the way in which medieval historians perceived the role of amirs, who were portrayed as replicas of the sultan, maintaining "justice and religion" in their spheres of authority.

The role of the saints

The importance attached by medieval historians to the saints reflects widespread belief in the significance of the existence of saints for the preservation of the order of the universe³⁴. Saints were believed to have influence with God, a proximity to whom enabled them to perform miracles. Their blessings were considered to be beneficial for the recipients.³⁵ Hagiographical literature

32. Khan AUS, p. 2 and 86.

33. Darke, 1960, p. 35 and 63.

34. Goldziher EI² (Abdal and Awtad)

35. Mala, 1977, p. 42 and p. 49.

written before the appearance of the works of medieval historians is full of examples of the importance of the saints.* Two sultans of Delhi, Iltutmish (ruled 1210-36)³⁶ and Fir^{uz} ^{Shah} (Tughluq) (ruled 1351-88)³⁷, allegedly received the throne as a result of the blessings of the saints. Stories were told how humbly the mighty sultan of Delhi behaved in the presence of saints. Iltutmish dismounted from his horse to greet Shaikh Jalal ^{al-}uddin Tibrizi³⁸. The same ruler also used to kiss the feet of Khwaja Muin ^{al-}uddin Chishti³⁹. Saints' displeasure could be fatal. It was told that the Sultan, Muhammad bin Tughluq (ruled 1324-51) died following the curse of Nizam ^{al-}uddin Auliya.⁴⁰

Greatly revered, the saints were expected to ensure the fall of rains, victory of those who believed in them over the ^{ir}enemies and to prevent calamities.⁴¹ Medieval historians accepted the traditional importance attached to the saints.

* On the rôle of the Indo-Muslim saints in the Delhi Sultanate see: Salim M. 1967, Haq, E., 1948
Haq S.M., 1974; 1975;
Habib, M., 1946; S.H. Askari, 1956; M.I. Borah, 1939.

36. Nizami, 1966, p. 16.

37. Nizami, 1975, p. 245.

38. Nizami, 1966, p. 25.

39. Nizami, 1973, p. 21.

40. Nizami, 1949, p. 167.

What is novel in their depiction of the relationship between saints and sultans in the Afghan period is a saint's willingness for and even solicitation of royal bounty.⁴² In the period preceding the invasion of Timur (1398), members of the Chishti order of sufi saints refused either to receive royal gifts or to serve sultans⁴³. Now this seems to have disappeared.

Personal qualities of rulers and amirs

It seems to us that medieval historians' manner of attributing to individuals certain good or bad personal characteristics echoes the content of ethical works written by Muslim philosophers interested in cataloguing virtues and vices.⁴⁴ A traditional catalogue of virtues, such as fear of God, humility, meeting the needs of the poor and of the orphans, and of vices, such as gluttony^{and} excess in sensual pleasures was applied to Afghan sultans and their amirs. Medieval historians appear to believe that individual characteristics were stable and did not change throughout a man's life, irrespective of his experience or at least they do not provide examples of individuals whose life-style changed as a result of their experiences.

42. See above, pp. 48; 46.

43. Haq 1965 gives examples of Chishti's behaviour in the face of a ruler.

44. Qasem 1977, pp. 229-39 provides a list of traditional virtues and vices.

Astrology

Astrology and astrologers enjoyed considerable popularity among the people, and the favour of Muslim princes and the court society throughout the Muslim world. References to astrology made by medieval historians reflect generally accepted beliefs about the possibility of reading God's will from the movement of celestial bodies.

Astrology was based on the doctrine that the universe is a simple whole and that the sublunary world is subject to the movements of the stars, whether by the direct influence of the latter or because there is a certain correspond^ence, an "analogy", between changes on earth or the movements of the stars; the latter may, thus, provide signs for indications⁴⁵. Changes in the heavenly bodies were to be correlated with changes of fortune on the earth⁴⁶. The astrologer was allegedly able to read the "signs in the sky" and to ascertain present or future events⁴⁷. He was called upon to give advice for the propitious moment for undertaking some important course of action.⁴⁸ Astrologers' opinion was sought whenever any

45. Anawati, 1970, p. 763.

46. Hodgson 1974, 421.

47. Anawati, 1970, p. 763.

48. Anawati, 1970, p. 763.

practical situation was critical and the outcome seemed to depend more on luck ^than on any calculable moves by individuals involved. This sense of dependence on fortune emerged especially in major enterprises such as military campaigns.⁴⁹ The astrologer was generally believed to be able to establish the future of an individual as it was thought that at the moment of birth of the human being the configuration of the celestial spheres fixed irrevocably the destiny of the newly born.⁵⁰

Medieval historians implicitly accept the validity of astrology.

God's direct intervention in history

The belief of medieval historians in the possibility of God's intervention in the field of human activity and his involvement in specific issues such as which of two contending groups of Muslims should win a particular encounter probably echoes in a diluted form the Muslim (more specifically the Ash'arite) view concerning God's absolute omnipotence and sovereignty in the world. According to the Ash'arites the world consists of atoms; an incessant direct intervention of God is needed to keep them together and so perpetuate the existence of the world.⁵¹ God's

49. Hodgson, 1974, p. 420.

50. Anawati, 1970, p. 767, Rosenthal, 1961, pp. 110-112.

51. Pines 1970, p. 792 & p. 813.

will is absolute. What is good and what is evil is determined by God's will.⁵² Man does not perform his own actions, but may "acquire" them (Kasb). Man's activities are brought about in every particular case through a power of acquisition specially created by God in the man in question.⁵³ According to Asharite philosophy human beings "do not play any part in the drama of choosing or doing and reap none of the moral or religious fruits accruing from such initiative".⁵⁴ God's decrees are perceived as both irreversible and inscrutable.⁵⁵ The acceptance of God's absolute freedom vis-a-vis his creatures led some Muslim philosophers to accept the possibility that he could "condemn prophets to eternal damanation and can reserve paradise for infidels."⁵⁶ The same belief was expressed in a more mild form in the following way: "We do not say that our good deeds will be certainly rewarded and our bad deeds undoubtedly forgiven".⁵⁷

Summary: Medieval historians offered a set of fragmentary and unrelated theories to explain the behaviour of individuals politically active throughout the Afghan period. Their historiography is couched in terms of ideas which

52. Pines, 1970, p. 813.

53. Pines 1970, p. 813.

54. Fakhry, 1970, p. 230.

55. Fakhry, 1970, p. 233.

56. Kassem, 1972, p. 89.

57. Maudoodi, 1965, p. 680.

have been developed long before their time. Although none of them explicitly refers to a specific Muslim work concerned with political theory, ethics, metaphysics, theology or astrology, it seems clear that they had followed very closely the traditional Muslim world^hview.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERPRETATIVE VALUE OF THE MEDIEVAL HISTORIANS' HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE AFGHAN PERIOD

Having described in the previous chapter the interpretative structure through which medieval historians themselves attempted to comprehend the meaning of the political culture of the Afghan period, we shall devote this chapter to discussing the issue whether medieval historiography forms a coherent and valid mode of explanation of all the known events which occurred in northern India throughout the rule of the Lodi and Sur dynasties.

Vagueness of interpretation

Medieval historians have not developed an overall, coherent system of interpretation of the Afghan period as a whole, nor indeed have they offered a general explanation of the occurrences during the respective reigns of individual sultans. They have limited themselves to attempted explanations of some of the deeds performed by individuals living in the period under consideration. Often their interpretation is in vague terms, which in fact fail to illuminate events and increase understanding. Thus Ni'matullah informs us that Ashraf Jilwani revolted against

Sultan Sikandar Lodi because he "lacked judgement (بجردی)¹; the same historian explains that Rai Bhid fled from Sikandar Lodi by reason of the "mistaken fear" (واصله) that he had gained a hold over Rai Bhid's nature"². Ibrahim Lodi's quarrel with his amirs evolved, according to Ni'matullah, from the sultan's "lack of confidence" (بسی اعتباری) in them.³ Bada'uni thinks that the proper explanation for Ibrahim's behaviour toward his amirs is his "mistrust" (بسی اعتمادی) in them⁴. Some of the activities of the sultans and of the amirs are explained through reference to some vague psychological or personal qualities possessed by individuals who performed them. Sikandar Lodi gave Jaunpur to his brother Barbak Shah because he wished to express his "royal favour" (الطفات خروانه)⁵; Jalal Khan Lodi submitted to Ibrahim Lodi, thus ending his revolt, as he did not have the talent (استقرار) and the aptitude (قابلیت) to govern⁶. The revolt of the amirs of Ibrahim Lodi is interpreted by Ni'matullah as emanating from their collective quality of being vain & glorious (خردوی)⁷.

1. N. 175.

2. N. 180.

3. N. 246.

4. B.I. 328.

5. N. 173.

6. N. 240.

7. N. 250.

Absence of interpretation

We have set out in the previous chapter the complex system of interpretation offered by medieval historians in apparent explanation of the political behaviour of individuals. Yet despite a proliferation and variety of explanations, many of the activities of sultans and amirs are merely recorded without any commentary whatsoever. In most instances medieval historians narrate events purportedly as they occurred in reality - how a particular ruler ascended the throne, how he fought against his external and internal foes, how he laboured to consolidate his authority; they may mention revolts and conspiracies against individual rulers, wars of succession following rulers' death - all this in the great majority of instances without any attempt at explaining the circumstances which brought those events about or the motives of individuals who were involved in them. As this absence of interpretative commentary typifies most of the material written by medieval historians, we shall offer only one example by way of illustration. We know from our sources that about 1525 Ibrahim Lodi faced a revolt of certain amirs, who invited the Timurid Babur to intervene⁸. At the same time Ibrahim Lodi continued to command the allegiance of other amirs. No explanation is offered as to the reason for this split in the ranks of Ibrahim's nobles.

8. N. 253.

Logical incompatibility

Medieval historians attempted to explain the activities of the Afghan sultans and other politically active individuals by reference to different layers of interpretation. The different levels of explanation portrayed above are not logically compatible and some of them contradict each other. Thus if one accepts the possibility of God's intervention in history either through his predestined plans or through sudden specific acts, no human explanation is possible and indeed once the belief in God's presence within the realm of human activity is accepted, it makes it superfluous^u_k to offer any type of explanation other than the will of God. The historiography of medieval historians is further complicated by their assumption that some special efficacy of saints may influence the course of events. Medieval historians do not seem concerned about the metaphysical problems posed by the relationship between God's will, saints' powers and human activity. The following story will serve as an illustration of this point. We are told that Bahlul Lodi, having at one time acquired the throne of Delhi for a sum of money from a faqir, subsequently became sultan⁹. It is not clear whether he actually ascended the throne as a result of the powers of the holy man, or by reason of God's will, or because of Bahlul's political abilities. We are never sure which of the

9. TA.I. 295.

activities described by our historians should be seen as emanating from God's unfathomable wishes and which as arising from the mundane ambitions of individuals with whom our historians are concerned. Did God who wished Sher Shah to be a sultan, also will him to fight against his brother Sulaiman, to betray ^{the} Mughal ^{emperor} Humayun and to evict the Sultan Jalal uddin Nuhanî from Bihar? Was Islam Shah's son Firoz dethroned and murdered as a punishment for the execution by Islam Shah of his nephew Mahmud Khan Sur¹⁰ or was it a result of Islam Shah's order to flog Shaikh Mahdi ^{Alai}¹¹. Were both these events predestined or were they a result of an act of a misinformed or of an evil ruler?

The problem of a belief in predestination as evidenced from the assumption of the truth of astrology and of numerology, is never confronted by our historians with the other, secular, types of explanation that they offer. They seem to accept mutually exclusive and contradictory propositions of determinism and free will and as a result the whole framework of their historiography cannot be maintained.

Medieval historians seem to be completely unaware of the grave philosophical problems posed by their simultaneously accepting the assumption of God's omnipotence and omniscience and the possibility of his personal intervention within the field of human activities on the one

10. B.I. 379 and B.I. 367.

11. B.I. 408.

hand, and man's freedom of action and responsibility for his actions on the other hand. They do not discuss the issues of incompatibility between justice and God's omnipotence, between God's decree and human actions.*

Lack of critical assessment

As we have already mentioned, medieval historians interpret discrete events without paying any attention to the existence, within their own histories, of facts which contradict the specific interpretation they offer. Thus when Khwass Khan, an amir of Sher Shah, revolted against Islam Shah and when his rebellion ended with Khwass Khan's

* A discussion of the antinomies between God's omnipotence and the freedom of will and responsibility of man for his actions did occupy a place in the Muslim philosophy and theology. The Mutazilite school within the Muslim philosophy propounded the view that God can not do evil and that man is free to choose between god and evil and consequently could be held responsible for his actions. The Ash'arites believed that God's will is absolute and no restriction can be put on his freedom of action. They left the problem of human freedom and responsibility unanswered. (see Pines 1970, pp. 787-813). They believed that God creates evil without being an evildoer (Watt, 1948, p. 144). Medieval historians do not demonstrate any acquaintance with the Mutazilite view; rather they seem to have uncritically followed the Ash'arite view.

failure through reference to a general principle that "war against one's master does not prosper" (میسنت نرار)¹². Abul Fa~~z~~l apparently forgets that Islam Shah's father, Sher Shah, rose to power through betrayal of five of his masters - Muhammad of Bihar, Jalal ^{al-}uddin of Bihar, the pretender Mahmud Lodi, and the Timurids Babur and Humayun¹³. Medieval historians noted that Afghan rulers ascended their thrones on auspicious days chosen by their astrologers.¹⁴ They do not however comment on the fact that out of seven Afghan sultans three died a violent death, events which would appear to contradict the possibility that they ascended their thrones on truly auspicious days. Bada'uni interprets the murder of Fir^uz Shah, the son of Islam Shah, as a retribution brought on the latter for his having ordered the execution of Mahmud Khan Sur¹⁵, apparently disregarding the fact this form of punishment could not have affected Islam Shah ^{who} was already dead when it occurred.

In a more general way, there seems to be a dis-association between the treatment of the history by historiography of medieval historians and most of the political events they describe. Their narratives contain descriptions of how Muslims fought other Muslims, of how rulers ascended their thrones through murder and deceit and of how members of the same family struggled with each other. Yet these events are left unexplained. Political

12. AN.I.331.

13. A. 52 and 57 and 71-72 and 86-87 and 114.

14. See above Chapter One.

realities and political theory remain mutually separated and historiography seems to be irrelevant in explaining the political culture and process as it occurred throughout the Afghan period.

Summary

The historiography of medieval historians contains mutually exclusive assumptions. They assume that the future is determined by stars, that God's will can manifest itself in the field of human activity and that the saints can influence the course of human history; but they also appear to narrate events as if these were determined by human actors. Medieval historians do not provide any criteria as to which of these factors constitutes a proper explanation of particular events. Moreover most of the historical narrative does not contain any explanation for the activities of the individuals involved.

CHAPTER FOUR

MODERN HISTORIANS' MODE OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS OF MEDIEVAL HISTORIANS

Modern historians have accepted the view that before an attempt could be made to reconstruct the history of the Afghan period, the truth value of the works of medieval historians must be established. Source analysis must logically precede any historical reconstruction if there is a reasonable doubt whether the accounts of medieval historians contain the true description and interpretation of events as they happened. K. R. Qanungo, writing as early as 1921, has been aware of the need to perform source analysis of the material relevant to the period under consideration. He writes: "the test of severe, fair-minded criticism is necessary before the materials could be utilized so as to form a basis of a sober, scientific discovery."¹ Writing more than forty years after the appearance of Qanungo's monograph on Sher Shah, Hameed ud-din reiterates the necessity for source analysis, stressing that "in attempting to reconstruct its history, it is necessary to study the character of historical writing on this period and to examine the attitude of early historians, together with the factors which influenced their mind at work."² I. H. Siddiqi, expressing a similar

1. Qanungo, 1931, p. 428.

2. Hameed-ud-din, 1962, p. 44.

view, argued that it was of great importance to understand "the likes and dislikes, social background, religious and political ideals and group associations."³ of medieval historians before an attempt could be made to reconstruct the history of the period.

The following works of modern historians seem to be of particular importance toward the analysis of the possible sources of biases and preconceptions contained in the accounts of medieval historians: K. R. Qanungo's A Study of Abbas Sarwani published in 1921;^{*4} N. B. Roy's Makhzan-i Afghani and Tarikh-i Majlis Arae;⁵ S. M. Imam ud-din's Some Persian Literary Sources of the Afghan History of India;⁶ Hameed ud-din's Historians of the Afghan Rule in India;⁷ I. H. Siddiqi's analysis of Hasan Ali's Tawarikh-i Daulati Sher Shahi,⁸ of Kabir's Afsana-i Shahan,⁹ of Abdullah's Tarikh-i Daudi¹⁰ and of Rizaqulla's Waqiat-i

3. Siddiqi, 1969c, p. 277.

* Some works which dealt with the chronicles of medieval historians were published before 1921 (e.g. Blochmann's study of Bada'uni, published in 1869 or Elliot & Dawson's History of India as Told by its Own Historians) but these were mainly concerned with establishing biographical data about our historians and did not interest themselves with their historiography.

4. Qanungo, 1921a.

5. Roy, 1953.

6. Imam ud-din, 1959.

7. Hameed ud-din, 1962.

8. Siddiqi, 1963a.

9. Siddiqi, 1966a.

10. Siddiqi, 1966.

Mushtaqi;¹¹ S. H. Askari's work on Kabir's Afsana-i
Shahan;¹² S. C. Misra's work on Abbas Khan Sarwani¹³
 and K. R. Qanungo's composition on Ahmad Yadgar.¹⁴ The
 most recent publication which looks in detail into the
 historiography of the works of medieval historians is
 Hayban^s Mukhia's Historians and Historiography During the
Reign of Akbar which appeared in 1976.

Modern historians' commentaries on the accounts
 of medieval historians have taken two forms. One form
 has been concerned with the interpretation of each of the
 individual sources as an entity in itself. The other form
 consisted of an attempt to formulate general theories on
 the nature of the Persian literary sources for the history
 of northern India under the Afghan rule and of their value
 for the reconstruction of the history of the Afghan period.

In ^{the} course of the first type of commentary, modern
 historians have attempted to find answers to such questions
 as when a particular source was composed, by whom, on what
 kind of information it had relied, what is the truth value
 of the traditions on which the literary sources had relied,
 what were the aims of writing that particular account, what
 were the conditions under which a medieval historian had to
 work, what is the professional standard of his work and

11. Siddiqi, 1969c.

12. Askari, 1965.

13. Misra, 1965.

14. Qanungo, 1963 and 1961.

what is the value of the work for a modern historian attempting to reconstruct the history of the Afghan period.

In the following section we shall summarize the results of the research carried out by modern historians on these matters and then proceed to present theories formulated by ^{them} concerning the general nature of medieval historians' work.

Modern analysis of individual works of medieval historians

Hasan 'Ali Khan Bahadur's Tawarikh-i Daulat-i Sher Shahi purports to be the earliest extant history of the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur.¹⁵ Some modern scholars have accepted the authorship and the dating of this work as genuine, and the work as valuable for historians of the Afghan period. According to S. M. Imamuddin the Tawarikh-i Daulat-i Sher Shahi "was written by a close associate of Sher Shah, it contains a valuable information about his reign and administration... it had escaped destruction at the hands of the Mughals"¹⁶. The particular value of this work is its objectivity as it is "honest in recording favourable and unfavourable events in the career of Sher Shah"¹⁷. Hasan 'Ali Khan's history of Sher Shah has been accepted as an original and true work by P. Saran,

15. Imamuddin, 1960, p. 2 and Roy, 1952, p. 53.

16. Imamuddin, 1960, p. 2.

17. Imamuddin, 1959, p. 39.

N. B. Roy, Hameed uddin and by S. C. Misra¹⁸. I. H. Siddiqi argues on the other hand that both the authorship and the dating of Tawarikh-i-Daulat-i-Sher Shahi are fakes and that the work was composed perhaps as late as Shah Jahan's reign (Shah Jahan reigned 1628-1657/8). In the opinion of I.H.~~S~~ Siddiqi the work of Hasan⁴Ali contains too many mistakes and anachronisms to be considered as a genuine source for the reign of Sher Shah Sur. Thus Hasan⁹Ali claims that Sher Shah's father, Mian Hasan, held as his jagir the territory of Munghyr, whereas other sources describe him as a jagirdar of Sahsaram and Khwaspur. A relative of Sher Shah, Muhammad Khan Sur is described by Hasan⁵Ali as a hakim of Jaunpur, whilst other medieval historians note that he was a hakim of Chaund. Sher Shah is said by Hasan⁶Ali to have married the widow of the sultan of Bihar, Muhammad Nuhani; no other sources refer to this important event. Hasan⁷Ali uses the word subah - denoting a province - and this term was not used in India before the reign of Akbar (ruled 1557-1605) and therefore it would appear that this work could not have been composed in 1548 as Hasan⁸Ali claims. Hasan¹Ali also describes a revolt of 'Tughluqs' and of 'Khaljis' against Sher Shah. This event is unknown to other sources. Moreover there were no individuals known to medieval historians who could be described as "Tughluqs" ; "Tughluq" was a name of one of the sultans of Delhi - Ghiya^sal-~~at~~uddin

18. Misra 1957 and Hameed-uddin 1962 p. 46 and Roy 1952.

Tughluq (ruled 1320-1325). His successor was the Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (ruled 1325-1351); no other individual bore this name after the extinction of the Tughluq dynasty following the death of its last representative the Sultan Nasir uddin Mahmud (ruled 1405-1412). All these considerations have contributed to I. H. Siddiqi's conclusion, that Tawarikh-i-Daulat-i-Sher Shahi is a fabrication. The first historian to quote this work was a 17th century historian Sujana Rai in his Khulasat al-Tawarikh. On the basis of this fact I. H. Siddiqi arrived at the hypothesis "Hasan Ali Khan's Tawarikh-i-Daulat-i-Sher Shahi" was composed in late 17th century by an anonymous faker"¹⁹. The fact that the title page and the colophon of this work are forgeries was established in 1950 by S.A.A. Rizvi²⁰. K. K. Qanungo shares I. H. Siddiqi's view that Tawarikh-i-Daulat-i-Sher Shahi is a forged work²¹. B. P. Ambashthya tries to steer the middle course between the scholars who consider the work to be a fake and those who think it to be a genuine source containing a valuable material for the rule of Sher Shah. In B. P. Ambashthya's opinion "some mistakes have crept into the writings of Hasan Ali... some of them are grave ... wrong statements rob much of its value as a chronicle"²². Still B. P. Ambashthya does not dismiss the work as a totally worthless forgery.

19. Siddiqi, 1969a, pp. 84-87.

20. Rizvi, 1950, pp. 84-87.

21. Qanungo, 1965, p. 17.

22. Ambashthya, 1974, pp. 26-27.

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Neither the date nor the authorship of Rizq^Aullah Mushtaqi's Waqiat-i-Mushtaqi, (composed about 1572) are questioned by modern historians. However his political sympathies are a matter of controversy among modern historians. M. A. Rahim considers him to be pro-Mughal²³. N. B. Roy describes Rizqullah as showing pro-Afghan tendencies, demonstrated in the way he portrays Sher Shah making him into a "national Afghan hero, glossing over his foibles and giving more credit to him as an administrator than he was entitled to"²⁴. Hameed uddin claims that Rizq^Aullah shows no signs of "political bias or fear in describing political events"²⁵. He was independent of political pressures²⁶. Hameed uddin argues that Rizq^Aullah's sources were at least as far as the reign of Ibrahim Lodi was concerned "exceptionally good" as he was an eyewitness to that turbulent period²⁷. For I. H. Siddiqi, Rizq^Aullah's objectivity is beyond doubt. Rizq^Aullah "did not try to glorify the Afghan rule"²⁸; moreover there is "no sign of twisting the facts, whether to cover up the weakness of any person or for the sake of familial adulation"²⁹. Yet I. H. Siddiqi also maintains

23. Rahim, 1961, p. 13.

24. Roy, 1952, p. 53.

25. Hameed-uddin, 1962, p. 48.

26. Hameed-uddin, 1962, p. 45.

27. Hameed-uddin, 1961d, p. 317.

28. Siddiqi, 1967a, pp. 248-249.

29. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 2.

that Rizq^{-A}ullah's account of Bahlul Lodi's reign cannot be trusted as it was based on "hearsay"³⁰.

Modern historians are in agreement that Rizq^{-A}ullah's work falls short of 'proper standards' of historical writing. S. M. Im^{-A}am uddin complains that Rizq^{-A}ullah included in his account "tales of miracles and apparitions, exhibiting the credulity of his age and of the author"³¹. These "stories of miracles and apparitions and enchantments deform the work"³². K. S. Lal appears to agree with Im^Mam uddin's judgement writing that the Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi is "not a first rate work" as it contains "digressions and anecdotes"³³. For B. N. Luniya the Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi is only a "quasi historical work... not carefully planned ... its narrative is disjointed"³⁴. I. H. Siddiqi complains that Rizq^{-A}ullah "narrates his stories whenever they came to his mind; thus he reduces the importance of his work"³⁵. His work lacks "unity of theme and chronology"³⁶. According to Siddiqi an even more serious defect of Rizq^{-A}ullah's form of writing, is his lack of "methodological doubt", the absence from his work of "taste for research" and the will to "question the evidence to ascertain the

30. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 16.

31. Im^{-A}am uddin, 1960, p.4.

32. Im^{-A}am uddin, 1959, p. 46.

33. Lal, 1963, p.8.

34. Luniya, 1969, pp. 109-110.

35. Siddiqi, 1966, p. 22.

36. Siddiqi, 1969c, p. 282.

facts"³⁷.

Despite all the alleged shortcomings of the Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi, of its lack of methodical presentation, ill arrangements of material, long digressions, repetitions and inclusions of stories about devils and jugglery, the work is still considered by modern historians to be of great value for any reconstruction of the history of the Afghan period. S. M. Imam uddin says that despite the fact that Rizq^Aullah includes in his work a "great deal of material which is not strictly speaking historical" the composition is still important as^{ty} "throws an interesting sidelight on life and manners of the people... from these anecdotes we can gather material bearing on the social and economic conditions"³⁸. B. N. Luniya points out that Rizq^Aullah's work "contains adequate and authentic details... about the general administration, conditions of the people, administrative machinery, steps taken to safeguard agriculture, measures to protect the citizens"³⁹.

I. H. Siddiqi finds that Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi contains "interesting information mixed with legends and fables"⁴⁰; this information is very valuable as far as it

37. Siddiqi, 1969c, p. 281.

38. Imamuddin, 1960, p. 4.

39. Luniya, 1969, pp. 109-110.

40. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 16.

enables historians to see glimpses of the "political history, social and economic conditions of India under the Afghan rule"⁴¹. For M. A. Rahim, ^ARizqullah's account is important as it "reveals the tribal character of the Afghan sultanate"⁴².

'Abbas Khan Sarwani's Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shahi has⁴ raised much learned controversy among modern historians. Scholars have argued about the aims of this work, the type of constraints under which^a Abbas Khan Sarwani had to compose it, the reliability of his sources and the value of^this source for the reconstruction of the reign of Sher Shah Sur.

Some historians assume that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani could not have told all the truth about Sher Shah, as the author was writing when the throne of India was occupied by Akbar, the son of the Timurid Humayun - whom Sher Shah had succeeded in evicting from his throne. B. P. Ambashthya and Hameed uddin believe that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani "wrote on Akbar's orders" and that therefore the truthfulness of his account of the rule of the rebel against the Timurid dynasty must be suspected⁴³. M. A. Rahim and S. M. Imam uddin stress that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani had "freedom of narration"⁴⁴ and therefore his work should be trusted as a faithful account of Sher Shah's reign.

B. P. Ambashthya suggests that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's sources could have been the official documents of the court, which he might have read in the Mughal libraries, and

41. Siddiqi, 1966, p. 22.

42. Rahim, 1961, p. 20.

43. Ambashthya 1974, p. 19 and Hameed-uddin, 1962, p. 44.

44. Rahim, 1961, p. 13 and Imamuddin, 1960, p.3.

which might have contained authentic reports about the Mughal-Afghan relations⁴⁵. S. M. Imam uddin claims that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani had access to personal sources of information as he had been acquainted with "persons whose fathers and grandfathers had served and lived during the Pathan rule"⁴⁶, and who had, in the opinion of S. C. Misra "formed the higher echelons of the ruling strata, whose life experiences could be of much help in establishing the truth about Sher Shah's activities"⁴⁷. On the other hand Harban§ Mukhia asserts that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's "circle of information" was a "narrow one"⁴⁸. I. H. Siddiqi opines that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani based his account on "hearsay"⁴⁹, and K. R. Qanungo claims that our author repeated "idle camp gossip"⁵⁰. I. H. Siddiqi conjectures that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's main source of information were the stories passed on to him by the members of the Sarwani family who could not have known much about the youth of Sher Shah, as he had been then merely "a petty noble"⁵¹.

Further, modern historians disagree about the latent aims of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's account. Some believe the work to be a glorification of Afghan rule⁵², the achievements of which were magnified out of all proportion by

45. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 19.

46. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 3.

47. Misra, 1965, p. 249.

48. Mukhia, 1976, pp. 163-164.

49. Siddiqi, 1971, pp. 8-9.

50. Qanungo, 1921, pp. 428-429.

51. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 2.

52. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 52.

this Afghan historian⁵³; 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's history, say some historians, aimed not only at the general glorification of the Afghan period in India, but its more specific end was to write "an apologia for Sher Shah"⁵⁴, and he wanted to absolve Sher Shah "from the charge of infamy levelled by the Mughal chroniclers"⁵⁵. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani is accused by some modern historians of having idealized Sher Shah and of having attributed to the first sultan of the Sur dynasty a number of political and administrative institutions, which in fact he did not establish⁵⁶. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani allegedly wished to "whitewash" Sher Shah to "cover up" his less credible deeds"⁵⁷. Tuhfa-i Sher Shahi is according to Harbans Mukhia, not less than "a panegyric of Sher Shah, the loyalty of the author rests unreservedly with the second Afghan empire in India"⁵⁸. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, as "a proud Afghan" could not but see the reign of Sher Shah as "a glorious achievement"; out of sympathy for Sher Shah 'Abbas Khan Sarwani "overlooked his shortcomings"⁵⁹.

K. R. Qanungo believes that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani emphasizes too much the part of the Sarwani family in the history of the reign of Sher Shah, probably because it was the author's own family⁶⁰.

53. Siddiqi, 1971, pp. 8-9.

54. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 149.

55. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 34.

56. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 20 and Rahim, 1961, p. 13.

57. Ambashthya, 1974, pp. 51-52 and 57.

58. Mukhia, 1976, p. 160.

59. Mukhia, 1976, pp. 161-163.

60. Qanungo, 1921, pp. 428-429.

Whereas one group of modern historians asserts that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's account shows too much pro-Afghan, pro-Sher Shah, and pro-Sarwani bias in the interpretation of the reign of Sher Shah, another group believes that despite his Afghan origins 'Abbas Khan Sarwani overcame his "nationalist" and "family" outlook. M. A. Rahim writes that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani was "conscious of the defects of the Afghans"⁶¹, and S. C. Misra emphasizes that despite the "deep nostalgia for the past" 'Abbas Khan Sarwani did not have any "deep seated resentment against the Mughals"⁶².

One of the charges which has been made against 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's work is that it falls short of the standard of historical research needed for the proper treatment of its subject and indeed may not rank as a "history" in the correct use of the term. H. Elliot claims that the Tuhfa-i-Sher Shahi is a "biography rather than history ... various actors set forth their opinions in speeches"⁶³. This charge of dramatization at the expense of truth was levelled against 'Abbas Khan Sarwani by S. M. Imamuddin, who writes that the former was "fond of putting speeches into the mouths of his characters"⁶⁴ and by K. K. Qanungo for whom 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's composition was "more a drama than a sober history"⁶⁵. I. H. Siddiqi accuses 'Abbas Khan Sarwani of "practising the economy of truth ... being indifferent toward dates... compiling his work without

61. Rahim, 1961, p. 13.

62. Misra, 1965, pp. 248-249.

63. Elliot and Dowson, 1872, p. 302.

64. Imamuddin, 1960, p.4.

65. Qanungo, 1921, p. 49.

subjecting his sources to historical scrutiny... creating confusion by narrating facts regardless of chronology"⁶⁶. K. R. Qanungo adds that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani was unable to "knit firmly ... his inaccurate, inconsistent ... contradictory account"⁶⁷. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani also shows, according to K. R. Qanungo "an awful ignorance of geography".⁶⁸

Modern historians disagree about the value of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's Tuhfa-i Akbar Shahi as a source for the reconstruction of the reign of Sher Shah. P. Saran believes it to be "the main source for Sher Shah"⁶⁹, while K. R. Qanungo claims that "a considerable portion of it has to be rejected in critical examination"⁷⁰. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani is accused by K. K. Qanungo of inventing stories and of harming Sher Shah's reputation and character⁷¹. The only part of the work of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani which K. R. Qanungo does not regard as inaccurate or as a fraud, is the portion of the Tuhfa-i Akbar Shahi which describes the institutions created by Sher Shah. K. R. Qanungo accepts this part as authentic because it is corroborated by Riq'atullah's Waqiat-i Mushtaqi⁷². S. M. Imam uddin

66. Siddiqi 1971, pp. 8-9 and p. 33.

67. Qanungo 1921, p. 429.

68. Qanungo, 1921, p. 40.

69. Saran, 1952, p. 69.

70. Qanungo, 1921a, p. 90.

71. Qanungo, 1921, p. 74.

72. Qanungo, 1921, p. 95.

opines that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani "failed to give her Shah proper consideration"⁷³, thus apparently following K. K. Qanungo's judgement that "Abbas was frightened by Akbar ... lest he offended Akbar by ascribing to Sher Shah Akbar's innovations"⁷⁴. Whilst K. K. Qanungo believes that 'Abbas Khan Sarwani underestimated the achievements of Sher Shah, B. P. Ambashthya opines that he might well have over-estimated the importance of Sher Shah's achievements having "retrojected Akbar's reforms to Sher Shah's reign"⁷⁵.

The known sources for those portions of the Tabaqat-i Akbari which describe the Afghan period in India are thought to be Rizq^Aullah's Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi⁷⁶ and 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's Tuhfa-i Sher Shahi. The latter work is not mentioned in the list of sources provided by Nizam uddin - but this lack of acknowledgement is explained by B. P. Ambashthya as a precaution of the author of the Tabaqat-i Akbari to avoid the displeasure of the emperor Akbar who had come to dislike 'Abbas Khan Sarwani⁷⁷.

The political sympathies of Nizam al-din as revealed in his treatment of the Lodi and the Sur dynasties are a matter of controversy among modern scholars. S. M. Imam uddin claims that Nizam al-din "does not show any great

73. Imamuddin, 1959, p. 44.

74. Qanungo, 1921, p. 429.

75. Ambashthya, 1974, pp. 64-65.

76. Prasad, 1938, p. 789.

77. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 46.

prejudices against the Afghans"⁷⁸, whereas I. H. Siddiqi believes that Nizam ^{al-}uddin, in his treatment of the reign of Sher Shah Sur "reflects the official hostility of Mughal historians"⁷⁹. Ambashthya describes, in a rather vague way, Nizam al-din as a "non-official Mughal historian" and praises his "objective study of Sher Shah"⁸⁰. M. A. Rahim's evaluation of the "Afghan Chapters" of the Tabaqat-i Akbari appears to be self contradictory; although he asserts that the work is "a fair study", he also claims that though "reliable... Nizam uddin occasionally conceals the facts"⁸¹. In K. K. Qanungo's opinion Nizam al-din's objectivity makes his "testimony in favour of Sher Shah to be of greater weight than 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's evaluation"⁸² of the founder of the Sur dynasty.

S. M. Imam uddin praises Nizam al-din for his "good professional standards" of history writing and for inserting generally correct dates⁸³.

Bada'uni's account of the Afghan period, as it appears in his Muntakhabat-i Tawarikh, seems to be based on the Tabaqat-i Akbari⁸⁴; the Tuhfa-i-Sher Shahi⁸⁵ and

78. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 6.

79. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 3.

80. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 49.

81. Rahim, 1961, p. 12 and p. 17.

82. Qanungo, 1931, p. 441.

83. Imam uddin, 1958, pp. 48-49.

84. Hardy EI² (Bada'uni).

85. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 37 and p. 45.

personal recollections⁸⁶.

Bada'uni's sympathies - and on this point there are no disagreements among modern historians - appear to be with the Afghans in general and with Sher Shah Sur in particular. His study of the Afghan sultans is described by M. A. Rahim as "more Afghan than the Afghans, more than fair"⁸⁷ and I. H. Siddiqi claims that Bada'uni's treatment of Sher Shah shows that its author "does not suppress the truth, there are no signs of twisting the facts or of adulation"⁸⁸.

Modern historians argue that Bada'uni's favourable treatment of Sher Shah, the great enemy of the Timurid dynasty, was motivated by Bada'uni's dislike of his contemporary sultan - the Timurid Akbar. "Dissatisfied with the religious policies of Akbar" writes Imam uddin "he became favourably disposed toward the Afghan rulers - especially the Surs"⁸⁹. B. P. Ambashthya, who refers to Bada'uni as "non-official Mughal historian"⁹⁰, appears to be in agreement with the evaluation of S. M. Imam uddin when he says that Bada'uni "probably hailed Sher Shah as a champion of Islam in contrast to Akbar"⁹¹. Ambashthya believes that Bada'uni deliberately omitted facts detrimental

86. Qanungo, 1921, pp. 442-443.

87. Rahim, 1961, p. 12.

88. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 3.

89. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 6.

90. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 45.

91. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 45.

to Sher Shah's reputation⁹². I. H. Siddiqi assumes that Bada'uni praised Sher Shah because the latter "helped religious institutions"⁹³. K. K. Qanungo argues that Bada'uni's favourable account of Sher Shah and Islam Shah was the result of the disgust he felt with Akbar and so he "has thrown himself with some warmth and sympathy into the narration of the achievements of Sher Shah and Islam Shah"⁹⁴.

Whilst modern historians have recognized Bada'uni as a friend of the Afghans in general and of Sher Shah in particular, they have delineated Abul Fazl as an enemy of the Afghans. Abul Fazl was "the worst enemy of Sher Shah" writes R. P. Tripathi⁹⁵; being an "official Mughal chronicler", comments Ambashthya, he "has presented the life and the career of Sher Shah in a derogatory tone ... to form a proper perspective to a more brilliant picture about the good qualities of Humayun - the father of Abul Fazl's patron Akbar"⁹⁶. According to W. Haig Abul Fazl was "ever ready to disparage those who drove his master's father from his throne"⁹⁷; I. H. Siddiqi believes that Abul Fazl "reflects the hostility of the Mughal historians"⁹⁸

92. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 62.

93. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 3.

94. Qanungo, 1921, pp. 442-443.

95. Tripathi, 1921/2, p. 127.

96. Ambashthya, 1974, pp. 58-59.

97. Haig, 1937, p. 45.

98. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 3.

and that he was "biased against any person opposed to the Mughals"⁹⁹. M. Elphinstone even suggests that Abul Fa~~z~~l "attributed the administrative system of Sher Shah to Akbar"¹⁰⁰. The most mild evaluation of Abul Fa~~z~~l's treatment of the Sur dynasty is that proposed by M.A. Rahim who writes that Abul Fa~~z~~l "gave the facts if this did not injure the reputation of Akbar"¹⁰¹. Some historians have gone so far as to conjecture that Abul Fa~~z~~l faked those parts of the biography of Sher Shah which describe the latter's early life. This account "is wholly devoid of truth" claims K. R. Qanungo¹⁰². Ambashthya asserts that Abul Fa~~z~~l omits to mention the early reforms of Sher Shah because of "his contemptuous outlook about the early career and character of Sher Shah"¹⁰³.

As Abul Fa~~z~~l became identified by modern historians as an arch-enemy of Sher Shah, every word of praise he has for Sher Shah seems to be very important and valuable in the eyes of modern biographers of the first ruler of the Sur dynasty. His "testimony in favour of Sher Shah is more valuable than the eulogies of Abbas" writes K. R. Qanungo^{103a}, and the same opinion is expressed by R. P.

99. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 77.

100. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 458.

101. Rahim, 1961, p. 12.

102. Qanungo, 1921, p. 444.

103. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 77.

103a. Qanungo, 1921, p. 444.

Tripathi¹⁰⁴ and by S. M. Imam uddin¹⁰⁵.

Firishta's account of the Afghan sultans was based, in the opinion of B. P. Ambashthya on the Tabaqat-i Akbari and on some unknown source, which was used by him to narrate the Lodi period in more detail than that included in Nizam al-din's account¹⁰⁶. Apart from a suggestion of M. A. Rahim that Firishta was pro-Mughal in his political sympathies¹⁰⁷, there appears to be no other modern evaluation of the Tarikh-i Firishta as far as it is concerned with our period.

Modern historians believe that in his capacity as a librarian to Khan i-Khanan 'Abdur Rashid, the emperor Jahangir and to Khan-i-Jahan Lodi¹⁰⁸, Ni' matullah, the author of Tarikh - i Khan Jahan Lodi, had access to records and to official documents. In addition to documents Ni' matullah probably utilized the accounts of his predecessors - 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, Nizam al-din, Abu'l Faiz, 'Abdullah and Rizaullah¹⁰⁹. Ni' matullah is the first medieval historian who openly acknowledged his debt to 'Abbas Khan Sarwani's account of Sher Shah¹¹⁰.

104. Tripathi, 1921/2, p. 127.

105. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 7.

106. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 46.

107. Rahim, 1961, p. 12.

108. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 23 and Ambashthya, 1974, p. 47.

109. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 47 and Imamuddin, 1960, p. 25.

110. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 47.

Modern historians consider Ni' matullah to be pro-Afghan in his sentiments. Imam uddin claims that Ni'matullah "added anecdotes to increase the prestige of the Afghan rulers"¹¹¹. K. S. Lal assumes that it was only natural for Ni'matullah to "look back with pride to the glories won by his race in the remote past"¹¹². Ni'matullah, claims N. B. Roy, was not only pro-Afghan - he was specifically biased in favour of Sher Shah whom he "made a national Afghan hero, glossed over his foibles, giving him more credit as an administrator than he was entitled to"¹¹³.

Modern historians are divided in their opinions about the "professional standards" of Ni'mutallah's Tarikh-i Khan Jahan Lodi. N. B. Roy praises him for having "understood the scope of history, for which reason he excluded from his book all fables and anecdotes which formed a distinguishing feature of the Afghan chronicles"¹¹⁴. S. M. Imam uddin opines that Ni'matullah acted as a good historian having "scrutinized his information ... acknowledging his obligations to different historians ... recorded events with great patience". His work, continues Imam uddin "described in detail and chronological sequence the political events, cultural achievements, causes of the political events"¹¹⁵. Imam uddin praises Ni'mutallah

111. Imam[^]uddin, 1959, p. 48.

112. Lal, 1963, p. 324.

113. Roy, 1952, p. 53.

114. Roy, 1958a, p. 5.

115. Imam[^]uddin, 1960, p. 23.

for having omitted the "absurd and ridiculous stories which can be found in other histories"¹¹⁶ of the Afghan period. B. P. Ambashthya and B. N. Luniya differ from the opinions expressed by N. B. Roy and S. M. Imam uddin about the quality of Ni'matullah's work. Ni'matullah claims Luniya, paid "little heed to the chronological order of events ... including in his account wonderful stories"¹¹⁷. Ambashthya opines that the Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani "lacks in dates ... interspersed with silly anecdotes"¹¹⁸.

Historians differ greatly about the value of Ni'matullah's account for the reconstruction of the history of the Afghan period. H. Elliot believes it to be "a valuable work as the author was near contemporary with the events he described"¹¹⁹. S. M. Imam uddin asserts that the account is a "correct and honest chronicle"¹²⁰; B. N.; Luniya contends that the lack of chronological order and the inclusion of wonderful stories ... minimizes the historical importance" of the Tarikh-i-Khan Jahan Lodi¹²¹.

Controversy exists among modern historians about whether a shorter account of the Afghan period known as Makh̄āzan-i Afghani which has been attributed to

116. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 25.

117. Luniya 1969, p. 113.

118. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 23.

119. Elliot and Dowson, 1873, p. 67.

120. Imam uddin, 1960, p. 23.

121. Luniya, 1969, p. 113.

Ni'matullah, was in fact written by him or whether it was compiled at some later date by the otherwise unknown historian Ibrahim Batni. K. R. Qanungo believes Makhzan-i-Afghani to be the work of Ni'matullah who in the year 1670 found it necessary to re-write his own account¹²². N. B. Roy argues that this account is not to be attributed to Ni'matullah. He thinks that it is a late work, and that its proper name is Tārīkh-i Majlis Ara'i¹²³. B. P. Ambashthya assumes that Makhzan-i-Afghani was written between 1612/13 and 1670 by a compiler who used the accounts of Abbas Khan Sarwani, of Nizam ^{al-}uddin and of Ni'matullah¹²⁴.

The Makhzan-i Afghani is assumed by N. B. Roy to be a pro-Sher Shah account in which the Sur sultan was glorified and his exploits magnified out of all proportion to reality.¹²⁵

Ambashthya believes that the Makhzan-i-Afghani is a worthless chronicle "lacking in dates, interspersed with silly anecdotes and miracles" and "replete with wrong statements".¹²⁶ K. R. Qanungo opines that it includes in addition to quotations from Tabaqat-i Akbari "grotesque stories, dreams, prophesies."¹²⁷

122. Qanungo, 1965, p. 9 and 19.

123. Roy, 1953, p. 79.

124. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 24 and 202.

125. Roy, 1953, p. 79.

126. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 24 and p. 202.

127. Qanungo, 1921, p. 433.

The date of 'Abd^Aullah's Tarikh-i Da'udi composition remains unknown. H. Elliot suggested that as 'Abd^Aullah incidentally mentioned the name of the Timurid Jahangir (ruled between 1605 and 1627) the account could not have been composed before the accession of Jahangir i.e., 1605.¹²⁸ M. A. Rahim and I. H. Siddiqi believe that it was composed during the reign of Jahangir;¹²⁹ this suggestion is accepted by K. K. Qanungo, who conjectures the work was written in 1623.¹³⁰

Though 'Abd^Aullah is considered by Hameed ud-din to have been free from any political pressure, while engaged in writing his account of the Lodi and Sur Sultans,¹³¹ he is believed by A. Halim to have wished to "flatten the Afghans at the expense of the Mughals."¹³²

Modern historians fully agree that 'Abd^Aullah did not achieve a high standard of professional history writing. His work was found by H. Elliot to be "deficient in dates". The same historian accuses him of being "fond of recording stories and anecdotes" which were arranged in a "desultory and disjointed" manner. This unfavourable judgement was accepted by M. A. Rahim,¹³⁴ Ambashthya¹³⁵ and Halim.¹³⁶ Hameed ud-din stressed that 'Abd^Aullah "did not write a scientific account of the Afghan period."¹³⁷ Imam ud-din adds that the "political history has not been reported properly, many anecdotes have been incorporated instead."¹³⁸

128. Elliot & Dawson, 1872, p. 43.

129. Rahim, 1961, p. 17; Siddiqi, 1966, p. 16.

130. Qanungo, 1963, p. 59.

131. Hameed-ud-din, 1962, p. 45.

132. Halim, 1961, p. 263.

133.

134. Rahim, 1961, p. 14.

135. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 20.

136. Halim, I, 61, p. 23.

137. Hameed-ud-din, 1962, p. 46.

138. Imam^Aud-din, 1960, p. 3.

The principal sources used by 'Abdullah in his account were, according to Luniya and Iman ud-din, Rizqullah's Wa^qiat-i Mushtaqi and 'Abbar Khan Sarwani's Tuhfa-i Akbar Shah.¹³⁹

Despite these shortcomings some modern historians have found Abdullah's account a valuable source as in their opinion the information it contained could be used in order to reconstruct the history of the Afghan rule in India. Tarikh-i Daudi contains, claims Elliot, "materials from which history might be compiled."¹⁴⁰ Imam ud-din believes that this work contains information about the development of agriculture and trade,¹⁴¹ and Rahim finds the Tarikh-i Da'udi a useful source for "the nature of the Afghan monarchy and the ideal of administrative system of Islam Shah".¹⁴² I. H. Siddiqi contends however that 'Abdullah "wrote for money" and that his account is too meagre "to supplant our knowledge" with new information.¹⁴³

The identity of the author and the date of the composition of the Tarikh-i Salatin-i Lodi wa Suri remain a mystery. Though Ahmad Yadgar claims to have been a son of a wazir to Mirza Askari (brother of the Timurid Humayun), S. H. Hodivala has succeeded in proving that this statement was false: Ahmad Yadgar simply copied the relative

139. Luniya, 1969, p. 113.

140. Elliot & Dawson, 1872, p. 435.

141. Imam^ud^udin, 1959, p. 42.

142. Rahim, 1961, p. 14.

143. Siddiqi, 1966, p. 23 and p. 26.

sentence from Tabaqat-i Akbari; the wazir to Mirza Askari was not Ahmad Yadgar's father but that of Nizam ^{al-}~~ud~~-din.¹⁴⁴ As the identity of Ahmad Yadgar is unknown, and in the absence of internal clues, the precise dating of the work must remain conjectural. As the author was acquainted with the Tabaqat-i Akbari he could not have composed the work before 1593, the date on which Nizam ^{al-}~~ud~~-din completed his composition. The suggestions that Ahmad Yadgar wrote after 1614 and during the reign of Shah Jahan (ruled 1628-1657/8) or even as late as 1684 remains hypothetical as long as no new information capable of deciding this controversy becomes available.¹⁴⁵

The sources on which Ahmad Yadgar based his history were the accounts of Nizam al-din, of Ni'matullah and of Rizqulla^{-A}.¹⁴⁶

Hameed uddin believes that Ahmad Yadgar was free from political pressures and that he could have expressed his views about the Afghan period without fear or adverse results for his career from the Timurid government¹⁴⁷.

K. R. Qanungo and B. P. Ambashthya put forward the view that the main reason for Ahmad Yadgar's composition was his wish to attack Hindu society and to glorify Islam¹⁴⁸.

Modern historians are unanimous in their condemnation of the low standard of history writing in Ahmad

144. Hodivala, 1957, p. 188.

145. For different datings of Yadgar's work see: Qanungo, 1963, pp. 57-59; and Beveridge, 1916 pp. 287-289.

146. Qanungo, 1963, p. 60.

147. Hameed-uddin 1962, p. 45.

148. Qanungo, 1964, p. 32 and Ambashthya, 1974, p. 25.

Yadgar's work. S. H. Hodivala calls him a "careless and very untrustworthy compiler"¹⁴⁹ who recorded "folk tales and childish stories"¹⁵⁰; Ahmad Yadgar did no more than to compile his work out of the "patches and shreds purloined from earlier authors and pieced together without discernment or discrimination". The work is "full of demonstrable errors in regard to names, dates and facts"¹⁵¹. M. A. Rahim adds that the account of Ahmad Yadgar consists of a "storehouse of fantastic stories"¹⁵²; Ambashthya accuses Ahmad Yadgar of having believed "what he read or heard without questioning the bona fide of his authorities"¹⁵³; Hidayat Hosain complains that at the end of the reign of each Afghan king Ahmad Yadgar "gives fanciful and sometimes absurd stories in order to breath some life into the dry facts of the history of the kings"¹⁵⁴; H. Elliot attacked Ahmad Yadgar for his "great liking for marvellous and ridiculous stories... and little attention to dates"¹⁵⁵.

S. M. Imam uddin seems to be the only modern historian who despite his belief that Ahmad Yadgar's account was not always reliable still considers it to be of value to a scholar as it supplies "full details" about the Afghan period¹⁵⁶.

149. Hodivala, 1939, p. 471.

150. Hodivala, 1939, p. 183.

151. Hodivala, 1939, pp. 484-485.

152. Rahim, 1961, p. 15.

153. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 25.

154. Hidayat, 1939, p. 7.

155. Elliot and Dowson, 1873, p.2.

156. Imam[^]uddin, 1959, p. 46.

The date at which Muhammad Kabir composed his Afsana-i Shahan is not known. S. H. Askari suggested that the account was written sometime during the reign of Jahangir (ruled 1605-1627)¹⁵⁷; R. C. Majumdar has conjectured that the work might have been composed during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605)¹⁵⁸.

The source of this work were presumably the traditions circulating within the family of Muhammad Kabir's ancestors. While writing his account, Muhammad Kabir relied only on his memory¹⁵⁹.

Hameed uddin believes that no political pressures were brought to bear on Muhammad Kabir while he was writing his account¹⁶⁰; I. H. Siddiqi asserts that the main end of Muhammad Kabir's history was to "magnify the Afghan rule"¹⁶¹.

Modern historians agree that the Afsana-i Shahan was not written in conformity with the standards of professional history writing. M. A. Rahim opines that Muhammad Kabir put together a "series of anecdotes of little historical value"¹⁶²; for Ambashthya the account is "less than history, series of detached anecdotes ... having no historical sequence... roughly arranged in a

157. Askari, 1965, p. 184.

158. Majumdar, 1960, p. 750.

159. Askari 1965, p. 184.

160. Hameed-uddin 1962, p. 42.

161. Siddiqi 1969b, p. 67.

162. Rahim, 1961, p. 15.

chronological order"¹⁶³. Hameed uddin stresses that the Afsana-i Shahan is "incoherent, wrong" and that its author did not attempt to "verify the dates" his main preoccupation being the "collection of myths, traditions, superstitions, gossip"¹⁶⁴; I. H. Siddiqi's judgement is even harsher than that of his fellow scholars; "Most of the recorded stories are no more than a figment of author's imagination... ignorant of facts... chronologically ill arranged, full of digressions"¹⁶⁵. I. H. Siddiqi even accuses Muhammad Kabir of having deliberately "practised the economy of truth" and of being without the ability to differentiate between "real history and fiction"¹⁶⁶.

Despite the shortcomings of Muhammad Kabir's composition historians believe that his account can be utilized by modern scholars attempting to reconstruct the history of the Afghan period as "one can gather from Afsana-i Shahan valuable information about cultural, economic, political and socio-religious aspects of Medieval India"¹⁶⁷ and the account enables the historian to collect "useful information ... for the reconstruction of the economic life of the Afghans"¹⁶⁸; the anecdotes which form Muhammad Kabir's

163. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 28.

164. Hameed-uddin, 1962, p. 29.

165. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 3.

166. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 67 and 58.

167. Imam^uddin, 1960, p. 5.

168. Siddiqi, 1969, p. 66.

history "reflect the spirit of government and Afghans interest in culture and learning"¹⁶⁹.*

General theories about the nature of the works of medieval historians

Modern historians have not only attempted to analyze each of the individual extant sources for the Afghan period separately, but they have also put forward general theories about the views and aims of authors of the Persian works. These theories attempt to explain the views and aims of medieval historians in terms of the possible nationalistic bias of the writers; the political pressures which they might have been subjected to; their class origins and their religious prejudices.

The nationalistic bias hypothesis

Modern historians believe that the "national" origin of medieval historians determined the way in which they interpreted the Afghan period. Those who were Afghans

¹⁶⁹. Rahim, 1961, p. 15.

* R. S. Sharma and I. H. Siddiqi seem to believe that the non-historical literary evidence which is extant from the Afghan period is more valuable to the reconstruction of the Afghan's activities in India than the chronicles of medieval historians. Sharma praises the Padmavati of Muhammad Jayasi as a valuable record of Sher Shah which importance and objectivity is enhanced by the fact that its author was not a court poet and thus could record events honestly. (Sharma 1932, p.302); Siddiqi opines that the hagiographical literature is of the utmost importance to the modern historian as "it helps to understand the reality of the Afghan rule" and this enables the scholar "to reconstruct the history of the Afghan period in its true perspective" (Siddiqi 1969b p.1).

wrote a pro-Afghan version of the events which had led to the establishment and then to the destruction of the Afghan empire in India; whereas those who were Mughals attempted to bring forth the Mughal traditions about the Afghan sultans. "The Afghan historians" writes M. A. Rahim, "being of the same race" (as the Afghan sultans)" were carried away by their sentiments for their rulers"¹⁷⁰ and he adds "Afghan historians inclined to idealize their Afghan rulers and to exaggerate their achievements"¹⁷¹. "It was only natural", asserts K. S. Lal, "for the Afghan chroniclers to look back with pride to the glories won by their race in remote past"¹⁷². S. M. Imamuddin and I. H. Siddiqi agree that Afghan historians attempted to glorify the Afghan rule¹⁷³; K. R. Qanungo finds it reasonable to suggest that "Afghan historians, owing to their national sympathy and national bias are friendly and even eulogist to Sher Shah"¹⁷⁴.

If Afghan historians are represented as trying to glorify the Afghan period in India, the Mughal historians are represented as having had the opposite aim - that of diminishing the stature of the predecessors and of rivals of their own Mughal sultans. They wrote a "biased

170. Rahim, 1955, p. 168.

171. Rahim, 1961, p. 11.

172. Lal, 1963, p. 324.

173. Imamuddin, 1959, p. 48.

174. Qanungo, 1921, p. 427.

account" of the Afghan period, claims Hameed uddin¹⁷⁵, thus apparently agreeing with the view propounded by S. M. Imam uddin that the Mughal historians were "prejudiced against the Afghans and failed to give them due credit for their attainment. They wished to show the Afghans at their disadvantage"¹⁷⁶. Mughal historians were allegedly particularly hostile to Sher Shah Sur, who had succeeded to evict the Mughal emperor Humayun and forcing him into exile, therefore says R. P. Tripathi the Mughal historians "have studiously tried to throw into shade Sher Shah's achievements which they credited their own master"¹⁷⁷. Ambasthya asserts that Mughal historians "levelled charge of infamy against Sher Shah"¹⁷⁸. Sher Shah's innovations were appropriated by Akbar and as the history of the first ruler of the Sur dynasty was transmitted by his enemies, only a scant justice was done to him by the Timurid annalists claim M. Elphinstone, W. Erskine and E. Thomas¹⁷⁹.

The political pressure hypothesis

Some modern scholars believe that medieval historians were not free to write a true account of the Afghan period, as the Timurid emperors supervised their work and forced

175. Hameed-uddin, 1962, p. 47.

176. Imamuddin, 1959, p. 39.

177. Tripathi, 1921/2, p. 127.

178. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 34.

179. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 458 and Erskine 1854 (vol. II) p. 444 and Thomas 1871, p. 392.

the historians to write accounts which would suit the opinions of their political masters. As Mughal rulers have been supposed to have shown a great dislike for their Afghan predecessors, the histories of the Afghan period reflect their negative view of the Afghan sultans. Thus M. A. Rahim writes that as the "compilation of historians was done under general supervision and influence of the Mughals" the result inevitably was that "the Afghan historians could not have idealized Afghan rulers and heroes at the expense of Mughals"¹⁸⁰. K. K. Qanungo asserts that the Mughals "pursued the memory of their Pathan predecessors with unforgiving vindictiveness"¹⁸¹. R. P. Tripathi claims that those who ^{had} shown sympathy with the Afghans fell under the suspicion of the Mughal officials¹⁸². S. M. Imamuddin suggests that the Mughals might have ordered the destruction of the chronicles which showed the Mughals in an unfavourable light¹⁸³ and that the Timurids might have destroyed all the contemporary records of the Afghans¹⁸⁴.

Hameed uddin attempts to qualify the general statement that all of the Mughal rulers detested the memory of their Afghan predecessors. It was only Akbar who did not permit the writing of an objective history of the Afghans and forced his contemporary historians to compose

180. Rahim, 1961, p. 10 and 12.

181. Qanungo, 1921, p. 1.

182. Tripathi, 1921/2, p. 146.

183. Imam^uddin, 1960, p. 2.

184. Imam^uddin, 1959, p. 39.

anecdotes. According to Hameed uddin, Akbar refused to give historians permission to use the royal archives and thus caused them to write inaccurate accounts. But Akbar, who is supposed to have hated Afghans, was succeeded by Jahangir, who tried to conciliate the Afghan element among his subjects and gave more freedom to historians to write more objective accounts of the Afghan period. Unfortunately, says Hameed uddin, by the time such permission was granted most of the original documents had been lost and the historians could not but write inaccurate works¹⁸⁵.

According to yet another version of the political pressure theory - one which has been put forward by P. Hardy, "Akbar sponsored writing of regional histories which might serve to link his rule psychologically with that of pre-Mughal sultans in India"; - Akbar's request resulted in the works of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani and Abul Fazl; moreover says Hardy, Akbar having recreated a great regional empire needed a great regional history to describe it in a favourable light. This need was to find an echo in the works of Nizam al-din.¹⁸⁶

The class hypothesis

I. H. Siddiqi has promoted the view that the authors of the Persian chronicles were representatives of a specific social group, namely the Muslim intelligentsia.

185. Hameed.ud-din 1962, pp. 45-47.

186. Hardy EI² (Firishta)

They introduced a specific view of history whereby good Muslim rulers always provided economic support to the learned. This view was propounded in order to convince their contemporary rulers that they should follow the same line¹⁸⁷.

The Islamic bias hypothesis

N. B. Roy and I. H. Siddiqi assume that one of the aims of history writing by the authors of medieval chronicles relating to the Afghan period was to glorify Islam and to record the abasement of Hinduism. Some Afghan rulers were praised as champions of Islam and Muslim scholars attempted thus to induce their contemporary sultans into following the example of their pious predecessors and faithfully promote the cause of Islam¹⁸⁸.

The results of modern research - a summary

Modern historians who have attempted to analyze the works of medieval historians have been interested in two sets of problems. The first was concerned with source analysis, namely the quest to establish the date, authorship and authenticity of the sources as well as the professional standard of the medieval histories; the second

187. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 56.

188. Roy, 1958a, p. 19 and Siddiqi, 1969a, p. 56.

focussed on ^{the} issue of the validity of the Persian sources, i.e. how trustworthy are the medieval accounts and what factors might have forced or influenced medieval historians to write biased histories.

Source analysis

Modern historians have failed to agree on the issues of the authenticity of the Tawarikh-i Daulat-i Sher Shahi; the identity of the author of the Tarikh-i Salatin-i Lodi wa Suri, as well as the date of composition and the identity of the author of Makhzan-i Afghani. There is a controversy among modern historians as to dating of the histories of Kabir and of Abdullah.

Modern historians agree that the works of Ni'matullah, 'Abd-Allah, Rizqullah, Kabir, Ahmad Yadgar and Abbas Khan Sarwani fall short of a professional standard of history writing, as they have perceived it, as the above mentioned medieval historians include in their chronicles material which is not historical such as fables, anecdotes and romantic stories. ^{The} medieval historians whose names were listed above are judged by modern historians to have been unable to submit their source material to critical analysis and to compose a historical narrative which would have the quality^{ies} of being coherent, detailed, arranged in chronological sequences, containing only truthful information.

Source truthfulness

Modern scholars seem to have agreed that the works of Bada'uni, ^SAbd-Allah, Ahmad Yadgar, Kabir and Ni'^{-A}matullah show a pro-Afghan bias and they have therefore concluded that these medieval works should not be accepted without a comparison between their version of events and that of other sources. Abul Fa^lazl is generally believed by modern historians to have been biased against the Afghans. Modern scholars have disagreed as to the political sympathies of Nizam al-din, 'Abbas Khan Sarwani and Rizq^{-A}ullah. Firishta's history is said to be pro-Mughal.

Modern historians suggest that none of the medieval works can be trusted as an objective account of the Afghan period. Yet they fail to agree on the question of the possible motive or motives ^{of} individual medieval historians in composing a biased narrative about the deeds of Afghan sultans.

Modern historians apparently believe that there is only one way of writing a history if it is to be a scientific account of the past.* Medieval historians have fallen short of this standard. Despite their shortcomings, medieval accounts could be utilized in writing a proper, scientific account of the Afghan period.

* For the definition of the term "scientific historical account" see below, p.144.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VALIDITY OF THE CRITICISM LEVELLED BY MODERN HISTORIANS AGAINST MEDIEVAL HISTORIANS

Two main charges have been levelled by modern historians at the authors of medieval accounts of the Afghan period - that their works did not amount to a scientific account of the Afghan rule in India and that these works were biased.

The first accusation, namely that medieval historians did not write a coherent, detailed, chronologically well-arranged narrative which would impart information about the administrative, social, religious and political developments in India under the Afghan rule must be, even if we conclude that the charge is factually true, ~~misplaced~~ ^{misplaced} ~~and inconsistent~~.

Modern scholars have laboured under the assumption that there is only one way in which a proper historical narrative should be composed. This professional standard they have applied to the works of medieval historians, which have then been found wanting. The demand that the medieval historians of the Afghan sultans should have presented their material in a specified manner and should have included facts which are of interest to modern historians is in itself a-historic. One modern historian complains that medieval chronicles do not contain information about the lives and the activities of the Hindu reformers

Kabir, Nanak and Ramananda¹, another modern historian is dissatisfied that medieval historians do not provide adequate data on the revenue system of Sher Shah², yet another that medieval historians fail to see the achievements of the Afghan rulers in their proper perspective³. In other words modern scholars have unreasonably expected that historians who lived in another culture and in a different era should have the same concepts as modern historians, of what history is about and how it should be presented.

The other charge made against medieval historians has been that their accounts could not be trusted as they showed bias and did not seek to express objective truth. Modern historians have come to believe that medieval historians' alleged lack of objectivity could be explained through reference to such considerations as the nationality of the author or the particular political pressure being exerted on him by the ruler of his time.

It must be pointed out that as long as no first-hand and contemporary sources for the Afghan period are discovered, it is impossible to prove or to disprove a hypothesis that the extant detailed accounts all of which were written after the Lodi and the Sur dynasties had lost their power*, were biased in comparison with the sources

1. Pandey, 1956, p. 253.

2. Saran, 1952, p. 69.

3. Rahim, 1961, p. 105.

* We have accepted the suggestion of I. H. Siddiqi that the Tawarikh-i Daulat-i Sher Shahi is a spurious work composed after the extinction of the Sur dynasty. For Siddiqi's arguments see above pp. 87-88.

written under the Afghan sultans.

Modern historians have compared the extant chronicles with each other and have asserted that they differ significantly and that these differences could be best explained as being the result of historians' national origins, religious beliefs or social background or the result of the political censorship.

Modern historians have postulated the existence of two groups of scholars among the medieval historians of the Afghan period: the Afghan school and the Mughal school. It may be pointed out that modern historians did not define in a precise way who among the medieval historians should be categorized as belonging to the Mughal group and who - to the Afghan group. The only Afghans, so described by virtue of descent, among the medieval historians were Muhammad Kabir and ⁶Abbas Khan Sarwani. The "national" or "ethnic" identity of ⁵Abdullah ^Aand Ahmad Yadgar are unknown. The other medieval historians who wrote about the Afghan period were not "Mughals". They were Muslims living in India. Apart from Firishta all medieval historians spent their lives under the rule of sultans from the Timurid dynasty*. It is impossible to compare "Mughal" and "Afghan" groups of historians, as there seems to be no basis for such a differentiation, when what is termed a "Mughal" group simply did not exist at the time and has been apparently created by modern historians. If, on the other hand, we assume that the term "Mughal historians" refers not to the "nationality" of a historian

* For biographical information about the various medieval historians see above pp. 5-11 and p. 104.

but to the fact that he collaborated with or was patronized by the Timurid emperors, then the term "Mughal historians" may be taken to describe both historians of Afghan and non-Afghan" nationality. Among the Afghans patronized by the Timurids was Abbas Khan Sarwani.⁹ Among the non-Afghans patronized by the Timurids were the historians Abul Fazl, Bada'uni, Nizam al-din, Ni'matullah. Another group of medieval historians who were not patronized by the Mughals includes both an Afghan (Muhammad Kabir) and non-Afghans (Rizqullah, Firishta).^{-A} Again, it is not clear in what sense one of the groups should be expected to show an anti-Afghan sentiment, whilst the other to show a pro-Afghan sentiment.

Any comparison among works of medieval historians written by Afghans, by non-Afghans and by those whose "nationality" is unknown results in the conclusion that there are no systematic differences among these accounts. Apart from the vituperations of Abul Fazl against Sher Shah and Islam Shah⁴, which however did not prevent him from reaching and stating the conclusion that both had been good rulers⁵, all the Afghan sultans with the exception of Muhammad Adil Shah Sur,⁶ are represented as capable rulers following Islamic precepts of good conduct. However defined, neither the "Mughal" nor the "Afghan" group of historians shows any systematic bias for or

4. AN.I. 147-196 passim.

5. AN.I.339.

against the Afghan sultans. Indeed as we have attempted to show in the first chapter of this thesis all medieval historians wrote accounts reiterating the same types of narrative and anecdotes, and including examples of positive and negative activities of each of the Afghan sultans. We do not detect in their accounts an all out effort to construct a coherent view of the Afghan period as a whole or even that of individual Afghan sultans, which may enable the deduction of intentional bias in their accounts.

We have already noted that Abul Fazl's apparent enmity toward the Surs did not prevent him from expressing his belief that both the father and his son were good rulers^{*}; on the other hand the historian Bada'uni, who seems to show admiration for Sher Shah⁶, is the only medieval historian to report that Sher Shah broke the oath he made to the emperor Humayun not to attack him. Bada'uni informs us that Sher Shah had made his promise swearing on the Quran⁷. It would be reasonable to expect that if Abul Fazl and Bada'uni wished to construct their own interpretations of Sher Shah neither of them would include in his account an evaluation and a report which clearly contradict his other statements.

It is very difficult to sustain the hypothesis of

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- * Abul Fazl says: الحق الحق بدر و بدر (انتقام)
اسباب روزگار سلیقه دا شکر
 AN, I, 339
6. Bada'uni congratulates himself for having been born during "just reign" (الملك العادل) of Sher Shah
 B.I. 363.
7. B.I. 351.

the alleged enmity of non-Afghan historians to the Afghan sultans when one encounters such a glowing description of the deeds of Sultan Sikandar Lodi as that presented by the "non-Afghan" Nizam ^{al-}uddin. According to the presentation of Nizam ^{al-}uddin, Sikandar Lodi was the ideal Muslim ruler combining justice and religion⁸. The same medieval historian also notes down his favourable evaluation of Sher Shah⁹.

It seems to us that the attempt to differentiate between the various accounts of the Afghan period using the criterion of "nationality" of their authors is based on a mistaken generalization of the view of Abul Fazl of Sher Shah. M. Elphinstone and other 19th century British historians assumed that the Mughal court historians must have been hostile to Sher Shah as he had evicted Akbar's father from the throne of India¹⁰. Though this theory appears to provide an explanation for the way Abul Fazl's portrayed the Sur sultans. But this hypothesis fails to explain the attitude of Nizam ^{al-}uddin or of Abbas Khan Sarwani toward the same monarchs. Moreover there is no evidence that either Abul Fazl or any other medieval historian had a consistently hostile attitude against the other Afghan dynasty to rule northern India - the Lodis.

8. TA.I. 334-340.

9. TA.II.103 and 106.

10. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 458 and Erskine 1854 (vol. II) p. 444 and Thomas 1871, p. 392.

Despite the fact that no "nationalist" bias can be detected in the writings of medieval historians, modern historians have continued to accept this false dichotomization. Perhaps the reason for the persistence of this false hypothesis may be found in the atmosphere of the development of Indian nationalism since the beginning of the 20th century. In the climate of growing Indian nationalism it might have appeared reasonable to expect that historians of different national origins would write conflicting and biased accounts whenever they would devote themselves to the analysis of the past of their own nation. Nationalistic feelings of 20th century historians were ~~anachronistically~~ ^{unhistorically} ascribed to medieval historians.

There appears to be no evidence to support the idea put forward by modern historians that the Timurid emperors applied political pressure and censorship to force their court historians to write biased accounts of their Afghan predecessors in India. There is nothing in the extant sources for the Afghan period to suggest that the Timurids deliberately destroyed documents and records which could show them in an unfavourable light in the comparison with the Afghan sultans. Neither Akbar nor any of his successors ordered the demolition of the mausoleum : Sher Shah had built in Sahsaram and in which he himself was buried¹¹. Both Nizam al-din and 'Abbas Khan Sarwani wrote their accounts during the reign of Akbar. These two sources

11. On the Sur mausoleum see Nath, 1975, and 1976.

describe in a sympathetic and even eulogistic way the Afghan period in general and the reign of Sher Shah in particular. This fact refutes the hypothesis that Akbar put pressure on his court historians to write a biased account of his predecessors.

P. Hardy's view that Akbar invited historians to write histories which could connect his reign with that of his predecessors, could explain the positive accounts of the Surs as written by Nizam al-din and by 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, but his theory is contradicted by the description of Sher Shah and of Islam Shah which is included in Abul Fa^ll's Akbar Namah. Abul Fa^ll was a close collaborator of the emperor Akbar and his account should presumably reflect the views of Akbar or at least should not try to be too displeasing to Abul Fa^ll's master. Yet the invective thrown by Abul Fa^ll against Sher Shah and Islam Shah could not be interpreted in a way to suggest that Abul Fa^ll and presumably also Akbar wished the readers of Akbar Namah to identify Sher Shah as a legitimate predecessor of Akbar.

Neither the hypothesis of "class bias" nor that of "religious bias" can explain the whole contents of the medieval chronicles. Medieval historians did record facts about the relationship between Afghan rulers and the learned and indeed they pointed out that most of the Afghan sultans were pious Muslims - but medieval historians also noted down in their works facts which could be embarrassing if their avowed aim was only to glorify Islam - they

described how Muslims fought each other rather than their enemies in faith and how the way to power of sultans was paved with murder of fellow Muslims and betrayal of their former rulers. Medieval historians' works are certainly far more rich in information than might have been expected had they been merely records of the favours the Afghan sultans did to the learned.*

Summary

Two charges have been levelled by modern historians at the medieval historians of the Afghan period - the first has been that the accounts they wrote do not conform to a proper standard of professional and scientific manner of history writing; the other charge has been that the accounts are biased and do not reflect the objective truth of realities of the Afghan period. Medieval sources have been thought to be biased either because of the nationalist considerations of their authors, which caused them to write favourable accounts of their own co-nationals and an unfavourable account of the enemies of their nation; or because medieval historians were induced by their sovereigns into writing biased accounts to suit the current political preoccupations of their royal masters. Two other factors have been proposed by modern historians as contributing to the unreliability of medieval historians' works - the "class" outlook of their authors and their religious outlook. Medieval historians are believed to have manipulated their

* See "Chapter One".

accounts so as to glorify Islam and to promote the social and economic interests of their own class.

The first charge can be dismissed as anachronistic. Medieval historians of the Afghan rule in India could not be expected to write in a manner of modern historians since ex hypothesi they lived in a different world. The second charge - that of intentional bias in the interpretation of the Afghan period can not be substantiated. No detailed sources contemporary with the Afghan are extant; hence it is impossible to verify the hypothesis that later sources falsify the accounts in a manner consistent with their own preconceptions. Moreover there appears to be no real evidence to suggest that any of the Timurid rulers attempted to force their court historians to manipulate evidence or interpretation of it. Lastly, although it is true that medieval histories contain descriptions of relations between the Afghan rulers and the learned, and of their attempts to fight the infidels, they certainly contain much more ^{than} merely a record of glorious deeds of the Muslim kings in relation to the learned and to the Muslim community in general.

CHAPTER SIX :

MODERN HISTORIANS' INTERPRETATION

OF THE AFGHAN PERIOD

Modern historians of the Afghan period have sought an answer to two questions - what was the significance of the Afghan period within the mainstream of the general history of the subcontinent; and how to explain the political actions of the political elite of northern India in the Afghan period. In particular, they ^{so-called} conceptions of political and social purpose and of political and social forces which would best express the dynamics of Afghan rule.

Two hypotheses have been offered by modern historians in satisfaction of the first question. Some historians have maintained that the Afghan period was a break within the history of India, as the Afghans introduced uniquely new elements into the political scene in India. These elements have not been absorbed within the mainstream of Indian history. Another group of historians has perceived the Afghan period as an integral part of Indian history, without which subsequent developments could not be properly understood. The Afghans acted as a bridge between the Turkish and the Mughal periods. The first hypothesis will be referred to as "the tribal monarchy hypothesis" and its alternative as "the continuity hypothesis".

Modern historians have thought that the second issue of their historiography of the Afghan period, namely the internal dynamics of the political events in northern India in the period between 1451-1⁵57 could be best explained as a continued struggle between exponents of two irreconcilable political programmes. Members of one of the struggling Afghan parties wished, it has been suggested, to establish an absolutist monarchy, while their rivals wanted to create a decentralized state. We shall refer to the political programme of the first group as "the imperial ideology" and to that of their rivals as "the diffusionist ideology".

We shall proceed now to a detailed exposition of the basic concept of modern historiography of the Afghan period.

The tribal monarchy hypothesis

Proponents of the tribal monarchy hypothesis believe that during the Afghan period there existed in northern India a group of people bound together by feelings of solidarity and of racial exclusiveness. This group was distinct from and independent of other groups; it possessed its own unique characteristics. This group had its own political development and its own history.

Members of this group are referred to as "Afghans" or "Pathans"¹; their common bond is described as "Afghan

1. Srivastava, 1964, p. 198.

fraternity"²; "Afghan people"³; "brotherhood"⁴; "race"⁵;
 "Pathan community"⁶ and "Afghan nation"^{*}.

Afghan national history in India

Afghans came to power in India when Bahlul Lodi ascended the throne of Delhi and, according to I. H. Siddiqi, "created in the mind of the Afghan nobles a sense of belonging to a brotherhood instead of different tribes"⁷. Though Bahlul's successor Sikandar Lodi "wished the Afghan chiefs to contribute to the common good of the entire Pathan community in India"⁸ the effect of his work faded away during the rule of Sikandar's successor Ibrahim Lodi, when the chiefs "forgot their common interests as Afghans and invited Babur"⁹.

* W. Erskine was the first historian to describe Sher Shah as "the most eminent of his nation" (Erskine 1854, vol. II, p. 44). The term "nation" became very popular among modern historians to designate the Afghans living in India during the period under consideration; e.g. Misra, 1957, ap. 332; Tripathi, 1936, p. 45.

2. Hameed-uddin, 1961c, p. 3.
3. Misra, 1953, p. 71.
4. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 25.
5. Qanungo, 1963, p. 61.
6. Srivastava, 1964, p. 198.
7. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 25.
8. Srivastava, 1964, p. 198.
9. Rahim, 1961, p. 55.

Though the Afghans were defeated by the Timurid Babur, they now came to realize "the folly of not submitting to the central government. Hoping to regain their tribal and individual interests they submitted to the higher cause of nationalist interests"¹⁰. Afghans united against the Mughals "whom they hated as foreign usurpers"¹¹ and raised themselves in revolt against the Timurids who "usurped their sovereign rights and privileges"¹². The first attempt to destroy the Mughals was made, it is said, under the leadership of Mahmud Lodi (a brother of the Sultan Ibrahim Lodi), who became "a symbol of Afghan resistance"¹³ failed. It was another Afghan, Sher Shah Sur, who "revived the Afghan power"¹⁵. He pronounced "the unity of all Afghans"¹⁶ and "worked to bring the regeneration of the Afghans"¹⁷. Sher Shah's army became "the embodiment of the Afghan revival"¹⁸. Sher Shah's success, which resulted in the eviction of the Timurid Humayun from India, became a "national triumph".¹⁹

10. Imamuddin, 1958, p. 275.

11. Pandey, 1963, p. 45.

12. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 172.

13. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 240.

14. Ambashthya, 1974, p. 243.

15. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 68.

16. Haig, 1937, p. 49.

17. Mahajan, 1958, p. 40.

18. Misra, 1953, p. 71.

19. Qanungo, 1921, p. 204.

Sher Shah created "an Afghan kingdom in which none was for the party and all were for the state"²⁰. Sher Shah himself became a "saviour of the Afghans"²¹ and their "national leader"²². He devoted himself to the task of "defending his empire against foreign invasion"²³. Unfortunately, under Islam Shah, son and successor to Sher Shah, the "ancient rivalries" of the Afghans revived²⁴ and the situation deteriorated even more under Islam Shah's successor Muhammad 'Adil Shah; the Afghans showed "no national solidarity, they struggled for personal gain, their character deteriorated"²⁵, and when "three Afghan factions were engaged in a murderous struggle for supremacy"²⁶ Humayun returned and shortly afterwards Afghans lost their kingdom in defeat.

National characteristics of the Afghans

Having described the "national" history of the Afghans we shall proceed to the description of their "persistent characteristics" as a "nation".

Afghans have "democratic spirit"²⁷; they show

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- 20. Haig, 1937, p. 57.
 - 21. Imam Juddin, 1958, p. 274.
 - 22. Prasad, 1955, p. 95.
 - 23. Tripathi, 1921/2, p. 142.
 - 24. Lane-Poole, 1906, p. 241.
 - 25. Mahajan 1958, pp. 49-50.
 - 26. Havell, 1924, p. 150.
 - 27. Halim, 1961, pp. 195-196 and Nizami, 1970, pp. 665.

"reckless courage"²⁸; "excel in fighting and banditry"²⁹; Afghans are "turbulent"³⁰; they "love freedom"³¹; they exhibit "sentimental attachment to their queer idea of unbridled freedom"³². Afghans lack discipline and are "disobedient"³³; they are "impatient of any authority"³⁴; "proud and unruly"³⁵; "unsophisticated"³⁶; "ignorant"³⁷; "quarrelsome"³⁸; "selfish, mad after revenge, foolish, short-sighted and treacherous"³⁹. Afghans indulge in the "national vice of duplicity... ^u ~~un~~scrupulous ^{breach} ~~break~~ of faith"⁴⁰. "Pathans never forgets or forgives an injury";⁴¹ they know only one thing, egotism, pure and simple"⁴². Afghans are also "fanatic Muslims"⁴³.

28. Pandey, 1963, p. 61

29. Roy, 1958a, p.9.

30. Wheeler, 1880, p.88.

31. Qanungo, 1921, p. 203.

32. Lal, 1963, p. 133.

33. Haig, 1928, p. 246.

34. Dunbar, 1943, p. 160.

35. Dunbar, 1943, p. 160.

36. Tripathi, 1936, p. 86.

37. Haig, 1928, p. 246.

38. Rahim, 1961, p. 34.

39. Tripathi, 1936, p. 91.

40. Thomas 1871, p. 392; K.K. Qanungo assures his readers that "treachery is a typical Afghan trait" (Qanungo 1963, p. 61); W. Haig seems to believe that Afghans "are treacherous to their own race" (Haig, 1937, p.48).

41. Qanungo, 1921, p. 175.

42. Ahmad, 1945, p. 362.

43. Srivastava, 1964, p. 199.

The only redeeming feature of the Afghans seems to be their "chivalry"⁴⁴ and their tradition "not to molest the children and women of their enemy"⁴⁵.

Afghans show much "sentiment"⁴⁶ and "devotion to their leaders"⁴⁷ and to their tribes⁴⁸.

In their characteristics Afghan chiefs resemble their own followers. They are "fierce democrats"⁴⁹, "rapacious and turbulent"⁵⁰; "rough and uncivilized"⁵¹; interested only in "self gain"⁵². They are capable of masking their "self interest by a garb of patriotism"⁵³.

Tribal organization of Afghans in India

Modern historians claim that the social organization of Afghans in India was tribal. According to M. A. Rahim "in the 15th and 16th centuries the Afghans of India were essentially a tribal people in their nature, behaviour, social institutions, associations and political

44. Nizami, 1970, p. 685.

45. Lal, 1963, p. 150.

46. Nizami, 1970, p. 664.

47. Pandey, 1963, p. 61.

48. Rahim, 1961, p. 34.

49. Srivastava, 1964, p. 208.

50. Erskine, 1854 (vol.1), p. 411.

51. Erskine, 1854 (vol. II), p. 461.

52. Mahajan, 1958, p. 49.

53. Pandey, 1963, p. 163.

ideals"⁵⁴. Afghan tribes were ruled by chiefs whose office asserts, W. Erskine, was hereditary. They ruled "like oligarchs"⁵⁵. Hameed uddin believes that the tribal chiefs nominated their own successors, though their choice was subject to approval of their tribe.⁵⁶ Nizami assumes that successors to chiefs were chosen according to their suitability⁵⁷. The chiefs commanded their own army which was composed of a "tribal levy"⁵⁸ - or as S.C. Misra puts it, "chief's army was composed of people often connected with him in a tie of blood and tribe"⁵⁹.

Afghan chief, created the first Afghan empire in India. According to W. Erskine, Bahlul Lodi was "raised to the throne by a confederacy of six or seven great Afghan chiefs"⁶⁰. As the chiefs were tribal leaders, the monarchy they established "represented their tribal peculiarism" - asserts M. A. Rahim⁶¹. The Afghan ruler was considered by his subordinate chiefs as only "the first among equals"⁶². His main function was military leadership⁶³. Rulers were elected by chiefs⁶⁴.

54. Rahim, 1961, p. 34.

55. Erskine, 1854 (vol.I), p. 461.

56. Hameed-uddin, 1961b, p. 332.

57. Nizami, 1970, p. 665; on the same subject see also Pandey, 1963, p. 222.

58. Pandey, 1963, p. 245.

59. Misra, 1953, p. 73. For the same opinion see Pandey, 1963, p. 81.

60. Erskine, 1854 (vol.I-p.405; this point was accepted by Keene, 1893, (vol.I), p.94.

61. Rahim, 1961, p.34.

62. Pandey, 1963, p.215; Modern historians like to express the idea of equality among chiefs and their subordinate nobles by the Latin phrase "primus inter pares" - see for example Srivastava, 1964, p. 208; Haig, 1928, p. 228.

63. Lane-Poole, 1903, p. 191.

64. Rahim, 1961, p. 38; Pandey, 1963, p. 224.

Once the Afghans had established themselves in India, their chiefs established deliberative councils" to aid their kings in business of government⁶⁵. Afghans occupied the chief offices in the administration of the state⁶⁶, and "according to Afghan practice and custom ... proceeded to divide India among themselves"⁶⁷. Each of the tribal leaders received a piece of land on which his tribesmen settled, thus establishing different tribal zones in India⁶⁸. The kingdom continued to be regarded as a tribal property owned by the Afghans and divided among their chiefs⁶⁹.

While settled in India, Afghans continued to observe their tribal values - they married within their respective tribe⁷⁰, the family was patriarchal and polygamous⁷¹.

Political authority was diffused and decentralized⁷².

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65. Misra, 1957, p. 332; Pandey assumes that Sher Shah's policies were approved by "Afghan assemblies" (Pandey, 1963, p. 74).
66. Lane-Poole, 1903, p. 191; Tripathi (1935, p. 84) writes that non Afghans were excluded from positions of power.
67. Imam[^]uddin, 1961, p. 260.
68. Rahim, 1961, p. 41.
69. Saran, 1952, p. 61.
70. Rahim, 1961, p. 38.
71. Pandey, 1963, p. 62 and Prasad, 1955, p. 197.
72. Nizami, 1970, p. 674.

The chiefs had the maximum authority in their own possessions⁷³. The power of the ruler was very limited. He was no more than the president of an "oligarchy of chiefs"⁷⁴. The lands possessed by the chiefs were descended by inheritance within the family.⁷⁵

The continuity hypothesis

In contradistinction to the group of modern historians who have considered the Afghan period to have formed a break in the development of Indian political culture and its history, there are scholars who maintain that the Afghans accepted and continued to develop^{the} political and administrative institutions known to and accepted by their predecessors on the throne of Delhi. Moreover, the achievements of the Afghan sultans were, in this opinion, passed on to their successors, the Mughal dynasty and thus formed an important stage in the evolution of Indian political and administrative institutions. Proponents of the continuity hypothesis see the Afghan sultans as the legitimate successors of the Turkish, Khalji and the Tughluq dynasties which ruled over northern India between 1206 and 1405.

73. Hameed-uddin, 1961b, p. 335.

74. Haig, 1928, p. 228.

75. Imam[^]uddin, 1961, p. 261.

Restoration of the "Delhi Sultanate"

Afghan rulers are seen by the supporters of the continuity hypothesis as recreators of a political unit which came into existence in India following the Muslim conquest of parts of the subcontinent since the beginning of the 13th century. That political unit is known to modern historians as the Delhi Sultanate. Bahlul Lodi, the first Afghan sultan to rule over Delhi is described by A. L. Srivastava as having "restored the prestige and the credit of the Delhi kingdom"⁷⁶. G. A. Dunbar credits Bahlul Lodi with the achievement of having "re-established the authority of Delhi"⁷⁷. I. H. Siddiqi considers the same ruler as having "revived the Delhi Sultanate"⁷⁸.

Some historians go as far as to suggest that Bahlul Lodi had a conscious political plan of re-building the Delhi Sultanate. J.C.A. Powell-Price says that "Bahlul intended to restore the kingdom to its lost greatness"⁷⁹. K. S. Lal argues that "Bahlul wanted to re-unite Hindustan under one rule"⁸⁰; and W. Haig pronounces that Bahlul Lodi

76. Srivastava, 1964, p. 196. A similar expression is used by I. Prasad who writes that "Bahlul restored the prestige of the Delhi sultanate" (Prasad 1955, p.471).

77. Dunbar, 1943, p. 158.

78. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 158.

79. Powell-Price, 1958, p. 154.

80. Lal, 1963, p. 148.

had the "resolution of restoring the kingdom to its former pre-eminence among the Muslim states of northern India"⁸¹.

Sikandar Lodi, the son and successor of Bahlul is believed by A. Halim to have "revived the prestige of the Delhi Sultanate"⁸².

The Lodi dynasty as a whole is considered by A.B. Pandey to "have raised the importance of the Delhi Sultanate".⁸³

Bahlul Lodi considered himself as heir to the control of the "province" which had once, albeit not for the whole of that institution's history, formed part of the "Delhi Sultanate". According to A. Halim "Bahlul considered *Multan* as a province legitimately belonging to Delhi"⁸⁴.

K. K. Qanungo attributes to Sher Shah a traditional policy of the Delhi Sultans of countering any expansion of foreign powers at their expense. K. K. Qanungo believes that the real motive for Sher Shah's attack on the Hindu Rai Maldeo could be understood through reference to Sher Shah's recognition of the fact that as "a monarch of Delhi he could not tolerate foreign dominion"⁸⁵.

81. Haig, 1928, p. 228

82. Halim, 1938, p. 21.

83. Pandey, 1963, p. 293.

84. Halim, 1961, p. 21: Sastri believes that Bahlul "succeeded" restore the old frontiers of the kingdom of Delhi as far as Bihar" (Sastri, 1970, p. 372).

85. Qanungo, 1921, p. 317.

Afghan Sultans as restitutors of Delhi Sultanate's institutions

Afghan sultans are seen by the supporters of the continuity hypothesis not only as restorers of the political importance of Delhi Sultanate but as reviving and reforming traditional modes of government, which had prevailed in the Delhi Sultanate. Sikandar Lodi is believed by R. P. Tripathi to have "re-introduced the early Turkish ideals of government"⁸⁶ A. Halim emphasizes that Sikandar Lodi "restored the earlier traditions of obedience to the sultan"⁸⁷. Both Sikandar Lodi and his son and successor Ibrahim Lodi are described by I. H. Siddiqi as "having realized that the monarchical traditions of the early sultans of India could best serve the political and cultural needs of their sultanate"⁸⁸. Sher Shah Sur, according to R. P. Tripathi "reverted to the system of Turkish sultans"⁸⁹. M. A. Rahim believes that Islam Shah Sur, the son and successor of Sher Shah showed "in his royal behaviour the reappearance of the days of the great Turkish sultans"⁹⁰.

The Lodi and the Sur sultans are said to have accepted and to have reformed the administrative system which they had inherited from their predecessors and in turn *to have* passed it on to their successors, namely the Mughals. I. H.

86. Tripathi, 1936, p. 86.

87. Halim, 1961, p. 21.

88. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 29.

89. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 29.

90. Rahim, 1961, p. 84.

Siddiqi believes that the "evolution of social and of administrative institutions, begun during the 14th century, was retained and revived by the Lodis"⁹¹; the same historian stresses that the "administrative institutions reached their perfection under Sher Shah after having passed through an evolutionary process that in certain respects had started at the beginning of the sultanate"⁹². For S. M. Imam uddin the outstanding achievements of Sher Shah were but the culmination of the "patient work of the Lodis"⁹³. S. R. Sharma emphasizes that Sher Shah merely "continued the system of Sikandar Lodi and of Ala uddin Khalji". I. Prasad seems to accept this interpretation of Sher Shah's activities when he says that in that Sultan's regulations there was "little that was entirely new"⁹⁴. The administrative division of the empire of Sher Shah into units known as sarkars was, according to M. A. Rahim already in operation under the Lodis⁹⁵; sarkars' administrative subdivision into parganas was merely a reappearance under Sher Shah of the

91. Siddiqi, 1963c, p. 148.

92. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 104.

93. Imam uddin, 1964, p. 10; writing in the same vein, P. Saran claims that "Sher Shah improved the Lodi system" (Saran 1952, p. 68).

94. Sharma, 1936, p. 604; Siddiqi believes that Sher Shah simply "adopted most of the regulations of Ala uddin Khalji" (Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 62), adding that Sher Shah was "unnecessarily credited with the establishment of new administrative system - while he only introduced certain reforms and revived old traditions" (Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 79.).

95. Rahim, 1961, p. 96.

well-established tradition of treating several villages as one administrative unit. It was of "ancient origins", claims S. C. Misra⁹⁶. M. A. Rahim believes that Sher Shah revived the function of shiqdar, known in the Delhi Sultanate since the days of Muhammad bin Tughluq (ruled 1324-1350)⁹⁷. I. H. Siddiqi adds that Sher Shah also revived the office of faujdar as known in the days of Muhammad bin Tughluq⁹⁸.

Afghan sultans as precursors of the Mughals and of the British

Some supporters of the continuity hypothesis believe that the Afghan sultans contributed toward the formation of administrative system which came into completion first under the Timurid emperors then the British. R. C. Temple writes that Sher Shah was "the father of modern Indian administration; following the lead of Firoz Tughluq and giving it to Akbar, Warren Hastings and Lord Dalhousie"⁹⁹. S. ^{M.} J. Jaffar concurs with this opinion. He writes that Sher Shah's "efficient system of the revenue settlement based on the actual measurement of the land under cultivation, was subsequently developed by Akbar the Great and has in all its essential features survived in British India under the

96. Misra, 1957, p. 324.

97. Rahim, 1965, p. 329.

98. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 118.

99. Temple, 1922, p. 160.

raiayatwari system"¹⁰⁰.

A. Halim believes Sikandar Lodi in his capacity as legislator to have served as the model for both Sher Shah and Akbar¹⁰¹. The emperor Akbar supposedly borrowed from Sikandar Lodi his ideas on how to reform the coinage, how to build the civil and administrative systems and how to perform land settlements¹⁰². Hameed-uddin suggests that Sikandar Lodi's rent roll system served as a model for that adopted by the Timurid Babur¹⁰³. In more general terms A. Halim hypothesizes that "the Lodi system of government evolved an administrative organization, purging old elements, introducing new life into it. Their measures were passed to Sher Shah and then to the Mughals"¹⁰⁴.

R. P. Tripathi believes that Sher Shah acts as a precursor of the Timurid Akbar¹⁰⁵. S. M. Edwardes points out too that "Sher Shah's example of administrative machinery assisted Akbar to establish his administrative machinery"¹⁰⁶. W. Haig percieves Sher Shah as "creator of the basis of Indian administration in the assessment and collection of the land revenue"¹⁰⁷. S. R. Sharma adds that Sher Shah's revenue system became an ideal toward which

100. Jaffar, 1936, p. 58.

101. Halim, 1938, p. 312.

102. Halim, 1961, p. 130.

103. Hameed-uddin, 1961b, p. 337.

104. Halim, 1961, pp. 211-212.

105. Tripathi, 1936, p. 98; the same opinion is expressed by Jaffar 1936, p. 56.

106. Edwardes, 1930, p. 159.

107. Haig, 1937, p. 56; the same opinion is put forward by Majumdar et al, 1947, p. 442.

Akbar strove"¹⁰⁸. I. H. Siddiqi claims that Sher Shah's vilayat system served as the model for Akbar when he decided to group together the sarkar units into subahs¹⁰⁹.

K. A. N. Sastri generalizes that Sher Shah's fiscal and other reforms became the basis of many of Akbar's most famous measures¹¹⁰. V. A. Smith seems to have anticipated the judgement of his fellow historians about the relationship between Sher Shah's reforms and that enacted by Akbar when he wrote that "Sher Shah established a regular system of revenue administration on which Akbar was to build his own system"¹¹¹.

M. A. Rahim sees Islam Shah, the son and successor of Sher Shah Sur, as Akbar's precursor in such administrative fields of action as the establishment of the provincial system of government; the creation of a bureaucratic hierarchical system - the mansabdari system. He also considered Islam Shah the author of the idea that the monarch has a divine right to rule¹¹².

S. M. Imam uddin believes that the Afghan sultans introduced a number of administrative, financial and judicial reforms which were the foundation of the excellent achievements of the Mughals¹¹³. I. H. Siddiqi finds himself in

108. Sharma, 1965, p. 262.

109. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 122.

110. Sastr, 1970, p. 455.

111. Smith, 1908, p. 107.

112. Rahim, 1971, p. 95 and p. 113.

113. Imam`uddin, 1960, p. 1.

114. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 1.

agreement with this general evaluation of the achievements of the Afghan rulers when he writes that "the Lodi and the Sur regime continued with necessary modifications under the Mughals"¹¹⁴.

The imperial ideology

Whereas the concept of the "tribal monarchy" and the "continuity hypothesis" were put forward by modern historians in order to explain the significance of the Afghan period within the history of the Indian subcontinent, the "imperial ideology" is one of the two concepts conceived with the view to interpret the political activities of the Afghans during their supremacy over northern India in the period 1451-1557.

The expression "imperial ideology" refers to a complex political programme allegedly adopted by some of the Afghans. According to the proponents of the "imperial ideology" this program included the following propositions: within the political system of the Afghan empire all the political and administrative powers were to be concentrated in the hands of one person - the sultan of Delhi. The ruler should be the apex of a bureaucratic machinery of government. The ruler alone could initiate and ensure, through continued personal supervision of his officials, the implementation of a specific set of administrative, economic, judicial and political policies. The ruler had to suppress

¹¹⁴. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 1.

those elements within his state which favoured alternative political ideologies. The ultimate aim of the ruler's policies should be to maintain law and order, political stability, economic prosperity and general happiness to all of his subjects, irrespective of their social, economic, racial or religious background.

We shall proceed now to elucidate the various components of the "imperial ideology" concept.

The ruler and his powers

Modern historians use different terms to describe the total authority of the Afghan rulers over their subjects. I. H. Siddiqi believes that the Lodi and the Sur sultans were "enlightened despots"¹¹⁵; A. L. Srivastava claims that Sikandar Lodi "established absolute authority"¹¹⁶; A. B. Pandey considers the same ruler^{went} "back to absolutism"¹¹⁷; Sikandar Lodi's successor, Ibrahim Lodi is believed by I. H. Siddiqi to have established "absolute despotism"¹¹⁸; Sher Shah was declared by H. G. Keene to be "an absolute monarch"¹¹⁹; J. N. Chaudhuri sees the same ruler as a "benevolent despot"¹²⁰; for S. M. Jaffar Sher Shah is a "despot"¹²¹; V. D. Mahajan views the rule of Sher Shah as "autocratic and enlightened"¹²². Islam Shah,

115. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 1.

116. Srivastava, 1964, p. 197.

117. Pandey, 1963, p. 119.

118. Siddiqi, 1961, p. 132.

119. Keen, 1893 (vol.I) p. 125; Imam uddin sees Sher Shah as "autocrat" (1958, p. 275).

120. Chaudhuri, 1974, pp. 83-84; see also Mahajan, 1958, p. 37.

121. Jaffar, 1936, p. 59.

122. Mahajan, 1958, p. 37.

the son and successor of Sher Shah, is described by M. A. Rahim as "enlightened autocrat"¹²³; I. H. Siddiqi considers Islam Shah to be "imbued with the idea of absolute kingship"¹²⁴ and an "autocrat"¹²⁵.

Apart from describing the ruler as an "autocrat" or a "despot", modern historians refer to the Afghan sultans as "monarchs" and as ^{ruleys} who pursue a programme of establishing their royal prerogative. Sikandar Lodi, says I. H. Siddiqi, "developed monarchical ideals demanding complete obedience". He behaved like "an all powerful monarch"¹²⁶. R. P. Tripathi claims that Sikandar Lodi "restored the power, the dignity and the authority of the crown"¹²⁷. Ibrahim Lodi is believed by A. Halim to have held an "extreme concept of monarchical ideals"¹²⁸. According to Hameed uddin Ibrahim Lodi became an "exponent of the doctrine of the divine right of the crown"¹²⁹; K. A. N. Sastri holds that Ibrahim Lodi has "zealously guarded the royal prerogatives"¹³⁰. R. P. Tripathi portrays

123. Rahim, 1961, p. 87.

124. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 70.

125. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 82.

126. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 35.

127. Tripathi 1936, p. 23. A similar expression is used by Pandey who says that Sikandar Lodi "enhanced the prestige of the sovereign" (Pandey, 1956, pp. 159-160).

128. Halim, 1961, p. 214.

129. Hameed-uddin, 1961a, p. 126.

130. Sastri, 1970, pp. 372-373.

Sher Shah as being engaged in the "revival of monarchical ideals"¹³¹. Modern historians say that Islam Shah believed in "divine monarchy"¹³²; "revived the office of the kingship"¹³³ and enhanced the "prestige of the crown"¹³⁴. M. A. Rahim stresses that the Sultans Ibrahim Lodi, Islam Shah Sur and Muhammad 'Adil Shah Sur believed in the "ideal of strong monarchy"¹³⁵. A. B. Pandey makes a general point about the Lodi sultans maintaining that they believed in the idea of the "monarch possessing the supreme majesty"¹³⁶.

I. H. Siddiqi and S. A. Jaffar amplify the rather vague terms of "absolute powers" and "royal prerogatives". I. H. Siddiqi claims that under the Lodi dynasty "the state was centralized; no one had clearly defined powers that could not be abrogated by the crown; there were no constitutional or customary safeguards"¹³⁷; the Lodis "drew their powers directly from the God"¹³⁸. According to S. A. Jaffar Sher Shah's autocracy was based on the theory that that sultan was the "fountainhead of all authority. He was the shadow of God on earth; answerable to no human authority"¹³⁹.

131. Tripathi, 1936, p. 98.

132. Srivastava, 1964, p. 429.

133. Yasin, 1961, p. 114.

134. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 125.

135. Rahim, 1961, p. 137.

136. Pandey, 1956, p. 215.

137. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 148.

138. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 60.

139. Jaffar, 1936, p. 57.

Some modern historians describe in more detail the powers of the Afghan sultans. A. B. Pandey thinks that Bahlul Lodi had reserved for himself the ministries of foreign affairs, defence, currence and justice¹⁴⁰. Sikandar Lodi was supposed to be, in A. Halim's presentation, "a legislator"¹⁴¹ and "the chief justice"¹⁴². In the eyes of A. B. Pandey Sikandar Lodi was "the highest judicial authority, commander in chief, responsible for all appointments, dismissals, promotions, transfers and supervision of officials"¹⁴³. Pandey also maintains that Sikandar Lodi was in full control of the church, which was "subservient" to that ruler¹⁴⁴. V. D. Mahajan believes that Sher Shah "held both the civil and military power in his hands"¹⁴⁵. S. A. Jaffar describes Sher Shah as "commander-in-chief and paymaster general" of his army¹⁴⁶. K. K. Qanungo makes Sher Shah "the owner of all the lands"¹⁴⁷. Islam Shah, the second sultan of the Sur dynasty, was in the view of his 20th century admirer a "great legislator"¹⁴⁸.

140. Pandey, 1956, p. 218.

141. Halim, 1938, p. 312; it seems that W. Erskine was the first modern historian to point out that "legislation" was part of the royal prerogative in the Afghan empire. He describes Sher Shah as a "legislator" (Erskine 1854, (vol II) p. 3443).

142. Halim, 1961, p. 223.

143. Pandey, 1956, p. 230.

144. Pandey, 1963, p. 252.

145. Mahajan, 1958, p. 237.

146. Jaffar, 1936, p. 61.

147. Qanungo, 1965, p. 35.

148. Rahim, 1961, p. 106.

S. A. Jaffar opines that Islam Shah "formulated a new code of regulations and justice was administered according to it"¹⁴⁹. In more general terms, S. M. Imam uddin believes that land grants were assigned by the Afghan rulers according to their "whim"¹⁵⁰.

Administrative achievements of the Afghan rulers

Modern historians depict Afghan sultans as able not only to formulate their own personal, political and administrative programmes, but also to fulfil them by means of a bureaucratic mode of government, capable of ensuring that their decisions were acted upon by the subjects. The Lodis, says A. Halim, "re-asserted the central authority" and "regularized the administrative machinery of the state"¹⁵¹. The Lodis, adds S. M. Imam uddin, had developed a "concept of fairly centralized government and efficient administration"¹⁵². Sikandar Lodi is much praised by modern historians for his administrative genius. The first to express this evaluation was M. Elphinstone who proclaimed Sikandar to be "a good administrator"¹⁵³. According to A. Halim, Sikandar Lodi "gave the sultanate an orderly administration"¹⁵⁴. Hameed

149. Jaffar, 1936, p. 68. .

150. Imam[^]uddin, 1961, p. 260.

151. Halim, 1951, p. 2 and p. 212.

152. Imam[^]uddin, 1963, p. 10.

153. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 419.

154. Halim, 1961, p. 129. Imam uddin writes in the same vein describing Sikandar Lodi as a ruler who "gave a proper shape to the Lodi administrative machinery" (Imam uddin 1964, p.9); Siddiqi concures with this evaluation of Sikandar Lodi, saying that he "established a sound administrative machinery" (Siddiqi 1969b, p.35).

uddin believes that Sikandar Lodi devoted himself to "a slow centralization of the administration"¹⁵⁵. A. B. Pandey asserts that Sikandar Lodi created a "judiciary machinery"¹⁵⁶ and "re-organized the finance department"¹⁵⁷. R. S. Sharma opines that Sikandar Lodi "centralized the administration, kept in touch with his provincial governors, directly controlled the retainers of the freeholders"¹⁵⁸. G. A. Dunbar believes that Sikandar Lodi "re-organized the administration of the provinces"¹⁵⁹. A. Halim adds to the administrative achievements of the second ruler of the Lodi dynasty the reform of coinage and that of land settlement¹⁶⁰.

The Sur sultans have been described by modern scholars as being no less conscious of their governmental duties than their Lodi predecessors. They had "personally supervised the functioning of the administration"¹⁶¹.

The most popular of Afghan sultans among modern historians was Sher Shah Sur, who was generally believed to have been a great administrator. The first to praise him as such was M. Elphinstone who wrote that Sher Shah "improved the civil

155. Hameed-uddin, 1960, p. 145; Pandey writes similarly that Sikandar Lodi "improved the administration" (Pandey 1956, p. 159-160).

156. Pandey, 1956, p. 230.

157. Pandey, 1956, p. 219.

158. Sharma, 1966, p. 154.

159. Dunbar, 1943, p. 149.

160. Halim, 1961, p. 130.

161. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 61.

government"¹⁶². E. Thomas considered that Sher Shah "systematized the revenue and fiscal departments of India"¹⁶³. H. G. Keene concurred in this high opinion of Sher Shah saying that he "prepared a new digest of civil and penal law"¹⁶⁴. V. A. Smith praised Sher Shah as a "civil governor"¹⁶⁵. For S. C. Misra Sher Shah is the ruler who "established a system of bureaucratic traditions"¹⁶⁶; for J. C. Powell-Price he is the sultan who "developed the state, improved the revenue collection and administration, formed a civil service"¹⁶⁷. Sher Shah's main achievement was to give "his country a firm, impartial and just administration, which could foster the economic life of the country", concludes S. C. Misra¹⁶⁸; S. K. Banerji praises Sher Shah for having set up "rural development schemes"¹⁶⁹. G. A. Dunbar

162. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 457.

163. Thomas, 1871, p. 292.

164. Keene, 1893 (vol. I.) p. 125.

165. Smith, 1908, p. 107.

166. Misra, 1957a, p. 334; other historians write in a similar vein - Moreland and Chatterjee emphasize that Sher Shah "established a regular bureaucratic hierarchy taking orders from the court" (Moreland and Chatterjee 1945, p. 208); I. H. Siddiqi claims that Sher Shah created "an obedient official hierarchy" (Siddiqi 1969b, p. 80); S. R. Sharma suggests that Sher Shah "had probably infused the spirit of routine work on his officials" (Sharma, 1936, p. 584).

167. Powell-Price, 1958, p. 240.

168. Misra, 1957b, p. 34.

169. Banerji, 1938, p. 184.

opines that Sher Shah created a "judicial system"¹⁷⁰.

I. H. Siddiqi believes Islam Shah, the successor of Sher Shah, to have modified the administrative system of Sher Shah. He had "re-created the provincial administration" allegedly abolished by his father" opines M. A. Rahim.¹⁷²

Modern historians hold that all Afghan rulers showed great interest in the administrative aspects of government. All of them "introduced a number of administrative, financial and judicial reforms"¹⁷³. From Bahlul Lodi who was a "competent administrator"¹⁷⁴, who "refrained from overtaxation"¹⁷⁵ and improved and re-modelled the administration¹⁷⁶; through Sikandar who kept "a close eye on administration"¹⁷⁷; to Sher Shah, who since his youth had "cherished definitive administrative ideas"¹⁷⁸, under whose reign the "centralized authority acquired great strength"¹⁷⁹, thanks to his "comprehensive reforms"¹⁸⁰ "in the various branches of administration"¹⁸¹, he became

170. Dunbar, 1945, p. 173.

171. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 61.

172. Rahim, 1961, p. 94.

173. M. Z. Siddiqi in his Foreword to Imamuddin, 1960, p.5.

174. Moreland and Chatterjee, 1945, p. 179.

175. Pandey, 1956, p. 98.

176. Hameed uddin, 1960, p. 140.

177. Powell-Price, 1958, p. 189.

178. Tripathi, 1936, p. 126.

179. Prasad, 1955, p. 62.

180. Imam uddin, 1958, p. 274.

181. Saran, 1952, p. 68.

"an architect of a brilliant administrative system"¹⁸² - all Afghan sultans showed understanding to the administrative problems of their realm.

The institutions and the regulations of the Afghan sultans

Modern historians have not only tried to show that Afghan sultans were interested in the administrative aspects of the government, but they have also attempted to discover the institutions through which the Afghan rulers could enforce specific rules. Much of the research of modern historians has been devoted to the reconstruction of what was regarded as the administrative machinery and the regulations of the Afghan rulers in general and of Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah in particular.

A. Halim who believes that the Lodi dynasty created a "central government which worked through well organized departments"¹⁸³ maintains that the central government was composed of several ministries, each supervised by specialized officials. The wazir was "chiefly responsible for the revenue department"; the "ministry of war" was under a "military inspector" who was also the "commander-in-chief" of the army. In addition to these ministries there was also a "department of intelligence" and a "department of public morals", the latter being supervised by a "censor"¹⁸⁴. According to Hameed uddin's reconstruction

182. Majumdar et al, 1947, p. 439.

183. Halim, 1961, p. 216.

184. Halim, 1961, pp. 219-227.

the most important "ministry" within the governmental structure under the rule of Sikandar Lodi was the diwan-i wizarat. It supervised the departments of "intelligence, communication, agriculture, economic affairs" as well as the "judicial branch"¹⁸⁵. Hameed uddin is convinced that Sikandar Lodi created a complicated and sophisticated judicial system. Sikandar Lodi himself was "the chief justice" and there were subordinate courts in towns, manned by the qadis, in their "fiefs" the "fiefholders" acted as judges and the villagers settled their disputes in the panchayat courts. In the capital there was a central court of justice, to which appeals could be made if the litigants were not satisfied by the decisions of the subordinate courts¹⁸⁶. A. B. Pandey thinks that the supreme court was headed by the wazir, and that each of the provinces had its own court - the provincial diwan¹⁸⁷. A. Halim believes that Sikandar Lodi divided his empire into "provinces". Each of the provinces was governed by a na'ib. Provinces were subdivided into parganas, each of which was supervised by an official known as shiqqdar¹⁸⁸. G. A. Dunbar assumes that Sikandar Lodi "re-organized the administration of the provinces" (he does not specify in what way this re-organization -was carried out)¹⁸⁹. K. R. Qanungo claims that Sikandar Lodi was the first ruler who ordered

185. Hameed-uddin, 1961b, pp. 334-335.

186. Hameed-uddin, 1961c, p.5.

187. Pandey, 1956, pp. 231-232.

188. Halim, 1961, p. 232.

189. Dunbar, 1943, p. 159.

a creation of a new system of revenue assessment which was based on "a survey of lands in the khalsa territory".

In order to be able to compute the total land revenue in his empire, Sikandar Lodi ordered all his assignees "to submit returns of the actual quantity of land and of the amount of revenue of their parganas"¹⁹⁰. The sultan was thus able to prepare a "rent roll" of his kingdom.¹⁹¹

I. H. Siddiqi claims that another known regulation of Sikandar Lodi was to order that all of his soldiers should be registered and that their military equipment should be noted down in official documents. Thus he could prevent his soldiers from submitting one type of military equipment on a parade and use another, of a lesser quality, when their services were needed in a military campaign.¹⁹²

Sher Shah's administration and regulations have attracted much scholarly attention. Much work has been done by modern historians to reconstruct the way in which Sher Shah's empire was organized, how was his bureaucracy organized and what were the functions of each of the officials. The results that emerge from this effort made by modern scholars over many years may be summarized as follows: the smallest administrative unit of Sher Shah's empire was the village. Administrative responsibility for the village affairs was in the hands of its "headman"

190. Qanungo, 1965, p. 35.

191. Hameed-uddin, 1961b, p. 337.

192. Siddiqi, 1965d, p. 231.

muqaddam) who was responsible for the collection of the land revenue due to the state¹⁹³. The muqaddam was aided by the writer (patwari)¹⁹⁴. Villages were grouped together into administrative units known as pargana¹⁹⁵. The administrative staff of every pargana included an official known as shiqqdar, a "treasurer" (fotahdar), an amin, a qanungo, an amil, a munsif and a faujdard.

The shiqqdar was according to I. H. Siddiqi a "military and civil official"¹⁹⁶, a "supreme pargana official whom the sultan appointed in the khalsa parganas, (royal domains); he held the rank of malik." The shiqqdar's function was to maintain peace and order, to help the revenue collectors in fulfilling their functions in general and specifically to aid them in cases when the muqaddams or the zamindars refused to co-operate, and to look after the lands granted by the sultan to the learned. Shiqqdars also sat in judgement in criminal affairs.¹⁹⁷ M. A. Rahim believes that the shiqqdar's duty was to punish tax avoiders as well as to maintain peace and to extirpate lawlessness¹⁹⁸. S. C. Misra emphasizes that the main task of the shiqqdar was to maintain "law and order". He contends that only Afghans could be nominated to this office,¹⁹⁹

193. Sharma, 1936, p. 589.

194. Tripathi, 1956, p. 127.

195. Misra, 1957, p. 324.

196. Siddiqi, 1971, pp. 111-113.

197. Siddiqi, 1969b, pp. 140-143.

198. Rahim, 1965, p. 340.

199. Misra, 1957a, p. 325 and 327.

The Shiqqdar supervised other officials of the pargana - the "treasurer" whose duty, surmises N. H. Sinha was to "accept the tax collected by the ^qshiqqdar"²⁰⁰ and who, opines S. C. Misra, had "to check and balance" the shiqqdar²⁰¹; the amin, who according to S. C. Misra was a "judicial officer"²⁰² but in the opinion of I. H. Siddiqi he dealt with the measurement of lands²⁰³; the munsif, who as N. H. Sinha suggests was in charge of horse branding operation²⁰⁴. I. H. Siddiqi and R. P. Tripathi identify the functions of the munsif and the amin²⁰⁵.

The pargana administrative staff included also an ⁹amil - the revenue collector - and a faujdar - who headed the local military contingent²⁰⁶. Minor administrative responsibilities were accorded to two clerks (patwari), who acted as record keepers, noting fdown all the important affairs of the pargana in Persian and in Hindi.²⁰⁷ The local ²qadi acted as a judge in civil suits²⁰⁸. Finally there was also an official known as qanungo, who, according to S. C. Misra, was a legal advisor for the peasant²⁰⁹;

200. Sinha, 1940, p. 167.

201. Misra, 1957a, p. 327.

202. Misra, 1957a, pp. 325-326.

203. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 143.

204. Sinha, 1940, p. 167.

205. Tripathi, 1956, p. 127 and Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 143.

206. Sinha, 1940, p. 166.

207. Misra, 1957a, p. 327.

208. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 143.

209. Misra, 1957a, p. 328.

though R. P. Tripathi thinks that gnungo was merely a record keeper²¹⁰.

Other than the ^qshiqdar_h, the members of the administrative staff ~~on~~ a pargana were not transferred from place to place. The shiqqdar was paid for his work by receiving land grants from the sultan; other officials were paid by the peasants²¹¹.

Pargananas were grouped together into larger administrative units known as sarkars. The administrative staff of a sarkar consisted of a ^qshiqdar-i shiqqdar_h and a munsif-i munsifan. According to S. R. Sharma the ^qshiqdar-i shiqqdar_h was "essentially a civil officer like a modern magistrate"²¹². J.N. Chaudhuri thinks that the main task of this official was to maintain "law and order"²¹³.

The munsif-i munsifan function was, says R. S. Sharma, analogous to that of a "circuit judge for trying civil suits; redressing the grievances of the peasants and of the muqaddams at the hands of the officials"²¹⁴. S. C. Misra suggests that the munsif-i munsifan was a judge in cases concerned with the revenue payment problems.²¹⁵

J. N. Chaudhuri adds another type of official to the administrative staff of the sarkar - namely the qadi.²¹⁶

210. Tripathi, 1956, p. 127.

211. Misra, 1957a, p. 328.

212. Sharma, 1966, p. 302.

213. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 79.

214. Sharma, 1965, p. 302.

215. Misra, 1957a, p. 329.

216. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 79.

In A. B. Pandey's view the shiqdar-i shiqdaran and the munsif-i munsifan formed a dyarchic system of government, the shiqdar-i shiqdaran acting as a military official and the munsif-i munsifan as a civil official²¹⁷. S. C. Misra believes that the sarkar officials were given land grants in lieu of their payment.²¹⁸

The generally held view was that the sarkars were grouped into still larger administrative units - the provinces²¹⁹. According to I. H. Siddiqi these units were known in Sher Shah's reign as vilayats²²⁰. The vilayats were governed by a "representative of the imperial government at the level of provincial government". The governor of a province was an official known as faujdar or an amin or a muqta²¹. His task was to supervise the shiqdars and to maintain "law and order" with the aid of a police force. The governor was the chief executive and judicial authority in his province²²¹.

J. N. Chaudhuri claims in addition to "provinces" there were in existence "military governorships", whose governors had to maintain large military forces to be ready to repel foreign invasions²²².

217. Pandey, 1963, p. 76.

218. Misra, 1957a, p. 329.

219. Saran, 1952, pp. 58-59 and Misra, 1957a, p. 331.

220. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 104.

221. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 113, and p. 121.

222. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 84.

A central government is seen by most modern commentators to have existed ^{endowed} with the function of supervising the provincial governors.²²³ It was composed of several ministries, each responsible for specific functions. Under Sher Shah served his "chief secretary" who acted as the sultan's chief advisor^e²²⁴; then came less important ministers - the financial secretary, the secretary who drafted the imperial orders and who was also acting as a foreign minister, keeping in touch with ambassadors and with envoys from other states²²⁵; military secretary; secretary of the artillery; the highest church dignitary; the highest chief justice and the religious censor.²²⁶ J. N. Chaudhuri adds another minister among the members of the government - one responsible for the department of intelligence²²⁷. A. L. Srivastava includes^{iv} Sher Shah's government secretaries responsible for the charity and the endowment department²²⁸.

The function of the chief justice was to decide criminal cases²²⁹ and to hear appeals²³⁰. The finance secretary - or to use the terminology proposed by A. L. Srivastava - the minister of revenue and finance - was in

223. Misra, 1957a, p. 332.

224. Sharma, 1965, p. 258 and Imam uddin, 1964, p. 14.

225. Srivastava, 1964, p. 404 and Sharma, 1965, p. 258.

226. Sharma, 1965, pp. 255-256.

227. Chaudhuri, 1974, pp. 83-84.

228. Srivastava, 1964, p. 404.

229. Sharma, 1965, pp. 255-256.

230. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 86.

charge of income and expenditure of the empire and general supervisory authority over other ministers²³¹. The military secretary, or the "army minister" was in charge of recruitment, organization and discipline. He made arrangements for payment of the salaries of the troops and of the officers and ^{and} look after disposition of the army on the field of the battle²³². According to I. H. Siddiqi, the highest church dignitary - known as sadr ^{al-} us su^{dur} was in charge of the department dealing with land grants to the learned, poets and the descendants of the prophets (the sayyids). He also controlled the religious affairs of the state²³³. The "censor" (muhtasib) business was to extinguish such religious crimes as adultery and drinking of intoxicants²³⁴.

The salaries of each of the officials in the government of Sher Shah were fixed by the Sultan himself²³⁵.

Sher Shah has been highly appreciated by modern historians not only for having erected a very complicated and sophisticated bureaucratic machinery, but also for having used it to enforce his regulations in the field of land revenue collection.

Modern historians believe that Sher Shah ordered

231. Srivastava, 1964, p. 404.

232. Srivastava, 1964, p. 404.

233. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 246.

234. Jaffari, 1936, p. 59.

235. Sharma, 1936, p. 584.

all the cultivated land to be measured and its yield assessed annually during harvest.²³⁶ In addition to land measurement, Sher Shah demanded from his officials that they divide the cultivated land into three classes according to their fertility and to the type of crops cultivated. Then, an annual yield for every unit of every cultivated land was established according to the type of crop grown²³⁷. The state demand from the cultivators was fixed and a charge of a certain weight of each kind of grain or its equivalent in cash was made on area sown²³⁸. The claim of the state for land revenue was based on measurement on the basis of an average yield determined separately for each main crop²³⁹.

In addition to regulating land revenue demand, Sher Shah ordered a coinage reform fixing the ratio of gold and silver of his coins²⁴⁰. He demanded that the tax on merchandise should be collected twice - at the border and in place of selling, thus abolishing the inter-provincial duties²⁴¹.

Islam Shah has been credited by modern historians with an important regulation - the abolition of the system

236. Keene 1893 (vol.I), p.125; Tripathi, 1936, pp. 299-300; Sinha, 1940, p. 167.

237. Moreland, 1926, p.449; Sharma, 1965, p. 264; Chaudhuri 1974, p. 85.

238. Moreland, 1925, p. 449.

239. Moreland, 1926, p. 459.

240. Sharma, 1965, pp. 276-277; Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 85.

241. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 86.

whereby soldiers were paid for their services by land grants. Islam Shah ordered that they should be paid in cash. He absorbed the land grants given into the royal domain²⁴². In the interpretation of I. H. Siddiqi, the effect of this order was to strengthen the central authority²⁴³.

Afghan rulers as benefactors of their people and their empire

Modern historians generally accept the view that Afghan sultans used their powers and their institutions in order to create a state in which law and order, peace and happiness would prevail. Afghan rulers aimed at providing material and spiritual prosperity for all of their subjects irrespective of their social, economic or racial origins. "The Afghan kings" writes M. Z. Siddiqi, "unified various parts in which the country was divided, into a well organized state"²⁴⁴. "Their administrative system had a healthy impact on the socio-economic life of the country"²⁴⁵, adds I. H. Siddiqi. A. B. Pandey assures us that the Afghan authoritarian form of government "was the only possible means of securing order and efficiency when democratic sentiment did not exist and aristocracy lacked enlightenment and patriotism"²⁴⁶, A. Halim praises the Lodi dynasty

242. Misra, 1952, p. 234; Srivastava, 1964, p. 429.

243. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 158.

244. M. Z. Siddiqi's foreword to Imam uddin, 1960, p.5.

245. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 1.

246. Pandey, 1956, p. 218.

for having restored "law and order"²⁴⁷, and I. H. Siddiqi -
 the Sur sultans for having "ensured peace and prosperity
 for their people"²⁴⁸.

Each of the Afghan rulers is praised by at least one of his modern admirers for the beneficial effects of his government. Bahlul Lodi, writes A. L. Srivastava, "restored order and discipline in the kingdom of Delhi"²⁴⁹, thus apparently agreeing with a similar evaluation of A. B. Pandey who claims that the first sultan of the Lodi dynasty ensured "law and order"²⁵⁰. Bahlul's successor, continues A. B. Pandey, ensured that "conditions of general welfare and happiness prevailed throughout his reign"²⁵¹. Hameed uddin concludes that as Sikandar Lodi maintained peace with his neighbours the result was that "peace begat plenty"²⁵². Through his personal interventions Sikandar Lodi created a situation in which "justice was done to common man"²⁵³; "the benefits of his reforms were shared by all classes"²⁵⁴. Both Sikandar Lodi and his successor Ibrahim Lodi were

247. Halim, 1961, p. 2.

248. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 61.

249. Srivastava, 1964, p. 193.

250. Pandey, 1956, p. 98.

251. Pandey, 1956, pp. 159-160.

252. Hameed-uddin, 1961c, p.6.

253. Nizami, 1970, p. 699.

254. Hameed-uddin, 1961c, p.7.

allegedly "inspired by the ideal of kingship in which all should bask under the sunshine of their benevolence irrespective of birth and creed"²⁵⁵. N. B. Roy eulogizes Ibrahim Lodi for his ideological position whereby "monarchy must attract into itself all sections of population by its impartiality"²⁵⁶. M. A. Rahim believes that Ibrahim Lodi desired to be "the king of all the people irrespective of their race and wished to give them the benefits of an orderly government"²⁵⁷.

Modern historians generally praise Sher Shah as a benefactor of his people and of his empire. He "created a kingdom in which no one was for the party and all were for the state", writes W. Haig²⁵⁸. He contributed to the foundation of all India empire" adds A. B. Pandey²⁵⁹. I. H. Siddiqi praises Sher Shah for having "consolidated and expanded his empire"²⁶⁰. In building his kingdom, assured

255. Siddiqi, 1965b, p.87; Writing in 1969 Siddiqi expressed the same idea saying that the Surs "realized that the monarchical traditions of the early sultans of India could best serve the political and the cultural needs of their sultanate" (Siddiqi, 1969b p. 29).

256. Roy, 1958a, p. 40.

257. Rahim, 1961, p. 55.

258. Haig, 1937, p. 57.

259. Pandey, 1963, p. 62.

260. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 68.

V. J. Mahajan, the Sur monarch had only one aim" he exercised his powers in the interest of the people"²⁶¹. "The secret of his power", writes Zulfiqar Ali Khan, "lay in the love of his subjects for whom his work was dedicated. He was one of them."²⁶² Labouring for his subjects Sher Shah "established a unity which he had long ago perceived to be the great need for his country"²⁶³; "he evolved order out of chaos"²⁶⁴ and "established perfect peace"²⁶⁵. Though he was an autocrat "his despotism rested on a democratic foundation"²⁶⁶ and his absolutism "was never forced, never oppressive, never capricious; it was based on general will"²⁶⁷. Peace, order, stability, as well as Sher Shah's regulations "gave a new trend to the economic set up of northern India"²⁶⁸. Sher Shah "laboured day and night for reforming the social and the intellectual conditions of his subjects and advancing their material interests"²⁶⁹ and he made "the old institutions to

261. Mahajan, 1958, p. 37.

262. Zulfiqar, 1925, pp. 6-7.

263. Keene, 1893 (vol. I), p. 125.

264. Tripathi, 1921/22, p. 126.

265. Tabibi, 1973, p. 88.

266. Pandey, 1963, p. 62.

267. Misra, 1957a, p. 333.

268. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 168.

269. Jaffar, 1936, p. 56.

serve the interests of the people"²⁷⁰. His sense of justice forced him to order that "in criminal cases everybody was subject to the law of the state"²⁷¹.

M. A. Rahim saw Islam Shah, the second ruler of the Sur dynasty, as following in the footsteps of his father Sher Shah in that his rule was "devoted to the happiness and progress of his people". He worked for "the good of the empire and the people"²⁷².

I. H. Siddiqi judges all Sur sultans to have been devoted to the service of the state and to have employed in their service only those individuals who "had the ability to serve the state"²⁷³.

The relations between the Afghans sultans and their non-Muslim subjects

Modern historians have developed and defended a thesis which provided that although the Afghan rulers of India in the period 1451-1557 were Muslims their rule was by no means inimical to the political, social and economic situation of their non-Muslim subjects. The religious factor was, or so modern historians claim, of no particular

270. Srivastava, 1964, p. 402.

271. Mahajan, 1958, p. 40.

272. Rahim, 1961, pp. 77; p. 108.

273. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 149.

importance when the Afghan sultans had to deal with the non-Muslim majority of their subjects. Neither the Lodis nor the Surs interfered with the internal affairs of the Hindus. On the contrary, they allegedly abolished discriminatory measures against them, ordered by their predecessors on the throne of Delhi. Afghan sultans allowed the Hindus to share in the beneficial effects of their government, employed them in their administration, encouraged them to participate in the political affairs of the empire on equal footing with their Muslim neighbours. In short their general policy was to encourage a rapprochement between their Muslim and their non-Muslim subjects.

Under Bahlul Lodi the Hindu subjects "enjoyed material prosperity"²⁷⁴; he "employed Hindus in his service"²⁷⁵. Bahlul's general policy toward his non-Muslim subjects was based on "broad based liberality"²⁷⁶; he did not discriminate between his subjects "on racial or religious grounds"²⁷⁷.

Under the rule of Sikandar Lodi the Hindus "were not

274. Hameed-uddin, 1961, p. 31.

275. Keene, 1893 (vol. I) p. 94.

276. Lal, 1963, p. 138.

277. Pandey 1963, p. 95; In the same vein Hameed uddin observes that Bahlul "was not intolerant" (Hameed uddin, 1960, p. 141).

interfered with"²⁷⁸. He encouraged them to share in the general happiness of his reign²⁷⁹. N. B. Roy claims that Sikandar Lodi "promoted Hindu-Muslim collaboration in political matters"²⁸⁰. Siddiqi observes that the same ruler employed Hindus in his administration without giving "consideration to their race or creed"²⁸¹. The same historian goes so far as to claim that Sikandar Lodi's reign witnessed "the integration of the Hindu and Muslim cultures. The process of the integration was accelerated and almost completed. The two religions were almost united"²⁸². I. H. Siddiqi's interpretation of the inter-relationship between Hindus and Muslims appears to reflect the earlier judgement of H. G. Keene that under Sikandar Lodi continued the process of "fusion of the two races"²⁸³ (i.e. the Hindus and the Muslims).

278. Siddiqi, 1969b, pp. 58-59.

279. Hameed-uddin, 1961, p. 13.

280. Roy, 1958a, p. 23; Roy wonders how could such an enlightened ruler as Sikandar Lodi be persuaded to participate in the persecution of his subjects; "A king with such a taste and temper", muses Roy, "was expected to listen to the call of art, science and philosophy rather than to the cry of 'religion in danger' and senseless destruction of altar and hearth of his own subjects" (Roy, 1958a, p.19).

281. Siddiqi, 1969b, pp. 58-59; Hameed uddin writes similarly that "Hindus suffered no discrimination in matters of administration" (Hame-ed uddin, 1961c, p. 13.)

282. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 56.

283. Keene, 1893 (vol.I), p. 95.

A. B. Pandey offers the suggestion that under the Lodi dynasty "the seed of Hindu and Muslim amity was sown to bear rich crop during the regime of the Mughals".²⁸⁴

K. S. Lal believes that the Lodi sultans continued to participate in a process of creation of a Hindu - Muslim unit²⁸⁵ which had begun since the Timurid invasion of India in 1398 : ^{and} had brought the Hindus and Muslims together²⁸⁵. Hameed uddin asserts that as part of their favourable attitude toward the Hindus the Lodi sultans never levied the jizya²⁸⁶. A. B. Pandey detects "a secular note in the Lodi politics"²⁸⁷.

Sher Shah Sur is praised by modern historians for his tolerant attitudes toward the non-Muslim residing in his empire. A. B. Pandey believes that Sher Shah was "free from religious bias and therefore supported by the Hindus"²⁸⁸; th^{is} monarch allegedly created "a government of national solidarity with Hindu co-operation"²⁸⁹. Sher Shah was "liberal and tolerant"²⁹⁰; he never acted as a "religious fanatic"²⁹¹; he "never oppressed a Hindu"²⁹²; he showed

284. Pandey, 1963, p. 293.

285. Lal, 1963, p. 193.

286. Hameed-uddin, 1961b, p. 338; Jizya was a polltax (levied by Muslim rulers on their non-Muslim subjects. (see: Cahen EI² (djizya)).

287. Pandey, 1963, preface.

288. Pandey, 1963, p. 45.

289. Pandey, 1963, p. 83.

290. Tripathi, 1921/22, p. 145; Haig, 1937, p.57; Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 90.

291. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 108.

292. Keene, 1893 (vol.I), p. 125.

"religious neutrality"²⁹³; to prove his favourable attitude toward his non-Muslim subjects he did not enforce the collection of jizya²⁹⁴ and abolished all other taxes imposed on non-Muslims²⁹⁵. Sher Shah allegedly allowed the Hindus to decide their civil suits in their own courts - the panchayats-and permitted them to maintain their own system of education²⁹⁶. Generalizing, K. A. N. Sastri writes that Sher Shah "never oppressed his Hindu subjects"²⁹⁷. According to the view of I. H. Siddiqi the Sur sultan encouraged the Hindus to participate in the political affairs of his empire. His "ruling class was composed of Afghans, non Afghans and Indians"²⁹⁸. S. M. Jaffar is convinced that Sher Shah went so far as to help the Hindus to practice their religious rites whenever they were far from their homes. To the rest houses that he built, Sher Shah appointed brahmins to help Hindus to fulfil their religious duties²⁹⁹. A. L. Srivastava

293. Misra, 1957c, p. 34.

294. Saran, 1952, p. 193.

295. Jaffar, 1936, p. 60.

296. Pandey, 1963, p. 77.

297. Sastri, 1970, p. 455.

298. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 89.

299. Jaffar, 1936, p. 61.

believes that Sher Shah allowed Hindus to follow their own religion undisturbed and as far as possible did not mix religion and politics. Sher Shah "did not carry an organized propaganda against Hinduism"³⁰⁰. K. K. Qanungo eulogizes the reign of Sher Shah as being "the dawn of the era of toleration for Hindus". Hindus were accorded "justice, equality of political rights". Sher Shah "established liberal Islam" and built an "Indian nation". He reconciled the followers of two rival creeds. He was "an ideal of the new India - the India of Hindus and Muslims united in heart and in spirit", "Islam was honoured and Hinduism not slighted"³⁰¹. I. H. Siddiqi appears to agree with the evaluation of Qanungo when he writes "one of the features of Sher Shah's age was the growth of a synthetic culture that brought Hindus and Muslims together. Religious eclecticism was popular, Hindus and Muslims were not divided on communal lines"³⁰². "There was full communal harmony. Hindu nobles served as trusted confidants of the state"³⁰³.

Modern historians believe that Islam Shah followed his father's policies ⁱⁿ conducting relations with Hindus. M. A. Rahim says that the second ruler of the Sur dynasty "promoted Hindu-Muslim unity, prepared the ground for Akbar's national monarchy"³⁰⁴. The same historian asserts that

300. Srivastava, 1964, p. 417.

301. Qanungo, 1921, p. 426; p. 415; p. 341.

302. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 105.

303. Siddiqi, 1971, pp. 155-156.

304. Rahim, 1961, p. 113.

Islam Shah encouraged the Hindus to partake in the government of India "as a counterpoise of the Afghans at the court"³⁰⁵.

J. T. Wheeler suggests that Muhammad Adil Shah Sur favoured the Hindus and wished them to partake in his government³⁰⁶.

I. H. Siddiqi seems to summarize the attitude of modern historians who believe that the Afghan age witnessed a reconciliation between the Muslims and the Hindus when he writes that in the Afghan period the "gulf between the conquered and the conquerors of India was bridged and the process of integration of Indian and Muslim cultures was almost completed"³⁰⁷. On the political level the integration between the Hindus and the Muslims expressed itself through the creation of a new form of government which combined the best elements of Hindu and of Muslim traditions of rule.³⁰⁸

Political opposition to the Afghan sultans

According to the view propounded by modern historians Afghan sultans attempted to fulfil the desiderata of what we have called the "imperial ideology", but their endeavour

305. Rahim, 1961, pp. 78-80.

306. Wheeler 1880,, p.127.

307. Siddiqi, 1967c, p. 33.

308. Srivastava, 1964, pp. 202-203;
Sastri, 1970, pp. 456-457.

to establish an absolutist regime met with an opposition which the sultans had to suppress.

Individuals and groups who opposed their rulers are described by modern historians as possessing highly unpleasant characteristics. They were selfish and opportunistic³⁰⁹; mutually jealous and power-drunk³¹⁰; interlocked in continued internecine feuds³¹¹; troublesome³¹²; career³¹³; hypocritical³¹⁴; known for their double dealings and duplicity³¹⁵.

Opposition to the Afghan sultans was expressed by two groups of individuals who were termed by modern historians groups of "nobles" and "chiefs". They formed an "aristocracy of rapacious chiefs"³¹⁶. Their influence on the state was wholly detrimental, as they attempted to prevent a creation of an orderly form of government. By their "selfish intrigues they plunged the whole country into disorder and confusion"³¹⁷. "They were an obstacle to efficient administration"³¹⁸. "They were without enlightenment or patriotism"³¹⁹. They did not even show attachment

309. Tripathi, 1936, p. 84; Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 40.

310. Lal, 1963, p. 159.

311. Jaffar, 1936, pp. 56-57.

312. Rahim, 1961, p. 41.

313. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 37.

314. Pandey, 1956, p. 163.

315. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 28.

316. Erskine, 1854 (vol.I), p. 411.

317. Majumdar et al, 1947, p. 343.

318. Rahim, 1961, p. 54.

319. Pandey, 1956, p. 44.

to their own families³²⁰. Their greed for more and more land grants forced the sultans "to further expand the empire"³²¹. The empire was for them no more than a "plaything"³²².

An implacable hostility existed between nobles and chiefs, and those rulers who wished to create an absolutist monarchy. Their interests collided, and as I. H. Siddiqi puts it "the implementation of the royal policy meant a destruction for them"³²³. Peace and prosperity in India could be achieved only through the destruction of the political powers of the chiefs. The Surs, claims Siddiqi, could ensure peace and prosperity for their people "because they had reduced their nobles to subservience"³²⁴.

Since the earliest days the Afghan empire in India, the sultans attempted to diminish and to destroy the powers of the nobles. The first attempt to curb the powers of the chiefs was performed by Bahlul Lodi. He "tried to raise gradually the prestige of the crown"³²⁵. His policies were carried on with more success by his successor Sikandar who "put down the power of the Afghan oligarchs"³²⁶ and crushed the power of the nobles"³²⁷. Ibrahim Lodi continued

320. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 44.

321. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 37.

322. Haig, 1928, p. 246.

323. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 43; The same historian also opines that the nobles "could not be willingly reconciled to the idea of a powerful king". Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 25.

324. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 61.

325. Siddiqi, 1965a, p. 45.

326. Sastri, 1970, pp. 372-373.

327. Siddiqi, 1969b, pp. 32-33.

the policy of his father. He wished to "enhance the prestige of the crown"³²⁸ promoting to positions of authority only those nobles "who were willing to serve him as servants"³²⁹. He succeeded in establishing a monarchy "head and shoulder above the nobility"³³⁰; being "imbued with the idea of absolute kingship he destroyed the nobles"³³¹. Islam Shah continued the 'anti-noble' drive. He was "unwilling to tolerate the nobles"³³² and he "wished to reduce them to subservience"³³³. Islam Shah understood that only the policy of "ruthless suppression of the chiefs could ensure a creation of a strong centralized monarchy"³³⁴.

The accession to the throne of Muhammad 'Adil Shah Sur marked an end to the attempts of the sultans to implement the "imperial ideology". His misrule brought the "victory of the chiefs and defeat of the idea of strong monarchy and centralized government"³³⁵.

328. Pandey, 1956, p. 163.

329. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 42.

330. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 67.

331. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 70.

332. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 82.

333. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 78.

334. Rahim, 1961, p. 67.

335. Rahim, 1957, p. 227.

The diffusionist ideology

Modern historians argue that throughout the Afghan period there existed a group of politically active individuals who attempted to fulfil a political programme³³⁶ which^{the} main tenet was the demand for the political authority to be diffused and decentralized. The "diffusionist ideology" formed a rival alternative to the "imperial ideology". The diffusionist ideology was espoused by two groups in the Afghan period³³⁶ - the nobles and the Afghan amirs³³⁷. Both "nobles" and "Afghan chiefs" wished to diffuse and to decentralize political authority. According to modern historians, the main difference between these two groups seems to be that whereas the "chiefs" wished to divide the kingdom among members of the same racial group - the Afghans, thus excluding the non-Afghans from possible partaking in the spoils of power, the "nobles" presumably desired to divide the power among themselves irrespective of their racial origins.

336. Synonymous terms to denote the "nobles" are "aristocracy" (Pandey, 1956, p. 218); "high nobles" (Siddiqi, 1965b, p. 87); "peers" (Srivastava, 1964, p. 192) "official nobility" (Moreland and Chatterjee 1945, p. 179).

337. This group is also referred to as "Afghan amirs" (Powell-Price, 1958, p. 189) "chieftains" (Jaffar, 1936, pp. 56-57); "great Afghan chiefs" (Keene, 1893 vol. I, p. 94); "aristocracy of Afghan chiefs" (Erskine 1854, vol. I, p. 411) "Afghan nobles" (Srivastava, 1964, p. 203).

The concept of feudal state

Modern historians associate with the terms "noble" an ideology and a "feudal" social order. The Afghan state under Bahlul Lodi was allegedly "a feudal fraternity in which the nobles held large areas of the country; they were joined together by a community of interests"³³⁸. R. P. Tripathi suggests that Bahlul divided his kingdom into fiefs, each under a noble. There was no central authority to control the fiefholders. Local commanders collected the revenue through local agents without attention to details of local government.³³⁹ A. B. Pandey says that the "fiefholders" did not have to pay tribute³⁴⁰. G. A. Dunbar asserts that the feudal social order continued to exist during the reign of Sikandar Lodi, who divided his kingdom into "fiefs"³⁴¹. Under the Lodi rule, conjectures S. M. Imam ud din, important nobles were empowered to increase the allowance of their own vassals thus hastening the process of sub-infeudation. The lords of the fiefs were independent from any supervision of the central authority. The fiefs were inherited within the family of the fief-

338. Hameed uddin, 1961b, p. 330.

339. Tripathi, 1936, p. 243 & p. 193.

340. Pandey, 1956, p. 217; Hameed ud din claim⁴ that Bahlul's monarchy was feudal (1961a, p. 125).

341. Dunbar, 1943, p. 160. Prasad (1965, p. 94) adds that Sikandar Lodi had "mighty vassals". Imam uddin (1961, p. 260) claiming that Sikandar Lodi allowed his fiefholders to retain all the surplus revenue of their fiefs. S. Lane Poole (1903, p.193) describes Sikandar Lodi's realm as being "without strong principles of cohesion"; "his monarchy was conger of nearly independent principalities, jagirs provinces, each ruled by hereditary chiefs."

holders³⁴². In Siddiqi's view the state functions were fulfilled by hereditary officials³⁴³. The feudal system continued to exist under the Surs who, according to the opinion of I. Prasad employed in their services "feudal barons with armed retainers"³⁴⁴. K. K. Qanungo believes that Sher Shah adopted an "anti-feudal policy"³⁴⁵.

The tribal program

Modern historians associate the term "Afghan chiefs" with the political and social organization of a tribe. The Afghan amirs allegedly wished to establish in northern India a "tribal monarchy". Afghan tribal leaders wished to divide northern India among various Afghan tribes. They also wanted to participate in the government acting on a par with their king.*

342. Imamuddin, 1961, pp. 260-261. Roy (1958a, pp. 37-38) says that the Lodi kingdom was "loose, ill knit, divided into territorial domains, feudally organised" and Hameed uddin (1961, p. 335) says that under the Lodis "the kingdom was divided among Afghan chiefs".

343. Siddiqi, 1969, b, pp. 32-33.

344. Prasad, 1955, p. 196.

345. Qanungo, 1921, p. 65.

* For the description of the institutions of the "tribal monarchy" see above, pp. 155; 160-163

Though "tribal monarchy" and "feudalism" refer to two different sets of social and political organizations, these terms are sometimes used interchangeably; see for example Roy's evaluation that the "Afghans were feudally organized" (Roy, 1958a, pp. 37-38).

Summary

Modern historians of the Afghan period applied themselves to the examination of two matters: the importance of the Afghan phase in the history of the Indian subcontinent and specifically the extent to which the Afghan mode of government could be considered to have inherited forms of rule prevailing before Afghan accession to power; and the nature of the forces which shaped political developments during that period.

Two contradictory hypotheses have been put forward in answer to the first question. Some scholars believe that Afghans created a unique polity, one which reflected their own social and political level of development. Afghan institutions and Afghan modes of government were abandoned when Afghans were succeeded by the Timurids as rulers. The other hypothesis provides that Afghans did not attempt to create a unique system of government but that they recreated the institutions known to their Muslim predecessors in India; these were later passed on to their Timurid successors and eventually absorbed within the system of government created by the British.

The inherent dynamics of the political process during the Afghan period have been understood by modern historians as being a struggle between two groups of individuals each equipped with its own political programme. One of the programmes postulated fulfilment of an "imperial ideology". Its negative counterpart was expressed in the "diffusionist ideology".

According to the proponents of the "imperial ideology" hypothesis the Afghan rulers and their supporters attempted to establish a social and political order which could bring the maximum happiness to all of their subjects - both Hindus and Muslims, Afghans and non-Afghans. To achieve this noble aim the Afghan sultans aimed at concentrating in their hands all political, administrative, judicial and military powers. They turned themselves into legislators, chief justices, commanders-in-chief of their armies and heads of government. They built up and presided over a vast and complicated bureaucratic machinery, through which they implemented their regulations. Afghan sultans created and supervised a governmental system which included such institutions as a central government, manned by officials who had exact functions to fulfil. Through the central institutions the sultans maintained control over the provincial governments. Though the sultans were Muslims, this fact had no adverse impact on their relations with their non-Muslim subjects. The sultans did not interfere with the "internal affairs" of the Hindus and tried to integrate them within the political and the administrative system of the sultanate; and finally, the sultans struggled against those groups which tried to prevent them from implementing the "imperial ideology".

The opposition to the "imperial ideology" was to be found, according to modern historians, among the "nobles" and the "chiefs" respectively representing the feudal and the tribal social and political orders. Modern scholars view the aspirations of the "nobles" and of the "chiefs" as selfish and "reactionary".

The intermittent contest between the proponents of the "imperial ideology" and the champions of the "diffusionist ideology" form the basic characteristic of the political culture of the Afghan period as portrayed in modern historiography.

CHAPTER SEVENTHEMES AND VARIATIONS IN MODERN HISTORIANS' INTERPRETATIONS
OF THE AFGHAN PERIOD

As we have shown in the previous chapter modern interpretations of the Afghan period centre on two issues - the significance of the Afghan period within the history of the Indian subcontinent, and the identification of the forces which could explain the aims of the politically active groups during the Afghan period. Two sets of theories have been offered to help solve each of the problems raised by modern historians. The meaning of the Afghan period within the history of India is to be found either in the "tribal monarchy hypothesis", which stresses the new and unique element brought by the Afghans into the Indian political scene, or in the "continuity theory" which in contradiction to the "tribal monarchy hypothesis" emphasizes the continuity between the Afghan period and the history of India as it had occurred before and after the Afghan period of domination over northern India: 1451-1557. The political dynamics of the Afghan period are to be explained according to the interpretation of modern historians through reference to a sustained struggle between individuals and groups who had embraced two opposing political programmes - i.e., the "imperial ideology" or alternatively its counter programme - the "diffusionist ideology". The Afghans are perceived by modern historians as either attempting to create

a stable regime and a centralized bureaucracy presided by a single ruler in whose hands all powers of government are concentrated and who operates them on behalf of his subjects, or alternatively Afghans are said to have maintained a polity in which political power was decentralized and diffused.

Development of modern historians' interpretative framework

The four concepts used by modern historians to explain the history of Afghan domination in northern India in 1451-1557 (i.e., the "tribal monarchy hypothesis", the "continuity theory", the "imperial ideology" and the "diffusionist ideology") were originally proposed, in a general form, by 19th century British historians of India. The "tribal monarchy hypothesis" was first alluded to by W. Erskine who in 1854 put forward the view that Bahlul Lodi was "raised to the throne by a confederacy of six to seven great Afghan chiefs".¹ The same writer was the first to suggest that the Afghans formed a "nation" when he described Sher Shah as "the most eminent of his nation in India".² Erskine was the first writer to attribute fixed national characteristics to the Afghans. According to him the "Afghans hated any superior",³ and they were "rough and uncivilized".⁴ E. Thomas, writing in 1871, elaborated on this point by claiming that the Afghans showed "national

1. Erskine, 1854 (vol.I), p. 405. This point was repeated by Keene in 1893 (Keene, 1893, vol. I, p. 94).

2. Erskine, 1854 (vol. II) p. 441.

3. Erskine, 1854 (vol. I) p. 407.

4. Erskine, 1854, (vol. II), p. 461.

vices of duplicity, treachery and unscrupulous break of faith."⁵ J. T. A. Wheeler believed that the Afghans were "turbulent Muslims fanatics".⁶ Publishing his History of India in 1880 J. T. A. Wheeler was the first to see the Afghan rule as a new development in the history of the Indian subcontinent. He wrote: "The Afghan rule of Sher Khan and his successors is a break in the history of India."⁷

The "continuity theory" found its first exponent in the writings of M. Elphinstone who, as early as 1841, described Sher Shah as the original author of Akbar's institutions.⁸ The foundations of the "imperial ideology" were again established by M. Elphinstone who maintained that Sikandar Lodi was "a good administrator",⁹ and that Sher Shah "improved the civil government".¹⁰ Erskine claimed that "Sher Shah was a legislator".¹¹ E. Thomas's view was that Sher Shah "systematized the revenue system and fiscal departments".¹² H. G. Keene was the first to observe

5. Thomas, 1871, p. 392.

6. Wheeler, 1880, p. 127.

7. Wheeler, 1880, p. 127.

8. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 458. This view was accepted by Thomas (Thomas, 1871, p. 391).

9. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 419.

10. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 418.

11. Erskine, 1854, (vol. I), p. 443.

12. Thomas, 1871, p. 392.

that Sher Shah wished to establish an "absolute monarchy".¹³

The "imperial ideology" comprises the hypothesis that Afghan rulers contributed to the improvement of the relations between Muslim and Hindus either by a policy of non-interference in their subjects' internal affairs or through such positive actions as the employment of non-Muslims in their service. H. G. Keene, writing in 1893, was the first to advance this point when describing Bahlul Lodi as a ruler who "employed Hindus in his service."¹⁴ Keene was also the first to claim that the Afghan period witnessed a reconciliation between Muslims and non-Muslims. According to Keene even the persecutions of Sikandar Lodi did not prevent the process of "fusion of the two races".¹⁵

The "diffusionist ideology" was first hinted at by Elphinstone who observed, in 1841, that Ibrahim Lodi "alarmed his chiefs".¹⁶ Erskine elaborated on this point commenting that the Afghans in India were under the authority "of hereditary chiefs ruling like oligarchs".¹⁷

These observations made by 19th century British historians have been elaborated and presented in greater detail by their 20th century successors. Only the most important contributions can be mentioned here. K. K. Qanungo devoted his monograph on Sher Shah which appeared in 1921 to the defence of the thesis that Sher Shah was a representative of the "imperial ideology", although rather incongruously he saw him as a "national" Afghan leader was well. The works

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- 13. Keene, 1893 (vol. I), p. 125.
 - 14. Keene, 1893 (vol. I), p. 94.
 - 15. Keene, 1893 (vol. I), p. 94.
 - 16. Elphinstone, 1874, p. 420.
 - 17. Erskine, 1854 (vol. II), p. 461.

of A. Halim, A. B. Pandey and N. B. Roy have presented the view that the Lodi rulers embraced the "imperial ideology".¹⁸ At the present time I. H. Siddiqi appears to be the most important scholar to defend the "continuity theory" which stipulates that the Afghan period in India formed a bridge between the early Turkish Sultanate of Delhi and the later Mughal form of government.¹⁹ M. Rahim espouses the opposite view, namely that the Afghans introduced a unique element into the history of India in the form of "tribal monarchy" and maintains that the groups who represented the "diffusionist ideology" were in power in the Afghan empire in India at least till the reign of Islam Shah Sur (ruled 1545-1553).²⁰

Controversies among modern historians

Despite the unanimous acceptance by modern historians of the general interpretative assumptions relating to the analysis of the Afghan period, significant differences of opinion do not exist among them in so far as interpretations of the activities of individual Afghan rulers are concerned. The disagreement focuses on the issue who among the Afghan Sultans upheld the alternative political programmes, who of them represented the "imperial ideology" and who - the "diffusionist ideology". There has been a controversy

18. Halim, 1961; Pandey, 1956; Roy, 1958a.

19. Siddiqi, 1969b, and 1971.

20. Rahim, 1961.

among modern historians as to the question who, if any, of the Afghan rulers could be classified as an exponent of the "tribal monarchy" and which of them attempted to pursue policies of their Turkish predecessors whose regulations were passed on to their Mughal successors.

Historians who have interpreted the Afghan period as that in which the Delhi Sultanate was restored to its former pre-eminence on the Indian subcontinent and who saw the Afghan Sultans as attempting to build a bureaucratic machinery of government, are confronted by others who claim that neither of these two propositions is viable. Majumdar and others argue that the Lodi Sultans "failed to check the disintegration process begun by Firuz Shah" and that they "failed to introduce any wholesome and strong element in their administrative structure".²¹ In H. G. Keene's opinion Bahlul Lodi "did not attempt to restore Empire's limits".²² A. L. Srivastava is in agreement with this evaluation of Bahlul's activities when he writes that "Bahlul did not entertain the ambition of reconquering the provinces of the Sultanate of Delhi".²³ In the opinion of W. Lees even the Sur Sultans did not succeed in establishing "law and order". "Except for the period of Sher Shah, he writes, there was little settled government in India. The glory of Delhi was gone ... the power of the sovereign was broken and the prestige

21. Majumdar et al, 1960, p. 342

22. Keene, 1893, (vol. I), p. 94.

23. Srivastava, 1964, p. 195.

of the empire disappeared".²⁴

Whereas some modern historians believe that Afghan Sultans wished to govern in an autocratic manner through a centralized state machinery, others interpret the activities of the Afghan rulers as pointing to the hypothesis that they represented the "diffusionist ideology" and wished to establish either a tribal monarchy or a feudal state. Bahlul Lodi was no more than a "tribal chief", claims A. Halim.²⁵ He created a "tribal kingdom", asserts R. P. Tripathi.²⁶ Rahim attributes to Bahlul Lodi an active policy of introducing tribal monarchy. Bahlul, writes Rahim, "parcelled the kingdom among the Afghan chiefs who held their jagirs in hereditary succession."²⁷ Rahim thus apparently agrees with an earlier judgement of the I. Prasad who was convinced that Bahlul "built a state based on blood kinship and pride of race".²⁸ In his evaluation of Bahlul's policies Prasad in turn seems to echo the description of the historian ~~M.~~ F. R. Rushbrook-Williams who asserted that Bahlul "based his powers upon the allegiance of his own

24. Lees, 1867, p. 450.

25. Halim, 1971, p. 13. A similar expression is used by A. B. Pandey who describes Bahlul as "tribal chieftain" (Pandey, 1963, p. 21).

26. Tripathi, 1921-2, p. 127.

27. Rahim, 1961, pp. 43-45.

28. Prasad, 1955, p. 93.

blood."²⁹ The aim of Bahlul's policies was no more than to "unite the Afghans in a common endeavour to impose their sway upon others" - claims N. B. Roy.³⁰ Far from being a centralized bureaucracy, Bahlul's state was based on "clan loyalties"³¹ in which the Afghans "sticked to their tribal ways"³² and the king was no more than "first among equals".³³ Q. Ahmad blames Bahlul for having given the Afghan nobles "so much latitude that they became the cause of the downfall of the empire".³⁴ Bahlul Lodi's successor, Sikandar, continued according to Pandey to maintain "the tribal organization" of the state.³⁵ Ibrahim Lodi, the last ruler of the Lodi dynasty, continued to support this system as the Afghan chiefs were "the foundation of his dynasty".³⁶

Sher Shah Sur relied on the tribal organizations to impose his own power. He divided his empire "into 47 divisions - the commands of which were distributed among the chieftains of the hostile clans".³⁷ Rahim supports the

29. Rushbrook-Williams, 1918, p. 15. This evaluation was also accepted by Moreland and Chatterjee, 1945, p. 179.

30. Roy, 1958a, p. 9.

31. Richards, 1965, p. 51.

32. Siddiqi, 1961, p. 119.

33. Lal, 1963, p. 159.

34. Ahmad, 1945, pp. 374-375.

35. Pandey, 1956, p. 219.

36. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 59.

37. Jaffar, 1936, p. 56.

theory that the tribal system of government was left intact by Sher Shah.³⁸

Some historians maintain that neither Bahlul nor Sher Shah were autocrats. Bahlul could do no more "than persuade Afghan chief but seldom to order them."³⁹ Rahim claims that Bahlul's "instincts and upbringing" prevented him from creating an absolute monarchy.⁴⁰ R. P. Tripathi asserts that the Lodi Sultans created a "confederacy" in which "the kingship was reduced to peerage".⁴¹ Sher Shah had to "consult his chiefs" before taking any action, and his steps had to be approved by an Afghan tribal assembly.⁴³ "Proud Afghans" "forced Sher Shah to abandon his project of introducing into his army a new system of military gradations, as these were not liked by the Afghans".⁴⁴

One group of historians claims that the Afghan sultans created a bureaucratic network manned on all levels by candidates best suited to fulfil governmental and administrative functions. Another group asserts that Afghan rulers promoted only those officials who could prove their

38. Rahim, 1961, p. 46.

39. Powell-Price, 1958, p. 184.

40. Rahim, 1961, p. 53.

41. Tripathi, 1936, p. 84.

42. Yasin, 1961, p. 114.

43. Pandey, 1963, p. 74.

44. Imam ʿud-din, 1958, p. 274.

Afghan descent. Bahlul Lodi, says W. Haig "could not tolerate strangers" i.e., non Afghans, occupying positions of power; he therefore got rid of his non Afghan wazir Hamid Khan.⁴⁵ The idea that under Bahlul and Sikandar Lodi no non-Afghans could be appointed to important offices is shared by G. A. Dunbar and by K. S. Lal. According to the former "Bahlul and Sikandar appointed their kinsmen and fellow countrymen to the chief offices".⁴⁶ Lal agrees that Bahlul Lodi dismissed the non Afghan officials and followed a "policy of Afghanization" in so far as appointments were concerned.⁴⁷ This policy did not undergo any changes under the Sur dynasty when all the "chief offices were in the hands of the Afghans".⁴⁸ Sher Shah Sur, argues Misra, followed the example of his predecessors and showed "racial bias" accepting the idea that the "rule is an exclusive Afghan preserve".⁴⁹

Whilst one school of historians believed that Afghan rulers wished to be the benefactors of all of their subjects, another group of scholars accepted the view that Afghan Sultans were interested only in promoting the interests of their fellow countrymen. Rahim writes that Bahlul Lodi did not take any interest in the affairs of his non-Afghan

45. Haig, 1937, p. 228.

46. Dunbar, 1943, p. 160.

47. Lal, 1963, p. 134.

48. Lane-Poole, 1903, p. 191.

49. Misra, 1957c, p. 38.

subjects.⁵⁰ E. B. Havell asserts that "Sher Shah's statemanship had no higher aim than to satisfy the cupidity of his own countrymen by lavish distribution of largesse".⁵¹

Another subject of controversy among modern historians is the question of the relationship between the Afghan Sultans and their non Muslim subjects. Supporters of the "imperial ideology" theory contend that Afghan rulers did not show any prejudice against the Hindus and that they even attempted to remove various repressive measures against non Muslims enforced by their predecessors. This view is sharply opposed by those historians who believe that some of the Afghan rulers were prejudicial toward the non-Muslims or that they even attempted to follow a policy of active persecution against the Hindus. Sikandar Lodi was not a tolerant ruler, claims Haig; he was a "bigot".⁵² Haig's view was accepted by A. L. Srivastava, according to whom Sikandar Lodi showed "relentless bigotry",⁵³ by K. A.N. Sastri, who described the second ruler of the Lodi dynasty as a "furious bigot"⁵⁴ and by R. S. Sharma, who thinks that Sikandar Lodi's "arch weakness" "was his bigotry".⁵⁵ Sharma

50. Rahim, 1961, p. 53. In the same vein Lal asserts that Bahlul Lodi "was only a leader of the Afghans, not a ruler of all of his subjects". (Lal, 1963, p. 159).

51. Havell, 1924, p. 49.

52. Haig, 1928, p. 226. Haig seems to repeat the judgements of Thomas, Elphinstone and Keene, all of whom had regarded Sikandar Lodi as a "bigot" (Thomas, 1874, p. 365; Elphinstone, 1874, p. 419; Keene, 1893, vol. I, p. 95).

53. Srivastava, 1964, p. 23. The same evaluation of Sikandar's religious attitudes is shared by Nizami (1970, p. 701) and by Halim (1961, p. 216).

54. Sastri, 1970, p. 372.

55. Sharma, 1966, p. 154.

refers to Sikandar Lodi as "Hindu hater"⁵⁶. He believes that Sher Shah Sur followed a policy of religious intolerance.⁵⁷ Both Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Sur are considered by modern historians to have gone beyond mere intolerance to a policy of active persecution directed against the non-Muslims. Sikandar Lodi, writes Srivastava, "tried to repress Hinduism and to exalt Islam",⁵⁸ thus echoing H. G. Keene's theory that Sikandar Lodi attempted to follow a policy of "wanton destruction of Hindu temples".⁵⁹ Sher Shah Sur is judged by Sharma to be a persecutor of Hindus.⁶⁰

Between the two opposing camps of modern historians, the one contending that Afghan rulers accepted the "imperial ideology" and represented the "continuity theory" and the other which sees the Afghan Sultans as representatives of the "diffusionist ideology" and of the "tribal monarchy" concept, there is a third group of researchers, who tried to mediate between the two camps of contending scholars. This group of historians maintains that the Afghan rulers attempted to follow the "imperial ideology" but were forced to compromise with the exponents of the "diffusionist ideology". Hameed ud-din represents this view when he says that Bahlul Lodi "had to improve and remodel the administration

56. Sharma, 1966, p. 153.

57. Sharma, 1963, p. 12.

58. Shrivastava, 1964, p. 23.

59. Keene, 1893, (vol. I), p. 95.

60. Sharma, 1965, pp. 271-273.

with due regard to the interests of the Afghan nobility";⁶¹ Bahlul Lodi could only try and "raise gradually the prestige of the crown"⁶² and he was forced to "feign humility before his powerful nobles"⁶³ writes Siddiqi. Sikandar Lodi was "only partially successful in his attempts to organize central government ;he failed to control his nobles" - writes A. B. Pandey.⁶⁴ Although Bahlul's successor "tried to centralize his powers"⁶⁵ he "could not check his noblemen in distant provinces",⁶⁶ and succeeded only in establishing a "mild control" over his amirs.⁶⁷ Ibrahim Lodi's measures against the nobles "were justified but premature".⁶⁸ Sher Shah Sur could have only tried to limit the effects of the "feudal system", but apparently not to abolish it completely.⁶⁹

Sher Shah Sur - an innovator or a reformer?

As well as the general problem of who among the Afghan Sultans could be described as a successful follower of the "imperial ideology", an issue which has aroused much

61. Hameed-ud-din, 1960, p. 140.

62. Siddiqi, 1965a, p. 45.

63. Siddiqi, 1969c, p. 287. Nizami says that Bahlul "had to compromise with his Afghans who demanded that the political activity should be diffused and decentralized". (Nizami, 1970, p. 674).

64. Pandey, 1956, p. 255.

65. Hameed ud-din, 1961b, p. 331.

66. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 37.

67. Rahim, 1961, p. 54.

68. Lal, 1963, p. 225, Hameed ud-din, 1960, p. 151.

69. Jaffar, 1936, p. 61.

controversy among modern scholars is the problem of Sher Shah's regulations. Historians disagree on the following questions: what exactly were the administrative reforms which Sher Shah wished to carry out, how far did he succeed in implementing them, were the economic policies of Sher Shah applied in all of his empire or only in some of its parts and what was the degree of novelty in his regulations.

In opposition to historians who uphold the hypothesis that Sher Shah Sur created central and provincial bureaucracies through which he implemented his policies are those historians who claim that Sher Shah did not establish a central government⁷⁰ and that moreover he administratively abolished the division of the empire into provinces.⁷¹

Sharma goes so far as to claim that even sarkars did not constitute real administrative units and that Sher Shah was in direct communication with the pargana officials.⁷²

Chaudhuri limits the extent to which the reforms of Sher Shah in the sphere of administration were carried out to Bengal only. It is solely in this province, he claims, that Sher Shah could order the appointment of such officials as shiddar, munsif, ^{q/}shiddar-i ^{q/}shiddaran or munsif-i munsifan.⁷³

In distinction from historians who believe that Sher Shah ordered that all the cultivable lands of his empire should be measured and that his commands were actually carried out, there is a class of scholars who maintain that this hypothesis is only partially correct.

70. Pandey, 1963, p. 73. Srivastava merely says that Sher Shah did not have a wazir (Srivastava, 1973, p. 45).

71. Rahim, 1961, p. 94.

72. Sharma, 1965, pp. 258-259.

73. Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 79.

S. C. Misra doubts whether Sher Shah could have achieved his aim in the administrative scene given the fact that he ruled only for a period of five years. He emphasizes that Akbar had to wait nineteen years before he could begin the process of land measurement.⁷⁴ R. S. Sharma's view is that lands were not measured in the provinces of Rajputana, Multan and Bengal, as in those parts of India cultivated lands were not measured even in Akbar's day.⁷⁵ Sharma doubts whether Sher Shah's orders abolishing inter-provincial transit duties were ever carried out. Even the mighty ^uAurangzeb, he claims, failed to enforce this order.⁷⁶

A number of historians maintain that the degree of novelty attributed to Sher Shah's regulations by other historians has been exaggerated. He is seen by the first group of scholars as : ^a reformer than as an innovator. Sher Shah, they say, did not create the sarkar administrative unit; he merely maintained it.⁷⁷ The office of shiqdar was known since the times of sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (ruled 1324-1351) and so it could not be considered as an innovation of Sher Shah.⁷⁸

74. Misra, 1952, p. 233.

75. Sharma, 1936, p. 592.

76. Sharma, 1965, p. 269.

77. Siddiqi, 1971, p. 104.

78. Rahim, 1965, p. 334.

A neglected topic - Afghan sultans as Muslim rulers

Though the great majority of modern historians expressed the view that the Afghan period could be understood properly only through reference to the concepts described in Chapter ^{51x} ; of this thesis, there are scholars who contend that the main preoccupation of the Afghan rulers was to ensure that their Muslim subjects led their lives according to the precepts of the Muslim holy law - shar'. The Afghan sultans acknowledged by their actions the obligation to defend the Muslim community against external threats to its existence. I. Prasad emphasizes ~~that~~ that the state under Sikandar Lodi was a "theocratic state".⁷⁹ Hameed uddin thinks that Sikandar Lodi's steps toward the destruction of Hindu temples could be best understood from the Hindu revival movement.⁸⁰ I. H. Qureshi believes that the Lodi sultans' main achievement was to stop aggression by Hindu princes against the Muslim states existing in northern India.⁸¹ R. P. Tripathi describes Sher Shah as a Muslim ruler, eager to fulfil the precepts of Muslim statecraft.⁸² R. B. Roy complains that the main defect of the Afghan empire was "the influence of the theologians".⁸³

79. Prasad, 1925, p. 481.

80. Hameed-uddin, 1961c, p. 12.

81. Qureshi introduction to Halim, 1961.

82. Tripathi, 1921/22, pp. 126-146.

83. Roy, 1958a, p. 37.

The theory that Afghan sultans perceived themselves as champions of Islam has not been further developed by modern historians. In distinction to the extensive work which has been to describe the activities of Afghan rulers as emanating from the "imperial ideology", only a few scattered references have been made by modern historians on the religious aspect of Afghan sultans' rule. The tendency of modern historians to see the ruler as embracing essentially a secular state ideology and as acting in a manner intended to be beneficial to all of their subjects, irrespective of their faith, is in sharp contrast to the way in which medieval historians perceived the aims of the political activities of the Afghan sultans.

Summary

Modern historians disagree in the way they interpret the aims of the activities of the Afghan rulers. The same Afghan sultans are described by one group of scholars as embracing the "imperial ideology", successfully suppressing the exponents of the "diffusionist ideology", while other historians believe that Afghan rulers were themselves adherents of the "diffusionist ideology" attempting to create a "tribal monarchy" in northern India. Yet another group of historians perceive the same Afghan sultans as trying to act in conformity with the "imperial ideology", but not being able to carry it out successfully because of the great strength of those who favoured the "diffusionist ideology".

Despite all the differences of opinion about the

meaning of activities of Afghan rulers, modern historians appear to share the same theoretical premises of interpretation of the Afghan period. We have shown that the theoretical framework within which Afghan period is explained by modern historians, was offered by 19th century British historians of India. The same framework was accepted and developed by 20th century historians.

CHAPTER EIGHT :CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MODERN HISTORIANS' HISTORIOGRAPHY
OF THE AFGHAN PERIOD

Having set out in detail the four basic concepts which have been used by modern historians in their interpretation of the political culture of the Afghan period, namely: the tribal monarchy hypothesis, the continuity theory, the imperial ideology and the diffusionist ideology, we shall now proceed to analyze them critically. The analysis will consist of an attempt to find the logical relations among the concepts used, and further to define these concepts in a more precise way. This in turn will enable us to ask whether the concepts thus defined can be corroborated by historical evidence appertaining to the period under consideration. We shall confront each of the hypotheses which have been proposed by modern historians with the extant material as it survived in chronicles of medieval historians, in inscriptions, in archaeological remains, in hagiographical works, and in other histories relevant to the Afghan period. We shall then attempt to answer the following questions: Does the interpretation of Afghan period offered by modern historians explain all facts known to us; is there any evidence which can refute any or all of the claims made by them; and to what extent does historical evidence support the views propounded by them.

An attempt at a critical analysis of the modern historians' historiography of the Afghan period is met by a number of obstacles:

1. Modern historians leave undefined most of the theoretical terms they use, such as "race"¹, "nation"², "enlightened despot"³ "absolute authority"⁴ "absolutism"⁵; "divine monarchy"⁶ "legislator"⁷, "chief justice"⁸; "church" ⁹, "judicial system"¹⁰ "administrative system"¹¹, "supreme court"¹² "fiefs"¹³ "feudal barons"¹⁴.

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1. Qanungo, 1963, p. 61.
 2. Prasad, 1955, p. 95.
 3. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 1.
 4. Srivastava, 1967, p. 197.
 5. Pandey, 1963, p. 119.
 6. Srivastava, 1964, p. 429.
 7. Halim, 1938, p. 312.
 8. Halim, 1961, p. 223.
 9. Pandey, 1963, p. 252.
 10. Dunbar, 1943, p. 173.
 11. Majumdar et al 1947, p. 735.
 12. Pandey, 1956, pp. 231-232.
 13. Tripathi, 1936, p. 243.
 14. Prasad, 1955, p. 196.

2. They use vague descriptions to interpret some of the political and cultural phenomena which allegedly occurred during the Afghan period. Among such descriptions are: "government and national solidarity"¹⁵; "~~Liberal~~ Islam"¹⁶; "law and order"¹⁷; "Hindu-Muslim amity" "integration of the Muslims and ^{Hindu} cultures".¹⁹

3. Modern historians very often do not quote the sources for the events and activities of the Afghans in India to which they refer as "facts". Thus Hameed uddin assures us that Bahlul Lodi "remodelled the administration"²⁰; M. G. Keene says that Sher Shah "prepared a new digest of civil and penal law"²¹. P. Saran states that the Afghan kingdom was considered by the Afghan chiefs as their tribal property²²; J. N. Chaudhuri describes in detail the central government of Sher Shah Sur²³; S. C. Misra reports

15. Pandey, 1963, p. 83.

16. Qanungo, 1921, p. 426.

17. Halim, 1961, p. 2.

18. Pandey, 1963, p. 293.

19. Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 56.

20. Hameed-ud-din, 1960, p. 140.

21. Keene, 1893, vol. I, p. 125.

22. Saran, 1952, p. 61.

23. Chaudhuri, 1974, pp. 83-84.

that ganungo acted as a "legal advisor for the peasants"²⁴;
 K. S. Lal says that Bahlul Lodi's policies toward his Hindu
 subjects were based on a "broad based liberality"²⁵; S. M.
 Jaffar claims that the Shah appointed brahmins to the rest
 houses he had built in order to enable his Hindu subject to
 fulfil their religious duties.²⁶

4. Modern historians do not state whether their inter-
 pretation of the Afghan period is their original creation,
 based on their reading of the sources, or whether they accept
 theories put forward by their predecessors. As a result we
 do not know whether their terms of reference, such as
 "absolutism", "feudalism", "tribal monarchy", acquire a
 new meaning or whether these terms retain the definitions
 attached to them by one historian's predecessors.

In view of the above mentioned difficulties we have
 been forced to define the concepts used by modern historians
 with reference to relevant definitions put forward by
 contemporary historians, anthropologistsst and political
 scientists. Though this device is arbitrary it seems to
 be of heuristic value as it helps us to establish whether
 concepts used by modern historians can be meaningfully applied
 to the Afghan period.

24. Misra, 1957a, p. 328.

25. Lal, 1963, p. 138.

26. Jaffar, 1936, p. 61.

Interdependence among the four concepts of modern historians' interpretation

A closer look at the four concepts with the help of which modern historians performed their interpretation of the Afghan period reveals that these concepts are not independent of each other, and that specifically the "tribal monarchy" hypothesis partly overlaps with the concept of the "diffusionist ideology", whilst the concept of "imperial ideology" is closely associated with the "continuity hypothesis" .

Proponents of the view that the Afghan rulers adopted the "imperial ideology", attempted to show that this political program was not a new form of government but a revival of the way in which India was governed during the reign of the Turkish sultans of Delhi.* Thus the "imperial ideology" becomes in fact a part of the "continuity hypothesis". The two theories cannot be said to be identical for some modern historians believe that Afghan rulers actively created the basis for further developments. These historians do not therefore relate the Afghan policy with the earlier political history of Muslims in India.**

Modern historians who assume that the supporters of the "diffusionist ideology" were also the exponents of the tribal form of organization correlate the "diffusionist ideology" with the "tribal monarchy" hypothesis***.

* See above pp. 164-168; 172-190; 222-224

** See above pp. 168-171

*** See above pp. 155-163; 204; 206

These two concepts do not however overlap completely as the proponents of the "diffusionist ideology" ascribe the programme of "tribal monarchy" to only one of the groups politically active in the Afghan period, whereas the idea of the "tribal monarchy" asserts that the Afghans did actually create a tribal polity in India.*

As the four concepts appear to be partially overlapping, it seems that modern historiography of Afghan phase in the history of India can be reduced to two sets of ideas. Both the place of the Afghan period in the history of the subcontinent and the meaning of the political activities of groups and individuals during that period are explained by modern historians through reference to two mutually exclusive sets of political programmes - the "imperial ideology" associated with the "continuity hypothesis" and the "tribal monarchy hypothesis" co-related with the "diffusionist ideology". We shall term the first set of ideas: "the centralist theory" whilst the second will be referred to as: "the decentralist theory".

The ideas associated with each of these two theories are summarized in the following chart:

Centralist Theory

Afghans recreated the Delhi Sultanate

Afghans created centralized political institutions which were passed on to their successors - the Mughals and the British

Decentralist Theory

Afghans created in India a tribal polity

Afghans maintained tribal institutions which were rejected by their successors

* See above, pp. 200-203; p. 206

Centralist Theory

Afghan ruler was an absolute monarch

Afghan period witnessed a rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims, both on political and on cultural levels.

Afghan state had centralized bureaucracy

Afghan sultans were religiously neutral in relations to their non-Muslim subjects.

Afghan rulers acted as impartial rulers of all of their subjects.

Afghan sultans suppressed exponents of the "diffusionist ideology".

Afghan sultans ensured law and order

Decentralist theory

Afghan sultan was a tribal chieftain - a "primes inter pares"

Afghans created a policy in which all the political and material advantages were limited to ^{those} who were of Afghan origins. Afghans were "religious fanatics"

Afghan polity was politically decentralized. It was divided among Hindu vassals and Afghan chiefs, who acted independently of their rulers.

Afghan sultans followed a policy of religious persecutions.

Afghan sultans perceived themselves as leaders of their own Afghan nation

Afghan sultans decentralized their polity, and promoted its feudalization.

Afghans were unable to maintain law and order as they were turbulent and anarchic.

From the content analysis of each of the ideas associated with the "centralist" and the "decentralist" theories it appears that the "centralist theory" is associated by modern historians with valuable political achievements. Modern historians dislike the phenomena associated with the "decentralist theory". Afghans who wished to fulfil them were viewed by modern historians with hostility.

Analytical and empirical analysis of modern historians'
historiography

In the following sections we shall examine the validity of modern historians' interpretations of the Afghan period. Each of the concepts used by modern historians will be precisely defined and then examined in the light of historical evidence. We shall attempt to ascertain whether modern historians' interpretative framework can be justified on the basis of extant historical evidence. As stated above modern historians have seldom defined precisely their own basic terms of reference. To overcome this difficulty we shall quote relevant definitions from appropriate works of contemporary historians, anthropologists and political scientists, when they are helpful in attempting to define more 'frames of reference'.

Did the Afghans create in northern India a polity reflecting their national, racial and tribal characteristics?

Modern historians appear to believe that Afghans attempted and even succeeded in creating and maintaining in northern India in the period 1451-1557 a polity reflecting their own unique national, racial and tribal characteristics.

Following M. Harris we shall define the term "race" as denoting a group "composed of subjectively significant individuals unrestricted by age and sex criteria, in which membership is sociometric (i.e. appears the same to all egos);

is established at birth, endures for life and confers special behavioural obligations and privileges". M. Harris claims that the "basic cognitive factors" which enable a group to maintain its identity and cohesion is the idea of descent. The basic behavioural obligations and privileges of members of the same race are marriage restrictions and jural privileges.²⁷

The term "nation" is the most frequent designation utilized by modern historians to describe the bonds among the Afghans living in India. Following the definition of D. A. Rostow we shall define "nation" as a "group of human beings, whose common solidarity is based on common language, history, prolonged self government, common economic structure and a continued occupation of a geographically well defined territory."²⁸; to this description we may add the characterization of G. A. de Vos who assumes that nations have "national character", which he defines as "the enduring personality characteristics and unique life styles found among the populations of particular national states".²⁹

Modern historians assume that the type of social bond which existed among the Afghans could be best described through reference to the "tribe". 20th century anthropologists have enumerated the following characteristics of this type of social organization: common name, specified

27. Harris, 1968, p. 264.

28. Rostow, 1968, p.8.

29. Vos, 1968, p. 14.

territory which it occupies, common language, a sense of belonging, relative isolation from other social groups, possession of a limited world view, lack of historical depth.³⁰ A tribal society is economically self-sufficient and it possesses social values of its own.³¹ The status of each member of a tribal society and his place within it, his rights, duties, claims to property all depend on his genealogical relationship to other members of his tribe. A kinship system ascribes to each individual a set of behavioral patterns and attitudes which together make up a systematic whole.³² A kinship system dominates the process of socialization, the use and transfer of property, the disputes and religious activities of the members of a tribe³³.

Modern historians of the Afghan period have not attempted to define either the term "race" or the term "nation". They do however provide a list of the alleged "national characteristics" of the Afghans and have attempted to reconstruct the tribal society hypothetically created by Afghans residing in northern India in the period 1451-1557.*

30. Yogesh, 1963, p. 3.

31. Lewis, 1968, p. 147.

32. Eggan, 1968, p. 390.

33. Goody, 1968, p. 401.

* See above, pp. 156-163

Modern historians have also offered a description of the political system created by the Afghans in northern India, termed by modern scholars "tribal monarchy".* Perhaps we should point out that the concept of "tribal monarchy" is unknown to anthropologists and it seems to contradict their idea that a tribal society is a "stateless society" - i.e. a society that "has no specialized political roles, let alone institutionalized political structures, composed of a plurality of roles."³⁴

The terms race, nation, tribe appear to have in common the assumption of a unique and a durable bond among individuals - created by virtue of their biological and cultural interrelationships, which in turn reflect themselves in the political structures created by such a group. The information preserved in extant sources for the Afghan period does not appear to provide us with enough clues to enable us to ascertain whether the Afghans, while residing in India, possessed a clear kinship pattern and unique cultural characteristics of their own, which made it possible for them to preserve a specific and precisely describable identity as distinct from that of other Muslims and non-Muslims who were their contemporaries.

Can the Afghans living in India in 1451-1557 be referred to as "tribe", "race" or "nation"?

* See above, pp. 156-163

³⁴. Southall, 1968, p. 157.

In deciding whether the Afghans constituted a "race" or a "tribe" in the above defined sense, it is important to be equipped with information about the marriage patterns and the obligations and privileges accorded by birth in a specific line of descent. The literary sources for the Afghan period are uninformative about the genealogical interrelationship and customary patterns of marriage among the Afghans. Sikandar Lodi's mother was not an Afghan³⁵; he himself was married to a widow of Sher Khan Nuhani³⁶ (her identity is unknown); Sher Shah Sur married a widow of Taj Khan Sarangkhani³⁷ and a widow of Nasir Khan Nuhani³⁸; in both cases the parentage and "national" identity of these women is unrecorded. One of the wives of Bahlul Lodi was an Afghan. She was a sister of Bahlul's cousin Shams Khatun³⁹. The mother of Firuz Shah Sur was a sister of the Sultan Muhammad⁴ Adil Shah Sur,⁴⁰ and so she was at least half Afghan. We may add to our list the mother of Sher Shah who was an Afghan^{40a}; Sher Shah's father was also married to a non-Afghan, who was the mother of Sulaiman Sur.

35. F.I. 178-179; Sikandar Lodi's mother was a daughter of a Hindu goldsmith.

36. N. 180.

37. B.I. 361.

38. A. 84-85.

39. TA.I. 298; F.I. 174.

40. B.I. 416.

40a A. 8-9

From the above summarized evidence, which is practically all we know about Afghan marriages, it is very difficult to conclude that there was any preferential type of marriage among the Afghans.

It is impossible to decide who was considered by Afghans themselves as - an Afghan. For example we do not know whether a son of an Afghan who had migrated into India from Roh and there married a Muslim girl who was born in India to a father who had been born in Herat and to a Hindu slave girl, was still considered by himself and by others as an Afghan. Our sources are silent on the issue whether Afghans had to fulfil obligations derived from their place within a specific branch of their tribe. (Such as marriage obligations, or patterns of property divisions).

To add to our difficulties in deciding what kind of bonds existed among Afghans in India, our sources do not appear to differentiate clearly between Afghans: there appears to be some kind of a subdivision into "groups" referred to in most of the sources as Nuhanis, Surs, Sarwanis etc. We are not informed whether these "groups" constituted clearly defined social units, with their own particular values and kinship patterns. We do not know whether the loyalties and obligations of an individual were defined through his association with the unit known as "Sarwani" or "Lodi" or with the unit known as "Afghans". When Sher Khan (the future Sher Shah) speaks to Jalal Nuhanis, the sultan of Bihar, he tells him that the Nuhanis

are stronger than the Surs and that the Nuhani "rule" is that "if someone had four brothers more than another, he kills or dishonours the other"⁴¹. Farid seems to point out that there is a difference between the Nuhanis and the Surs; on the other hand when Bahlul Lodi orders his amirs to give jagirs to the migrating Afghans⁴² he does not mention that the Lodis had to be treated differently from other Afghans. His order appears to imply that the unit "Afghans" might have been more important than any other of its "sub-units", not excluding that to which Bahlul himself belonged - the Lodis. To multiply our confusion even more we have a story recorded by Abbas Khan Sarwani, according to which Farid Sur invited Afghans to help him in his contest against his brother Sulaiman Sur⁴³. We do not know what kind of loyalties Farid might have appealed to while asking for Afghan support against his own brother who was himself an Afghan.

Sometimes our sources treat the "Afghans" as one unit, described as قوم 44. قبیله 45 اهل وصال 46 لا 47. Thus Afghans seem to possess a common bond to

41. A. 64.

42. A. 7-8.

43. A. 53.

44. A. 141.

45. TA. II. 92.

46. A. 5.

47. B. I. 386.

which our sources allude. Thus 'Abbas Khan Sarwani tells us that Farid Sur appealed to the Afghan sense of unity, arguing that they had lost India to the Mughals as they had been disunited ⁴⁸ **با هم اتفاق ندارد**: the same medieval historian tells us that at the beginning of the Afghan rule in India the Afghan amirs were well wishers of their own ⁴⁹ **قوم**. Yet when describing Afghan amirs our sources indicate to which "subunit" they belonged.⁵⁰ We do not know whether all ~~these~~ Surs, Karranis, Sarwanis and Niazis constituted "tribes" each with its own social and economic customs, or whether these appellations were analogous to surnames in our own culture.

Our sources do not provide an unequivocal indication that Afghans in India possessed ⁴⁹ cultural identity of their own, which differentiated in any known way between them and other Muslims living in the Afghan polity. Abul Fazl says that they were "unwashed" (**ناشته**) and "black hearted" (**تیره دین**)⁵¹. For 'Abbas Khan Sarwani Afghans were "brave" (**مردانگی**)⁵² These descriptions as well as the information that Afghans believed that criminals (or sinners) **گناهکار** have a right of asylum in the precincts

48. TA.II.93.

49. A.11.

50. A list of Lodi amirs is given in Siddiqi, 1977.

51. AN.I.158.

52. A.4.

of the family of a Shaikh Mullah Qattal⁵³ and that Afghans used to provide sharbat and betel leaves during funeral ceremonies⁵⁴, hardly constitute a basis or the necessity of using the term "nation" to describe the alleged bond among Afghans living in India during the period under consideration.

Was the Afghan polity "tribal"?

Although some modern historians have put forth the theory that Afghans who lived in northern India in the period 1451-1557 were organized on tribal lines, it does not seem that there is evidence to support this view. Medieval historians do not inform us whether the migration of Afghans to India included movements of whole "tribes", including women and children, or whether it was a movement confined to individuals. All we hear is that a great number of them did come to northern India following the invitation sent to Roh by Bahlul.⁵⁵ Though Afghans did receive jagirs from Bahlul⁵⁶, we do not know whether they settled in any specific place or whether they were dispersed throughout the Afghan polity. Afghan amirs formed part of the sultans' entourage, but we do not know whether such "nobles" as Dar¹ya

53. A.160.

54. Halim, 1961, p. 57. This custom was discontinued by Bahlul Lodi.

55. A.8.

56. A.7.

37

Khan Nuhani, the hakim of Bihar or Islam Khan Sarwani of Kara and ~~Manikpur~~⁵⁸ were "tribal chiefs" whose followers were recruited among the members of their own "tribes" or whether they were individuals who entered the service of Afghan Sultans and who in turn recruited their own armed supporters, irrespective of their "tribal" or "national" background.

Was the Afghan polity in India a "tribal monarchy"?

Modern historians describe "tribal monarchy" as a polity in which the rulers presided over an oligarchy of chiefs who formed a "deliberative council". The chiefs were also operative in electing a new monarch on the death of their sovereign.*

Although our sources do contain descriptions of rulers asking occasionally the advice of their "friends"⁵⁹, these instances could be hardly taken as proof ^{of} the existence of an institution with a set of formal procedures implied in the term "deliberative council".

57. N. 233.

58. N. 247.

* See above, pp. 160-163

59. Thus Bahlul consults his "well wishers" ^{خوا خوامان} (N.143); Sikandar sought the advice of his wazirs (N.188); Ibrahim - that of "pillars of the state" ^{دولت} (N. 238); Sher Shah that of his "honourable friends" ^{مزیجات} (A.143) and Islam Shah - that of his "boon companion" ^{ندیم} (B.I. 377).

It is difficult to accept the view that Afghan amirs elected their kings, as modern historians wish us to believe. There is no evidence to demonstrate that the demise of a ruler was followed by any formal process of election. Our evidence contains only references to squabbles and to intrigues on such occasions. Issues of succession seem to have been decided through wars amongst the contestants for power.*

It seems that the hypothesis upheld by modern historians whereby the Afghans in India created a "tribal monarchy" derives from the analysis of the ceremonial behaviour of Sultans in the presence of their amirs and from the accounts of their ability to coerce their "nobles" to act in accordance with their wishes on those occasions. Bahlul Lodi's refusal to sit on the throne and his preference for sitting on a carpet instead, his habit of addressing his amirs as masnad-i ⁹ali and his custom to ask their forgiveness when they felt offended is often taken as proof of the existence of "tribal monarchy" in India⁶⁰. Bahlul Lodi's distribution of the treasures of the kings of Delhi amongst his followers and his habit of handing out lands which he had conquered to his Afghan supporters are interpreted as further proof of the assumed existence of a political order characterized by "tribal" features.⁶¹

* For a detailed analysis of this problem see Chapter ^{Nine}~~Eight~~.

60. Rahim, 1956, p. 128; Nizami, 1970, pp. 686-687.

61. Pandey, 1956, p. 97.

It does not seem to us that there is any necessary connection between the polite manner of Bahlul, his liberality to his followers and the alleged hypothesis of Afghans creating a "tribal monarchy". Ceremonies do not necessarily reflect political realities.⁶² Even if Bahlul did grant jagirs to his followers⁶³, he was only pursuing a well established practice. It would appear that followers have to be provided for if their leaders wish to enjoy their continuous support. Distribution of jagirs does not necessarily have to be related to the concept of tribal society.

We are now in a position to summarize our views in connection with the nature of the bond which allegedly existed among Afghans living in northern India between 1451 and 1557; it does not seem to us that modern historians can substantiate their argument that Afghans created in India a political system which reflected their tribal characteristics. There seems to be no evidence that Afghans in India did possess characteristics justifying the use of the term "tribal society". Indeed from our sources it is difficult to deduce in what respects (apart from the fact that some Afghans migrated to India from Roh) were the Afghans

62. The fact that in this country government ministers, while receiving their seals of office, kneel and kiss the hand of their monarch, does not signify that the British monarch as a person is politically significant.

63. A.7: Rulers all over the eastern Muslim world were distributing land grants (known as iqtas or jagirs to their followers in lieu of their payment. (See: A. Cahen "Iqta" EI²).

different from other Muslims born in India or these who migrated to the subcontinent from Herat, Bukhara or Persia. There is no record from which to prove that they possessed in the period under consideration a unique kinship system, social institutions and cultural heritage with respect to which they could be differentiated from other Muslims inhabiting India at that time. It seems unjustified by extant historical evidence to describe the Afghans as a "nation" or a "race" in the above defined sense. Indeed the precise cohesive force which might have united the Afghans in India remains unknown. **

Did the Afghans create or maintain a "feudal state"?

One of the hypotheses offered by modern historians

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- * M.A. Rahim seems to be the only modern historian who has attempted to substantiate the theory that the Afghans in India created a tribal monarchy. Yet his arguments cannot withstand critical analysis. He seems to believe that the tribal nature of the Afghan polity in India is manifested in such phenomena as their habit of marrying within their tribe (Rahim, 1961, p.39), their settling on tribal lines (Rahim, 1961, p.51) and the fact that Afghan sultans parcelled their kingdom among Afghan chiefs (Rahim, 1961, p. 43 and p. 57). Rahim does not seem to be perturbed by the existing evidence which shows that some Afghans did marry non-Afghans apparently without any ill effects. For example, Sikandar Lodi was a son of a non-Afghan woman (F.I. 178-179); yet he occupied the throne of India. Farid Sur fought against his brother Sulaiman who was a son of a non-Afghan woman (A.8-9). Neither he nor anyone else used Sulaiman's descent from a non-Afghan woman as an argument against his claim for the jagirs of his late father. When Rahim speaks about land grants being distributed by Afghan sultans among Afghan chiefs (Rahim, 1961, p. 43, p. 57) he seems unaware that none of the Afghan amirs ever described in our sources as being a chief of a tribe. Rahim first claims that individuals mentioned as receivers of jagirs were chiefs of tribes, and then uses it as "evidence" for proving the tribal nature of the Afghan polity in India.

to describe the political system of the Afghan sultanate was that it was characterized by a "feudal structure".*

As the term "feudalism" is borrowed from a political and social order which prevailed in western and central Europe from the 8th to the 13th centuries, it seems appropriate to describe in brief that order so as to be able to examine the question whether our information about the rules governing the relationship between amirs and rulers in Afghan India could be rightly referred to as "feudalism".

M. Bloch and F. L. ~~Gaush~~^{Yash}of are two historians whose research centered on the analysis of the features of European feudalism enumerate its essential traits. According to M. Bloch, the feudal system was based on a "rigorous economic subjection of host of humble folk to a few powerful men ... combining inextricably the right to the revenues from the land with the right to exercise authority... chiefly for the benefit of an oligarchy of warriors."⁶⁴ Within the feudal system the "characteristic human bond was the subordinate's link with a nearby chief."⁶⁵ In a feudal society ties of obedience and protection bound man to man. Within the warrior ~~clan~~^{clan} these ties assumed the form of vassalage.⁶⁶

* See above pp. 205-206

64. Bloch, 1961, p. 443.

65. Bloch, 1961, p. 444.

66. Bloch, 1961, p. 446.

IV

F. L. Gaußhof describes the vassalage relationship existing between a lord and his vassal as being based on a formal contract followed by a ceremonial act of homage and oath of fealty sworn by the vassal to his lord.⁶⁸ The vassal was expected to provide his lord with military service to give him advice. On his part the lord was expected to protect his vassal when the father was attacked.⁶⁹

M. Bloch says that during the feudal period in Europe there was a widespread use of service tenement (fief) in lieu of payment instead of a salary.⁷⁰

It is not clear to us what was the reason which persuaded modern historians to use the term "feudal" to describe the relations between rulers and their amirs and those between the amirs and their own followers. The fact that Afghan rulers used to distribute jagirs⁷¹ and other forms of land grants, such as امير : مرد معاش ⁷² to their followers, and the fact that amirs were known to give jagirs to their supporters in turn⁷³, might have been

68. Gaußhof 73-75.

69. Gaußhof . 1963, p. 87-95

70. Bloch, 1961, p. 446.

71. e.g., N. 145; N171; A. 7-8.

72. e.g., B.I. 384; B.I. 321.

73. Jamal Khan, an amir of Ibrahim Lodi, gave a jagir to to Hassan Sur (A.12). Farid Sur promised to distribute jagirs among his followers (A.25).

interpreted by modern historians as pointing toward the existence of a "feudal" system. The jagir system was possibly understood to have been an equivalent of the "feudal" grant as it prevailed in central and western Europe throughout the 8th to the 13th centuries. Yet the attested facts relating to the distribution of land grants do not prove conclusively that there was in India a "feudal" system in the above defined sense. Both Afghan rulers and their amirs gave their followers not only "land grants" but also "pensions", "treasures" and money.⁷⁴ Moreover it is far from clear what functions did the amirs have to perform when assigned their land grants. Were they "officials" of the central government with the land grant being only a form of payment in lieu of their salaries, or were they independent in their fiefs? Were they bureaucrats and or "vassals"? What was the relationship between institutions of central government said to have existed at the time and these "vassals"?⁷⁵ Was there any fixed

74. e.g., Bahlul gives his amirs "stipends" (مواجب) (RA.I. 294); Daulat Khan paid for Farid Sur's services by giving him his خارج روزنه "travelling expenses" () and his "daily expenses" (خرچ) (A.42); Sher Shah paid his soldiers in cash (نقد) (B.I. 384).

75. One of the major problems of our sources in this context is their lack of information regarding the nature of the functions of various amirs within their jagirs or "offices". Thus we are informed that Sher Shah gave دادہ Miwat to Haji Khan (A.163), or that Ujjain was given by the same sultan to Darya Khan Gujarati (A.179). But on the basis of extant sources we cannot decide what exactly were these appointees expected to do. Sometimes the sources differentiate, between a jagir and a حکومت. We hear that an amir of Sher Shah Shujaat Khan received from his master Ujjain as his jagir and Mandu as his حکومت (A.182); yet we are not informed what was the difference between the two.

system of inheritance? Did the "land grant" refer to the "crown" on the death of the assignee? Had the amir any legal rights to his land grant irrespective of the fact which of the Sultans granted him the land, or could his land be legally taken away from him when the Sultan who granted it died and was succeeded by another ruler?⁷⁶ As long as

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76. Medieval historians do not provide any information regarding the conditions governing the inheritance of grants within the family of a grantee. We are informed that upon the death of Mahumud Khan, Kalpi was given by Sikandar Lodi to his son Jalal Khan (N.200); Bayana was given by the same sultan to the sons of Khan-i Khanan Faymul; upon the latter's death (N.191) and so was Bari, transferred upon the death of Mubarak Khan to his sons. These examples imply the existence of a trend to allow sons to inherit the grants of their deceased fathers. Yet we also hear about counter-examples. Sikandar Lodi deposed the sons of Mubarak Khan of Bari and nominated in their place another individual, Shaikh Qazal Makar (N.210); the sons of Khan-i Khanan Faymul were transferred from Bayana, to which they had inherited and Shamsabad (N.191). It seems that the question of inheritance was not decided upon legal considerations but was based on the pleasure of the reigning sultan.

answers to these questions remain unknown it is not possible to use meaningfully the term "feudal" to describe the political system prevailing in India under the Afghan rule.⁷⁷

Were the Afghan rulers representatives of the "imperial ideology" and restorers of the "Delhi Sultanate"?

Modern historians believe that Afghan rulers consciously attempted to recreate a political entity which had existed

77. It may be interesting to note that the historians Al. Cahen and W. H. Moreland objected to the application of the term "feudalism" which the Muslim context. According to Al. Cahen the term iqta' which was a form of administrative grant, was wrongly translated by the European expression "fief". Al. Cahen stresses that the state delegated its fiscal rights over its lands to a grantee, but the grant remained juridically in the hands of its former owner (i.e. the state) Iqta system enabled the grantee to collect his salary directly at the source, without the mediation of the state treasury. Al. Cahen asserts that some historians made an unjustified equivalence between iqta' and "fief" an equivalence which "arises only through confusion of ideas of ill informed translators" (Al. Cahen, Iqta' EI²)

W. H. Moreland wonders what might have convinced modern historians of the Delhi Sultanate to use the term "feudalism". He suggests that the use of feudal terminology "was presumably inspired by the fact that some nobles of the Delhi kingdom occasionally behaved like feudal barons, that is to say they rebelled, or took sides in disputed successions to the throne" (Moreland, 1928, p.6). W. H. Moreland asserts that the above mentioned analogy "is much too slight and superficial to justify the importation of feudal terms" (Moreland, 1928, p.7.).

before them - the "Delhi Sultanate". Restoring the institutions known to have been in existence during the rule of the Turkish, Khalji and Tughluq dynasties.

The Afghan sultans aimed, we are told, at creating a bureaucratic system through which they could, acting as autocrats, ensure material and spiritual happiness to all of their subjects irrespective of their social and religious background.

In the following sections we shall examine the question whether the Afghan rulers had indeed been exponents of the "imperial ideology" and restorers of the Delhi Sultanate, as they were portrayed by some modern historians.

Were the Afghan sultans autocrats?

The ruler of the Afghan empire is referred to by modern historians as an "autocrat" or "monarch". They do not, however, define either of these terms. One political scientist defines "autocracy" as that form of government "in which a single governor has (or claims) unlimited powers". The term "power" is defined by the same scholar : "the concept of power refers to the governors ability to affect human activity". "Unlimited power" refers to the ability of the governor to rule without any restrictions.⁷⁸ The concept of "autocracy" is akin to the concept of "dictatorship", which refers to a political system characterized by

78. Cassinelli, 1968, p. 478.

the "unrestricted domination of the state by an individual" whose rule is exercised in an arbitrary way and who "suppresses the competing legitimate, political and social groups and institutions". The dictator "concentrates all the political powers in his own hands and manipulates the apparatus of government so as to ensure a monopoly of his own position of authority. He aims at the "abolition of the juridicial bonds of political power, he eliminates the constitutional state, creates a new law, which sole aim is to serve as his instrument of rule. His manner of government is arbitrary and impulsive. A dictator employs despotic methods of political and social control such as intimidation and propaganda and enforces the duty of obedience through terror."⁷⁹

The other term which has been used by modern historians to describe the position of the Afghan ruler has been "monarch". This term is vague and may simply refer to a system of government headed by a single ruler whose powers are left undefined. The context in which the term is used may suggest that modern historians have understood it as an equivalent of term "autocracy".

Though modern historians describe the Afghan sultans as autocrats, it seems that the term does not describe appropriately the outlook and the activities of the Afghan rulers. There appears to be no indication in our sources

79. Stammley, 1968, p. 161.

that any of the Afghan sultans ever attempted to commit himself to an action which could be viewed as aimed at achieving unrestricted and arbitrary authority. None of them tried to suppress Islamic religious practices. There is no record of an action on the part of the ruler designed to subvert known traditions of government. It is not recorded by our sources that Afghan sultans tried to issue their own decisions in religion matters, that they ordered pagan temples to be built and the injunctions of the holy Muslim law to be disobeyed. Our sources describe the Afghan sultans as Muslim rulers who followed a tradition of government according to which the ruler is personally responsible for the maintenance of order which in turn enables the Muslims to conduct their lives according to the precepts of the holy Muslim law. Though not all of the Afghan sultans were perceived by medieval historians as being equally successful in the implementation of this ideal, none of them is described as actively pursuing an un-Islamic policy*. In their inscriptions Afghan rulers projected an image of themselves as pious Muslims and as

* Bada'uni's evaluation that Islam Shah Sur's farmans were not necessarily in agreement with the shar' and that the matters discussed in them were not referred to the qadis or the muftis (B.I. 385), may not be taken as a proof of the hypothesis that Islam Shah embarked on a policy of confrontation with the upholders of the religious orthodoxy. Indeed Bada'uni himself tells us that Islam Shah was held in high regard by the learned and by the pious (B.I. 416) so it is hardly possible that his farmans included commands directly contravening important religious injunctions. Bada'uni does not provide any example of the contents of these farmans.

preservers of social order^{*} and they do not use a term that could be translated as "absolute monarch".

Were the Afghan sultans legislators?

Modern historians, while describing the powers of the Afghan sultans in more precise terms say that they were "legislators"^{**}, thus apparently believing that during the Afghan period there existed a process of "legislation" which denotes "the enactment of rules of law by specialized state agencies endowed with high authority... legislation presupposes a fair degree of practical and legal differentiation. It requires a well understood distinction between general norms intended to govern human conduct in an indefinite number of future instances and individual commands intended to apply in a specific instance. It requires a well established distinction between institutions authorized to issue general norms and those not authorized to do so. It requires the setting up of a central agency equipped with this authority. It requires a fair degree of consensus that norms thus enacted rank above most other legal rules found in the society".⁸⁰

* On the self image of the Afghan rulers, see below, pp. 276-280

** See above, pp. 175-176

80. For this definition of the process of legislation see Akzin, 1968, p. 221.

Modern historians perceive the Afghan sultans as "legislators", yet nothing in our sources appears to indicate that any of the Afghan rulers acted in a way which could be interpreted as pointing ^{then} toward a possibility that ~~they~~ understood ^{their} own activities as "legislation" in the above defined sense. It seems anachronistic to ascribe to Afghan sultans living in the 15th and 16th centuries legal concepts and ideas derived from European modern legal experience. Afghan rulers did issue farmans⁸¹ but it is difficult to accept the proposition that they viewed these as "general norms of behaviour intended to govern human conduct in an indefinite number of future instances". Indeed we may assume that the society living under the rule of the Afghan sultans was largely regulated by rules to which metaphysical and customary origins ^{where} were ascribed and ~~were~~ a differentiation between political and legal institutions was not clearly delineated. To quote a modern political scientist: "In more primitive legal systems, where such differentiation has not taken place and where society is largely regulated by rules which one regarded as being beyond deliberate change by man-made institutions, one cannot speak of legislation."⁸²

81. One of Sher Shah documents is extant. It is published in: Jalal uddin, 1978.

82. Akzin, 1968, p. 221.

Were the Afghan sultans chief justices?

Yet another specific power was attributed by modern historians to the Afghan sultans - they allegedly had the powers to act as "chief justices"*. It seems that modern historians have accepted the idea that a process of adjudication was known to Afghan sultans, and that they themselves took an active part in it. "Adjudication process" is defined as a "set of interrelated procedures and roles for deciding disputes by an authoritative person or persons whose decisions are regularly obeyed. The disputes are to be decided according to a previously agreed upon set of procedures and in conformity with prescribed rules".⁸³ A judicial process "consists in the hearing by impartial persons of a complaint by one party to a dispute and of a defence by the other party together with their witnesses followed by a decision that one or the other has the superior claim"⁸⁴. The hearing of particular suits is but a part of a legal system which has been characterized by a search for objectivity, for all-inclusive and logically arranged rules for conduct administered by informed, intelligent and impartial judges"⁸⁵.

* See above, pp. 175-176

83. Peltason, 1968, p. 283.

84. Gluckman, 1968, p. 291.

85. Murphy, 1968, p. 315.

Despite modern historians' belief that Afghan sultans were "chief judges" presiding over a system of courts and courts of appeal, our extant sources do not indicate that the way in which cases were judged by sultans resembled the judiciary process as described above. We do not know about any book of rules according to which the sultan was supposed to decide the cases, we are not informed by historical sources whether there was any ordered way in which a case might be argued by rival claimants according to well defined judicial regulations. We are informed that Sher Shah maintained "courts of justice" all over the areas under his authority,⁸⁶ but we do not know how did these courts operate and who was judged by them. We have noted in Chapter One of this thesis some examples of sultans' interventions "in the course of justice". But the stratagems used by sultans to discover the culprits hardly resemble juridicial regulations as defined above.

Did the
Afghan sultans govern the church?

The historian A. B. Pandey offers the suggestion that Sikandar Lodi was in full control of 'the church' and which was subservient to him.⁸⁷ Pandey apparently believes that during the Afghan period there was in existence an organized church which in turn was dominated by the sultan. Pandey's view cannot be substantiated as the sources do not

86. A.216.

* See above, pp. 53-57

suggest that there was in existence during the Afghan period an organized, hierarchical 'church' whose members met regularly to decide issues of belief and administration. We do hear about individuals connected with implementation of the shar' and with the management of Muslim religious precepts,⁸⁸ but we do not know whether they were organized in any formal way. Afghan sultans did offer money to imams and other individuals connected with Muslim learning⁸⁹ but this hardly justifies the claim that Afghan sultans had any say in matters connected with the interpretations of the Muslim holy law. Indeed to judge from the example of the case of Shaikh Mahdi Alai who was brought before Islam Shah being accused by the learned⁹⁰ heresy and innovation, the sultan was coerced to adopt the advice of his sadr al-sudur Mullah^A Abdullah Sultanpuri and to order the Shaikh to be scourged. The attempts of Islam Shah to avoid sitting on judgement over the case of Shaikh['] Alai failed.⁹⁰

It seems to us that modern historians confuse the actual coercive power which an individual sultan might have possessed and which could have enabled him to enforce his will, with the legal, political and juridicial rights of a ruler as these are known to have been developed in Europe

88. e.g. qazis and muftis (B.I. 385); muhtasib (B.I. 402); on the role of the learned see above, pp.

89. See above, p. 46. Sher Shah distributed land grants to imams through a sadr (A.225-226).

90. The case of Shaikh Alai Mahdi is described in detail in Bada'uni's history (B.I. 393-405).

during the 18th century. Sultans might have exhibited personal cruelty⁹¹ but they do not turn them into "autocrats". They might have ordered individuals to be severely punished for transgressing their orders⁹², but these instances do not transform them into "judges". Perhaps the description of the Afghan sultans as preserved by medieval historians, and which insists on portraying them as being personally involved in managing the state affairs, has been misunderstood by modern historians as being an equivalent of the European concept of "autocracy".

Did the Afghan sultans erect bureaucratic state machinery?

Afghan sultans are viewed by modern historians as creators of a bureaucratic machinery of government - complete with civil service, bureaucratic hierarchy central and provincial governments, each manned by officials with well-defined functions.⁹³ Modern historians seem to assume that during the Afghan period there existed a government composed of a "group of individuals sharing a defined responsibility for exercising power"⁹⁴. The central government formed

91. For example Islam Shah is reported to have immured his amirs alive in the walls of the prison.
(B.I. 379).

92. See above, pp. ~~44-45~~. 55

93. See above, pp. ~~139-150~~. 180 - 190

94. Aptex, 1968, p. 215.

part of a sophisticated bureaucracy. Our historians appear to imply that during the Afghan period there existed in northern India a "system of appointments and promotions based on contractual agreements and regulations".⁹⁵

The nature of the surviving evidence appears to us to be too unspecific to allow an unequivocal affirmation that a bureaucratic system in the above defined sense did in fact exist in the period under consideration. The extant sources are vague and uninformative as to the manner in which the Afghan rulers conducted state affairs, through what institutions were their orders channelled, by whom were they executed and who was responsible for ascertaining how far rulers' commands were actually carried out.

Some of the recorded regulations may imply an existence of a complicated state machinery. Thus we are informed that Sikandar Lodi abolished a "grain tax"⁹⁶. Until he had ordered that the collection of this tax be stopped, apparently a mechanism existed for the evaluation of the amount of individual's income and for the deduction of the appropriate amount in payment to the state. Ibrahim Lodi allegedly commanded that the land revenue should be collected in kind *Ur ;)* and not in cash.⁹⁷ If this order was

95. For this definition of the term bureaucracy see Bendix 1968, p. 206.

96. N. 185-186.

97. TD.105; for full discussion of this regulation see Pandey 1956, p. 227 and Siddiqi, 1969b, p. 17.

carried out it necessitated a creation of a machinery to supervise the execution of sultan's orders. A sophisticated state machinery was apparently at the disposal of Sher Shah when he ordered that merchants should pay taxes only on entrance to his empire and in the place where the merchandise was sold.⁹⁸ Some kind of officials must have been needed to ensure that the order was obeyed, as well as to enforce Sher Shah's regulation to replace crop sharing system as a basis for taxation by that of land measurement⁹⁹, or to ensure that Islam Shah's command to abolish the jagir system in the provinces¹⁰⁰ would be fulfilled. The details of the structure and of the way in which the state machinery functioned were unrecorded.

Our sources do mention what appears to be names of certain functions. We hear about wazirs, hakms; amins; shiqdars; faujdars; sardars; 'amaldars¹⁰¹. However, although titles of officials were recorded by our sources, their exact duties were not. We do not know one function differed from the other and whether one type of officials supervised others. Was a hakm more important than a shiqdar? Was amin an equivalent title to that of a hakm?

98. A.222

99. A.210.

100. B.I. 384.

101. On wazir N.242; B.I. 418; on hakm N.233; on amin TA II.92; on shiqdar A.213; Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica 1953/4, p.5; Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica 1955/6, pp. 22-23; faujdar A.156; sardar B.I. 364-365; amaldar N.191; Inscriptions mention additional functions: dabir Epigraphica Indo Moslemica 1955/6 pp. 22-23 and muqta-i-shiq Epigraphica Indo Moslemica 1955/6 pp. 22-23.

9
Did the shiqdar supervise the faujdar?

Even the relatively ⁹full account of 'state' machinery as preserved by 'Abbas Khan Sarwani does leave many vital questions open. According to his description ^{of} ~~an~~ an administrative unit called by him a pargana there were the following officials: shiqdar, amin, fotahdar, one writer in Hindi language and one writer in the Persian language. In larger administrative units there were officials named by our source as shiqdar-i shiqdaran and munsif-i munsifan.¹⁰² The pargana officials had to perform the annual land measurement (جریب) and to collect taxes accordingly. The sarkar officials had to help in the collection of the taxes in those instances when disturbances occurred, they had to settle boundary disputes and to prevent oppression (ظلم)¹⁰³. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani does not describe how these different officials operated, what were their distinct functions and what were the interrelationships between them. Was the shiqdar the highest pargana official? Was he supervised by and responsible to shiqdar-i shiqdaran? Did the latter communicate directly with sultan's court?

We are not informed whether there were legal limitations on the administrative powers of various officials¹⁰⁴ and what were the relationships between them

102. A. 210.

103. A. 210-211.

104. The powers of governors are alluded to in extant inscriptions in such terms ^{شیرداری} Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica 1919/20 inscription number 5: ^{دولت} ; ^{دولت} ; Epigraphica Indo-Moslemica 1953/4, p.5.

and the sultan. Thus when Abbas Khan Sarwani describes Farid Sur's regulations within the parganas of his father, he does not refer to any obligation of Farid's father toward the sultan¹⁰⁵. Powers of officials do not seem to be defined in any clear way. Farid Sur informs his father's soldiers that as he had been appointed to be a shiqdar⁹ for his father, he has the authority of "removing" (عزل) and of "appointing" (نصب)¹⁰⁶. The amin of Bengal, Qazi Fazilat, was responsible, according to the record of Nizam ud din, for all affairs connected with "peace and war"¹⁰⁷. Officials seem to possess powers to devolve their authority within their sphere of influence. Thus Khwass Khan (the father of Mian Bhua) gave Delhi to his son Ismail and went himself to the court of Sultan Sikandar Lodi¹⁰⁸; Khwass Khan, an amir of Sher Shah, gave Sarhind to his own slave (خدا م) Bhagavant¹⁰⁹.

Officials bearing the same title seem to be engaged in the fulfilment of different functions. Thus Sher Shah appointed amins to measure lands and to assess the damage done to the crops by his passing soldiers. The amins were

105. A. 24-28.

106. A.21.

107. TA.II.92.

108. F.I. 182-183.

109. A. 163.

responsible for fixing the amount of compensation to be paid to peasants whose crops were damaged,¹¹⁰ but Qazi Fazilat was also described as amin, though his function seems to have been that of the governor of Bengal¹¹¹.

The sultans seem to possess a detailed account of the value of various parts of the empire in terms of land revenue. Thus we hear about a price list prepared for Sultan Sikandar Lodi¹¹²; Sher Shah reads the "treasury book (عربی خزانه).¹¹³ Babur apparently possessed a list with the value of each pargana noted down, as he mentions in his "Memoirs" the cash value of each of the land grants he distributed among various individuals¹¹⁴. Yet we do not know who prepared these lists, how accurate they were, how often were they re-examined.

Inscriptions and literary sources did not record the titles, names, and the functions of the "ministers" allegedly manning the central government. We do not know whether there existed a hierarchy of officials and a system of promotions through which an individual who began his career as shiddar eventually became a wazir.¹¹⁵ We are not informed by our sources how were orders of the central

110. A. 222-223.

111. TA.II 92.

112. N. 222.

113. A. 210.

114. BN.II.470; 577; 683-685.

115. Hemu is the only official information about whose career before his being nominated as a wazir to Adil Shah, was preserved. He was a شہناز بزار to Islam Shah. (Majumdar 1960 97-101) It is not known whether this was a normal career.

government transmitted to the provinces and by what means the sultan effectively controlled his officials in the provinces.

Despite medieval historians' insistence on the importance of the spy system in the proper management of state affairs, they do not in fact inform us how this system actually operated - how many spies there were, in what manner were they organized, who did they report to and by what means. We do not have a single name of an individual who fulfilled this function.¹¹⁶

If a vast bureaucratic system of centralized state machinery did exist throughout our period it seems to have left no traces and it seems not to ^{have} influenced the political dynamics of the Afghan period.

Was the Afghan rule beneficial to their subjects?

Modern historians praise Afghan rulers for having tried and even having succeeded in establishing law and order, peace, material prosperity and justice for all of their subjects.* As we are not informed by our sources about the specific conditions of the "common man" under the Afghan sultans, we can neither prove nor disprove the eulogist's description of medieval historians about general conditions of happiness allegedly characterizing the rule of Sikandar Lodi, that of Sher Shah or Islam Shah¹¹⁷. We

116. On spies of Sikandar N. 219; ^{44, 58} of Sher Shah A. 232.

117. Eulogy of Sikandar N. 212-218; that of Sher Shah A. 205-237; Abul Fazl praises Islam Shah's attitude toward the peasants AN.I. 336-337.

* See above, pp. 190-194

do not know whether wars of succession which followed the death of each of the Afghan sultans, the military campaigns and the conquests of various Afghan rulers as well as the Mughal invasions, had any effect on the general population. Curiously, medieval historians may inform us about an earthquake under Sikandar Lodi¹¹⁸ or the military campaigns of Sher Shah during which he almost lost his empire and at the same time assure us about general atmosphere of happiness and security accompanying the reign of each of these monarchs.¹¹⁹

It seems to us that modern historians generalized the eulogies of individual Afghan rulers such as Sher Shah or Sikandar in order to describe the reigns of all of the Afghan sultans as a period of happiness to all.

Did the Afghan rulers promote a Hindu-Muslim rapprochement?

Modern historians have attempted to defend the thesis that Afghan rule in India was beneficial not only for the Muslim subjects of the Afghan sultans but for their Hindu subjects as well. The Hindus allegedly shared in the material prosperity secured by the Afghan regime. The

118. N. 196; the same historian also informs us about a famine during the reign of Sikandar and the high price of corn which forced that monarch to abolish the grain tax (N. 185-186) only to inform us later that Sikandar's reign witnessed the phenomenon of low prices (N. 212).

119. See 'Abbas Khan Sarawani's work.

Afghan sultans refrained from ^{making} anti-Hindu propaganda, allowed them to maintain their own courts of justice, abolished discriminatory measures enacted by their predecessors against the Hindus and even promoted the development of a synthetic Hindu-Muslim cultured and favoured a political unity between the members of the two religious communities.*

There is some evidence in the extant historical sources for our period that suggests that there was a political "modus vivendi" between Hindus and Muslims, and that there existed some participation of Hindus in the "governmental machinery" of the Afghan sultans; there are even instances of individual Muslims and Hindus being interested in the cultural achievements of each other. Yet, this evidence does not seem to support the sweeping generalization which have been made by modern historians to suggest that the Afghan period witnessed an unusual degree of political and cultural rapprochement between the "two communities". It seems to us that the extant historical evidence for the relationships between Muslim and Hindus seem_y to be consonant with practical approach of Muslim rulers in India toward their non-Muslim subjects and with the Islamic notions of how to treat non-Muslim subjects who submit to Muslim rule.

We do find individual Hindus serving as members of

* See above, pp. 194-200

the entourage of Afghan sultans and fulfilling various functions on behalf of their sovereigns. Rai Pratap represents in concert with Qutb Khan Lodi his ruler Bahlul Lodi in negotiations with the Sharqi ruler of Jaunpur, which negotiations resulted in a temporary truce between the two Muslim sultans.¹²⁰ Kalayan Mal, the son of Rai Pratap, is delegated, together with Qutb Khan Lodi, to represent Bahlul at the funeral of the mother of Husain Sharqi of Jaunpur¹²¹; Kapur Chand is sent by Bahlul Lodi to the ruler of Malwa with the object of securing the latter's help against the ruler of Jaunpur.¹²²

Our sources contain references to Hindus who received remuneration for their services. Rai Karan received Shamsabad from Bahlul Lodi;¹²³ Rai Dudu received a number of parganas in Etawa¹²⁴ and Rai Ganes obtained Patiali from Sikandar Lodi¹²⁵. Hindus are also mentioned in our sources as receivers of presents from Afghan sultans. Rai Bar Singh was given by Bahlul Lodi a standard and a kettledrum;¹²⁶ Sikandar Lodi sent a robe of honour to Rai Man of Gwalior¹²⁷; Sher Shah gave presents to Puranmal

120. TA.I. 302-303.

121. Ta.I. 308.

122. TA.III. 348-349.

123. TA.I. 303.

124. TA.I. 311.

125. B.I. 314.

126. N. 155.

127. N. 174.

of Raisin¹²⁸. Some Hindu "rulers" submitted to Muslim rulers. Rai Pratap and the Rai of Etawa (whose name is unrecorded) submitted to Bahlul Lodi¹²⁹ and so did the Rai of Dholpur, the Rai of Gwalior and Rai Taluk Chand of Buksar¹³⁰. The Rai of Tirhut^{and} Rai Manikdeo of Dholpur submitted to Sikandar Lodi.¹³¹

Hindu officials served under Muslim sultans. Islam Shah had Hindu clerks who worked in his diwan;¹³² the Hindu Hemu served as an "inspector of market" (سنگری با دار) under Islam Shah and became a wazir under 'Adil Shah.¹³³

Some Muslims and Hindus did apparently show an interest in the achievements of each other's cultures. Islam Shah patronized a Hindu musician¹³⁴; during the reign of Sikandar Lodi a brahmin engaged in the teaching of ilm (science)¹³⁵; Firishta notes that when Sikandar Lodi ruled, some Hindus began to study Persian.¹³⁶

Evidence to support a contention that a practical "modus vivendi" existed between the Muslim ruler and his non-Muslim subjects can be found in the existence of a bi-

128. A. 174.

129. N. 147.

130. N. 164; N. 167; N. 168.

131. N. 180; N. 184; N. 193.

132. B.I. 387.

133. Majumdar, 1974, pp. 97-101; B.I. 389.

134. B.II. 42.

135. B.I. 323.

136. F.I. 287.

lingual farman of Sher Shah¹³⁷; from his Devagnagri^a inscriptions¹³⁸ and from his command to reserve for Hindus places and food in the caravansarais he had ordered to be built.¹³⁹

The above-mentioned evidence bearing on the nature of Hindu-Muslim relations does not justify the conclusion that there were unusually good relations between Hindus and Muslims under Afghan rule. The existence of Hindu nobles in the entourage of Muslim rulers was noted by historians in the period preceding that of the Afghan rule. Even during the reign of Ala^{al} ud-din Khalji (died 1316) - a Hindu rais appeared in the sovereign's court and were received by him.¹⁴⁰ Among the Hindu nobles of Ala^{al} ud-din Khalji was Maldeva, appointed by the Sultan as a governor of Chittor.¹⁴¹ The Hindu chiefs of Ujjain and of Chanderi recognized the suzerainty of Ala^{al} ud-din; so did Kanhar Deva, the ruler of Jalor.¹⁴²

137. Jalal ud-din 1978 - the farman of Sher Shah was written in Persian and in Kathi^{ali}.

138. Wright, 1936 - coins of Sher Shah.

139. TA.II. 107.

140. Habib and Nizami, 1970, p. 355.

141. Lal, 1967, p. 110.

142. Lal, 1967, pp. 114, 117.

Ala ud-din Khalji showed much favour to the Hindu Ram Chandra of Devagiri. The Sultan gave to the Hindu "prince" the title of Rai Rayan, a canopy and 100,000 gold tanakas and added the district of Navarani to his territories.¹⁴³ The historian Zia^{y al} ud-din Barani writes with dissatisfaction that Muslim rulers not only failed to overthrow the infidels but they even bestowed presents upon them.¹⁴⁴

The fact that some non-Muslims occupied certain positions in the rulers' courts did not preclude the latter from fighting non-Muslims. Medieval historians highly praise Afghan Sultans for their struggle against infidels.*

Muslim political traditions differentiated between two varieties of infidels. Only those among them who refused to submit to the authority of Islam had, according to Islamic precepts, to be exterminated. Those however who recognized the authority of Islam were accorded special privileges and were allowed to maintain their internal laws and customs¹⁴⁵. The Muslim jurist al-Mawardi even justified the possibility of a non-Muslim being nominated to the position of a wazir as long as he did not sit in judgement over Muslims or took the initiative in matters where Islam was concerned.¹⁴⁶ Thus the fact that Afghan rulers used Hindus as clerks or employed them in diplomatic missions does not indicate that they were particularly tolerant or that they have deviated from Muslim custom in this respect. Even the career of Hemu, who became a wazir to Muhammad 'Adil Shah, could be reconciled with Islamic orthodoxy.

143. Lal, 1967, p. 236.

144. Habib and Nizami, 1970, p. 355.

145. "Dhimma" EI² (Cl. Cahen)

146. "Dhimma" EI² (Cl. Cahen)

The available evidence for Hindu-Muslim relationship does not itself justify the generalization made by modern historians that Hindus were permitted to maintain their own courts or their own system of education. Our Persian sources do not contain any information on the educational or the judicial systems of the Hindus. The belief that Afghan Sultans abolished the discriminatory measures against Hindus is contradicted by the statement of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani who informs us that Sher Shah continued to collect the jizya (جزیه)¹⁴⁷ - i.e., the poll tax which the non-Muslims were obliged to pay to their Muslim rulers.

Our sources do not contain a single example of an Afghan ruler's action which could be interpreted as treatment going beyond the customary protection accorded by Muslims to those non-Muslims who recognized the authority of Islam. None of the Afghan rulers is known to have ever permitted a Hindu temple to be built or allowed a Hindu to marry a Muslim woman or tried to create a new creed which combined the elements of Islam and "Hinduism" or even permitted Muslims to apostasize or non Muslims to preach their faith among Muslims.* Occasional interest shown by Muslim rulers in Hindu music or the fact that some

* The "protected people" (i.e., the non-Muslim who recognized the authority of Islam) were not allowed to marry a Muslim woman, were forbidden to convert a Muslim to their faith or to build new temples ("Dhimma" EI² Cl. Cahen).

Hindus commanded the knowledge of the Persian language does not justify the vague generalization made by some modern historians that during the Afghan period a synthetic Hindu-Muslim culture was being created.

Did Afghan Sultans attempt to suppress the exponents of the "diffusionist programme"?

Modern historians ascribe to Afghan Sultans the intention of suppressing those individuals among their subjects who opposed their policies of creating a centralized form of government which would be beneficial to all subjects of the empire.* Although undoubtedly the Sultans did attempt to create a following of their own and tried to exile or kill individuals who opposed them, there^{are} no extant materials to show that any of the Sultans did so with the explicit purpose of carrying through a political programme to change the existing political structure of the empire. None of the recorded activities of Afghan rulers show that they endeavoured to build a centralized bureaucracy which was intended to replace the traditional mode of rule whereby the power was maintained by the Sultan who relied on the help of his armed followers. All that our sources show is that the only result of wars of succession was that one group of followers might have been replaced by another, not that the modes of government came to be changed in any way.**

* See above, pp. 200 - 203

** The subject of political behaviour during the Afghan period is discussed in Chapter ~~Eight~~ ^{Nine} of this thesis.

Did the Afghan Sultans recreate the empire of the "Delhi Sultanate"?

Modern historians state that the Afghan Sultans attempted to restore or even succeeded in restoring the "Delhi Sultanate"* . If what is meant by this statement is that any of the Afghan rulers recreated the Delhi Sultanate within the territorial areas over which the sultans^{ruled} in the days of the great Turkish Sultans of Delhi, such as Ala⁹ ^{al}-din Khalji (ruled 1296-1316) or Muhammad bin Tughluq (ruled 1324-1351) then this theory is plainly incorrect. None of the Afghan rulers had any authority over Guj^arat and parts of south India, regions which did form a part of the Delhi Sultanate before the accession of Firuz^{Shah} (Tughluq) (ruled 1351-1388/9).

Some modern historians seem to believe that Afghan rulers had a conscious plan to restore the Delhi Sultanate within the geographical boundaries it possessed before the invasion of India by Timur (1398). This idea appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the way in which Muslim rulers conceived the limits of their authority. None of the Afghan Muslim rulers ever proclaimed himself to be a ruler of a specific territory, or saw himself as a legitimate (if not de facto ') sultan of a "kingdom" with well defined historical and geographical boundaries. The regal titles adopted by the Afghan Sultans followed the traditionally

* See above, pp. 164-165

accepted royal protocol and the Afghan Sultans proclaimed themselves to be rulers of the Muslim community as a whole. Their authority was not confined to a specific territory or a specific category of subjects (such as 'the Muslims' of northern India). Our literary sources and the available inscriptions refer to the Afghan Sultans according to the traditional pattern of Perso-Muslim usage. Afghan rulers styled themselves "shah" and "sultan".¹⁴⁸ The title of "sultan" has been in use in the Muslim world since the Seldjukid period - i.e., from the second half of the 11th century.¹⁴⁹ The title of "Shah" which originated in the Sassanid period was reintroduced as part of royal protocol in the second half of the 10th century by the Buwaihids.¹⁵⁰ Both Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah describe themselves as "Sultan of Sultans".¹⁵¹ This appears to be modelled on the Persian royal title, "Shahⁱⁿ Shah". Sher Shah and Islam Shah utilized the title of "Amir".¹⁵² This title had been in use since the days of the Ummayyids.¹⁵³ Another title employed by all Afghan rulers was that of "caliph".¹⁵⁴

148. Wright, 1936, pp. 243-381.

149. Kramers EI¹ (Sultan).

150. Büchner EI¹ (Shah).

151. Hasan, 1919-20, inscription no.1; Quraishi, 1923-4, inscription no. 3.

152. Wright, 1936, p. 263, no. 1030 D; p. 342, no. 1331.

153. Duri EI² (Amir).

154. Wright, 1936, p. 245 no. 938; p. 250 no. 967; p. 255 no. 1013; p. 325 no. 1270; p. 365 no. 1428; p. 377 (no. 1480).

This was the traditional title of the head of the Muslim community¹⁵⁵. On one of the extant inscriptions from

Bahlul's reign that Sultans describes himself as the ^{deputy} representative (نائب) of the caliph.¹⁵⁶ In other inscriptions Bahlul refers to himself as the Khalifa¹⁵⁷.

Literary sources add that the Afghan Sultans possessed the traditional symbols of power such as throne سریر تخت¹⁵⁸, the right to mint coins inscribed with their names کاه , and the right to demand that their names be mentioned in the Friday prayers.¹⁵⁹ (حظبه)

Afghan Sultans appear to have considered themselves as rulers of the whole world. Sikandar Lodi, says Ni'matullah, "ascended the throne of the world rule"

(سریر جهانرادی)¹⁶⁰. Both Ibrahim Lodi and Sher Shah are described as "rulers of the world"

شاه عالم¹⁶¹. Bahlul Lodi was no less than a "world conqueror" جهان گنا¹⁶². The capital

city of the Afghan rulers is referred to as "the throne of the caliphate" سریر خلافت¹⁶³. Their inscriptions seem to convey the impression that they had conceived

155. Gibb EI² (Khalifa); Lambton EI² (Khalifa); Madelung EI² (Imama).

156. Wright, 1936, p. 246 no. 942.

157. Wright, 1936, p. 243, no. 924.

158. N. 170; A. 113.

159. N. 133.

160. N. 171.

161. A. 41; B.I. 367.

162. N. 169.

163. N. 199; A. 212-213.

themselves as combining in their persons the functions of caliphs and of Sultans, and as having a special relationship to God. Sikandar Lodi describes himself as "shadow of God" ظِلُّ اللَّهِ.¹⁶⁴ As pious Muslims the Afghan rulers fight successfully against the infidels. They proclaim themselves to be "father of victory" أَبُو الْفَتْحِ.¹⁶⁴ Afghan Sultans are fond of proclaiming their Islamic beliefs and they inscribe these on their coins. Sher Shah, Islam Shah and 'Adil Shah inscribe on their coins the basic Muslim belief "there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the apostle of Allah".¹⁶⁶ The message put across by Bahlul and Sikandar Lodi in their inscriptions is that they are "trusting in Allah".¹⁶⁷ Sher Shah is "strengthened in God".¹⁶⁸ Sikandar Lodi, Islam Shah and 'Adil Shah are "confiding in divine support".¹⁶⁹

Afghan rulers express a wish that their reign would be a long one through God's grace. All the Lodi Sultans pray "may his empire endure for ever".¹⁷⁰ Sher Shah, Islam Shah and 'Adil Shah say "may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and his power".¹⁷¹ As pious Muslims the Afghan Sultans

164. Hasan, 1919-20 inscription no. 5; N. 190.

165. Wright, 1936, p. 263 no. 1030 D; p. 326 no. 1282 B; p. 366 no. 1434.

166. Wright, 1936, p. 266 no. 1031 G; p. 326 no. 1282, p. 366 no. 1434.

167. Wright, 1936, p. 243 no. 924; p. 250, no. 967.

168. Wright, 1936, p. 273 no. 1056 A الْمُتَوَكِّلُ عَلَى الرَّحْمَنِ الْمَوِيدُ الرَّحِيمُ

169. Wright, 1936, p. 353, no. 1365; p. 372 no. 1444; Hasan, 1919-20 inscription no. 12 أَلُوَائِي بَتَا كَيْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ

170. Wright, 1936, p. 243, no. 924; p. 250 no. 976; p. 255 no. 1013 خَلَّدَتْ خَلْدَتَهُ

171. Wright, 1936, p. 263, no. 1030B; p. 366 no. 1434; p. 326, no. 1282. خَلَّدَتْ اللَّهُ مَلِكُهُ وَخَلْدَانَهُ

proclaim themselves to be engaged in an active defence of Islam. Islam Shah presents himself as "the help of Islam and kingdom".¹⁷² Adil Shah refers to himself as "father of the warrior in the name of religion",¹⁷³ while Sikandar Lodi is "the warrior in the path of God".¹⁷⁴ Sher Shah calls himself "champion of the faith".¹⁷⁵ Sikandar Lodi is described as "destroyer of heretics" and Sher Shah as "conqueror of infidels".¹⁷⁶ Afghan Sultans also refer to themselves in terms which may suggest their intention to act as preservers of a traditional social order.* They describe themselves as "just" معدل¹⁷⁷ and as "judges" ديان¹⁷⁸. To indicate their role as preservers of the association between politics and religion the Afghans Sultans combine their names with the concept of "religion" (دين) and that of "world" (دنيا)¹⁷⁹ thus probably reiterating the sentiment that "religion" and "world" are interconnected and that the one presupposes or is based on the other.

To sum up: the extant evidence suggests that the

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172. Wright, 1936, p. 337, no. 1315. عفو الاسلام والملك
 173. Wright, 1936, p. 374, no. 1463. ابو المجاهد الباهر من سبي الله
 174. Lal, 1963, p. 176.
 175. Wright, 1936, p. 303, no. 1156. خازي
 176. Quraishi, 1924-4 inscription no. 4; Epigraphica Indica, 1959-60, p. 8.
 177. Wright, 1936, p. 264, no. 1031 A; p. 339 no. 1318; p. 372 no. 1447.
 178. Wright, 1936, p. 299 no. 1103 D; p. 342 no. 1331; p. 374, no. 1462.
 179. Wright, 1936, p. 263, no. 1030 D; p. 326 no. 1282 B; p. 367 no. 1434E.

* see above pp. 87-92

Afghan rulers ideally conceived themselves as leaders of the Muslim community and not as kings of a territorially defined state. In so far as real conquests are concerned none of the Afghan rulers ever succeeded in bringing into his authority the territory held by the Khalajis and by the Tughluqs.

Did the Afghan Sultans restore the institutions of the Turkish rulers of Delhi?

Modern historians seem to have accepted the view of Abul ~~Fazl~~^{al} that Sher Shah Sur did not invent the institutions of the sultanate but rather ordered the reintroduction of the regulations of government known already to the Khalji ruler of Delhi, Sultan ^{al} Ala ~~ud~~-din Khalji¹⁸⁰. Generalizing from this interpretation of Sher Shah's regulations modern historians might have concluded that the Afghan Sultans were continuators of the Delhi Sultanate not because they attempted to re-establish the rule of Delhi over those parts of India which had been under the authority of the Khalajis and the Tughluqs, but on account of Afghan Sultans' administrative reforms which might have been conceived^{as}/based on the measures of Sultan ^{al} Ala ~~ud~~-din Khalaji.*

Though it is true that Ala ^{al} ~~ud~~-din Khalaji ordered the land tax to be based on measurement¹⁸¹ and that this

180. AN.I. 196.

181. Roy, 1960, pp. 23-28.

* See above, pp. 166-168

measure formed a part of Sher Shah's reforms as well, this fact does not substantiate the claim that Sher Shah conceived himself as a successor to 'Ala ^{al}~~ud~~-din Khaldji. The measurement system was applied in India before the times of Sher Shah. Thus Mahmud Gawan (died 1481), a wazir to the Bahmani sultan Muhammad, ordered the lands of the sultanate to be measured.¹⁸² The same regulation was enacted by the ruler of Kashmir, Zain al-din al-^{al}~~ud~~Abidin (ruled 1420-1460).¹⁸³ Land survey and the demand of land tax according to actual amount of land cultivated were not inventions of Ala ^{al}~~ud~~-din Khaldji; the authorship of these measures is attributed to the Sassanid monarch Khusro I, the measures were accepted by the Caliph Umar I (ruled 634-644). Since then this regulation came to be applied in the Muslim world.¹⁸⁴

By using the measurement system Sher Shah merely applied what must have been a traditional form of revenue assessment. Neither Sher Shah nor any of the other Afghan Sultans are known to have adopted other important regulations of Ala ^{al}~~ud~~-din Khaldji, such as his order for price control.¹⁸⁵ None of the Afghan Sultans claimed to have been in a "line of succession" to this Sultan of Delhi.*

* In distinction to European kings Muslim rulers bearing the same names and ruling over the same territory did not add numerals to their names by way of identification. The absence of this practice may indicate that Muslim Sultans did not conceive their own rule as being a link in a chain of succession.

182. Sherwani, 1956, p. 28.

183. De, 1939, p. 654.

184. Quershi, 1961, pp. 83-92.

185. On this measure see: Habib^z Nizami, pp. 372-391

Were the Afghan sultans predecessors of the Timurids?

Modern historians have depicted the Afghan rulers as predecessors of the Timurids in general and ^{the}the emperor Akbar in particular in the fields of civil administration, army organisation and land-tax arrangements. *

In this section we shall examine the issue of how far this view of modern historians can be substantiated.

Sources relevant to Akbar's reign mention the division of his empire into units known as subah. They also enumerate the administrative staff appointed to the subahs¹⁸⁶. The above mentioned administrative arrangements have not been recorded in sources treating with the Afghan period. Under Akbar the subahs were subdivided into sarkars. Sarkar as an administrative unit is recorded for the reign of the Shah Sur¹⁸⁷ and for that of Islam Shah¹⁸⁸. The names of the "administrative staff" of sarkars under Akbar are different from those recorded for the reign of the Sher Shah. Akbar's officials at the sarkar level were: faujdar, kotwal, ^{gari s}~~gari s~~, amalguzar, bitika~~hi~~ and fotahdar¹⁸⁹

186. Srivastava, 1973, p. 113.

187. A. 211.

188. Ab^{ul} Fazl says that Sher Shah divided ^{Hind} into 47 "parts" (^{ع ١٤٥}) AN.I.196.

189. Srivastava, 1973, pp. 130-138.

* see above pp. 168-171

Sher Shah Sur staffed his sarkars with two officials only. The munsif-i munsifan and the shiqqdar-i shiqqadaran¹⁹⁰ The sarkas were subdivided into parganas each with its set of officials. This arrangement and its officials are common to both Akbar and Sher Shah¹⁹¹.

As far as the army arrangements are concerned there is a similarity between arrangements prevailing in the Sur period and those of Akbar. Soldiers were paid in cash instead of receiving land grants.¹⁹² Another similarity between the systems prevailing in the Akbar and Sur periods for proper maintenance of the army is the use of the branding of horses to prevent fraudulent claims.¹⁹³

In the field of land revenue assessment and collection both Akbar and the Surs are said to have based their taxation systems on the actual measurement of lands cultivated.¹⁹⁴ Both Sher Shah and Akbar are recorded as having enacted a regulation whereby compensation was to be paid to cultivators whose crops were damaged by marching soldiers¹⁹⁵.

To sum up: the Timurid Akbar does seem to have followed some of the administrative reputation of his Sur predecessors.

190. A. 211.

191. Srivastava, 1973, p. 140; A. 210.

192. Srivastava, 1962, p. 176; B.I. 384.

193. Srivastava, 1962, p. 179, 83.

194. A. 208.

195. Srivastava, 1962, p. 247, A.210; 'Ain 296.

Summary

Modern historians have offered a complex system of ideas for the interpretation of the Afghan period and for the understanding of the activities of the Afghan Sultans, their supporters and their opponents. We have analysed the interpretative framework of the thought of modern historians and have found that extant historical evidence does not support it. Afghan Sultans proclaimed themselves in their inscriptions and were seen by medieval historians as Muslim rulers, piously fulfilling their function to protect their society and providing their Muslim subjects with means to lead the life prescribed by the holy Muslim law. Modern historians have not accepted this interpretation. They have attempted to prove that Afghan Sultans intended to establish either a tribal kingdom or an autocratic monarchy. They have tried to portray the Afghan Sultans as followers of an imperial ideology and as restorers of the Delhi Sultanate.

Yet, although the evidence available suggests that Afghans of Roh did migrate into India, and that both Bahlul Lodi and Sher Shah Sur were Afghans, these facts do not enable us to affirm the view that Afghans in India formed a distinctive cultural and social group. Careful examination of such terms as "tribe", "nation" and "race" enabled us to show that Afghans in India could not be meaningfully described by any of these socio-cultural categories. Modern historians seem to ignore the fact that Afghans were Muslims.

They made no attempt to examine the hypothesis that the religious background of the Afghans was of far more political and cultural importance than the tribal organization allegedly existing in their place of origin. If Afghans did retain their peculiar tribal characteristics while living in India, this seems to have left no trace in the extant historical sources. Afghan Sultans did have in their entourage Afghan amirs and they did distribute among them money and land grants. But these facts alone do not justify the thesis that an Afghan tribal monarchy was established in India. Afghan Sultans also had among their amirs non-Afghans and even non-Muslims who apparently received the same material remuneration as the Afghans.

Although it is true that Afghan Sultans fought against amirs in revolt, we are not free to deduce from these struggles that Afghan Sultans wished to create an autocracy. Their actions seem merely directed toward vesting powers in their own supporters at the expense of the supporters of their rivals. Autocracy or absolutism as they are understood in their 18th century European context have no equivalent in the form of rule exercised by the Afghan Sultans. Afghan ruler seem to have been described as a traditional Muslim form of government in which the Sultan was expected to maintain social order and obedience to the holy Muslim law. To achieve these aims he had to supervise personally affairs of state. This type of regime can hardly be said to conform with the content of the definition of either absolutism or autocracy both of which refer to situations in which the sovereign's rule is not limited by any legal or customary

consideration or by politically significant groups. Modern historians seem to ignore the very basic fact that Afghan sultans were Muslims and were depicted by medieval historians as followers of the shar' and not of a European program of secular absolutism.

Afghan Sultans did have officials such as hakms, shiddars, faujdars. But we know too little about the functions of these officials, the mode in which they exercised their tasks, their mutual relations and the way in which the sultans supervised their performance to be able to describe the governmental machinery as bureaucratic and centralised. The assumption which has been made by modern historians according to which a central government manned by ministers with specific functions existed under the Afghan Sultans does not ^{seem} to be based on the evidence known to us.

Afghan Sultans did have Hindus in their retinues and some Afghan rulers ^{did} show an interest in some aspects of Hindu culture. But these facts do not justify the hypothesis that the Afghan period witnessed an unusual degree of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement. Afghan Sultans do not seem to have deviated from the traditional way in which non Muslims were treated within the domains of Muslim rulers. Afghan Sultans fought against those Hindus who revolted or who refused to recognize their authority, but they accorded protection to those who recognized their rule. They did not however try to integrate Hindu and Muslim cultures, nor do they appear to have promoted Hindu-Muslim reconciliation.

The theory of modern historians according to which

Afghan Sultans desired to re-create the Delhi Sultanate does not seem to be corroborated. Afghan Sultans did not perceive themselves as rulers of Delhi or of any other territory. They were in their own eyes caliphs and Sultans of the Muslim community. They conceived themselves as rulers of the world. There appears to be no evidence that any of the Afghan Sultans (even if some of them might have re-introduced measures of government which had already been applied by their predecessors on the throne of Delhi) saw themselves as part of a line of succession or as following in the footsteps of other sultans who had ruled over Delhi before them.

CHAPTER NINE :

PATTERNS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR DURING THE AFGHAN PERIOD

The ignored problem: forms of struggle for power

In the previous chapters an attempt was made to clarify and to analyze the ways in which medieval and modern historians have interpreted the Afghan period (1451-1557). We have shown that medieval historians saw the period of Afghan political domination as characterized by a network of mutual obligations between individuals; their behaviour was assumed to have followed fixed traditions of duties imposed on an individual through his birth into a given family, religion and social group. An individual was expected to behave in some typical way, characteristic ~~to~~ of his socio-religious status. Sultans, amirs, saints, faqirs, peasants and soldiers - each seemed to have had duties toward fellow members of their community. In addition an individual had certain obligations towards members of his own nuclear family - his brothers, uncles, father, sons. On this network of personal interrelationships was superimposed a supernatural dimension which seemed to operate independently of the individual's following of traditional precepts of behaviour or his own psychological characteristics. Modern historians have been, as we have observed, chiefly interested in the question whether the Afghan rulers succeeded in imposing law and order in their realms and whether, operating through a system of centralized bureaucratic machinery, they attained the object of ensuring

material and spiritual happiness to their subjects irrespective of their social and religious backgrounds.

In this chapter we shall concentrate on a problem which appears to have been ignored by both medieval and modern historians: how political power and authority were achieved, maintained, and lost. It seems to us that the results of the enquiry into the patterns of political behaviour of individuals living in the period 1451-1557 could shed additional light on the question whether the interpretations of medieval and modern historians are capable of explaining the behaviour of those who were politically active throughout the Afghan period. The existence of an unstable political framework and the attempts of individuals to achieve and to maintain political power may be relevant to deciding the issue whether personal duties and obligations played an important role in the political culture of the Afghan period - as medieval historians wished us to believe, or whether the main concern of Afghan Sultans was to ensure the happiness of their subjects through the establishment of a centralized bureaucratic machinery - as modern historians assert.

Characteristics of political patterns of behaviour during the Afghan period.

It seems that the political behaviour of individuals during the Afghan period is capable of being explained through reference to one factor, namely personal shifting alliances among individuals banded together to achieve power. These

impermanent alliances were concluded in steps which are easily discernible and which seem to obey the following pattern:

1. An existing alliance is rendered unstable following the death, infirmity or failure to maintain political coherence of an individual who has formed a focus of habitual obedience.
2. The destabilization of an old alliance leads to a "war of succession" among contenders ^{within} the old, now dissolving, alliance. Each of the contenders for the position of leadership of the group seeks for allies, both within the group and outside it, among individuals whose support he ^{wishes} to recruit.
3. Each of the contenders attempts to break up and destroy the group headed by his rival(s); the "war of succession" continues until either the leader of the rival group is physically eliminated or rendered politically impotent or the original group breaks up, each of the subgroups forming a new political nucleus.
4. Once a political leadership within a group is established, competition between this group and other existing political alliances may develop, each of the existing networks attempting to destroy the other through offering support to rivals for leadership within the other group. The competition may lead to an attempt to annihilate the leadership of the other group, partial absorption of the rival network of alliances or to the imposition of real or symbolic authority over the rival group.
5. The position of leadership of a group, even if achieved, is never totally assured. The leader has to continue to

suppress potential and actual rivals for leadership who act as focus of discontent within the group and who in their turn can attempt to disrupt the existing political network through conspiracies, revolts, and by inviting other rival groups to assist in gaining power. Group leaders endeavour to build their own followship at the expense of the old network; the new recruits repeat the struggle for power once their master is dead.

6. Although, in the contest for power, preference is given by the group members to the issue of the family of the original leader, their inability to be at least partially successful in maintaining political alliances can lead to the disintegration of the original network of support and its re-crystallization under a member of a new family.

The patterns of groupings and re-groupings are relatively well documented as far as the Afghan sultans are concerned. There is also some evidence that their supporters had in turn presided over their own networks of alliances which manifested the same mode of political behaviour as described above and with respect to which the sultan could act as an external force attracting appeals from rivals contending for power.

We shall proceed now to a detailed description of the steps in alliance formation and dissolution as they occurred in the period under consideration.

The death of each of the Afghan sultans was an occasion for the rivalries existing within the network of alliances over which the deceased ruler had presided could

manifest themselves. Bahlul Lodi's death resulted in a war of succession among his sons Barbak Shah Lodi - the Sultan of Jaunpur, Nizam Khan Lodi, who proclaimed himself Sultan under the name of Sikandar, and Bahlul's grandson - 'A⁴zam Humayun Lodi.¹ The death of Sikandar Lodi was followed by a contest for leadership between his sons Ibrahim Lodi and Jalal Khan Lodi.² Sher Shah Sur's death brought about a war of succession between two of his sons - Jalal Khan, the future Sultan Islam Shah Sur, and 'Adil Khan Sur.³

The death of Islam Shah brought about rivalry between Islam Shah's son Fir^oz and Islam Shah's brother-in-law Mubariz Khan Sur, later the sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah.⁴ Fights for leadership existed in networks of alliances presided by men of a lesser status than that of a Sultan. Thus events gradually ripened into a war of succession between Farid Sur, the future Sultan Sher Shah, and his brother Sulaiman Sur, on the death of their father Hasan Sur.⁵

Each of the contenders for leadership was supported by members of the original network. Thus Nizam Khan (Sultan Sikandar Lodi) was supported by Khan-i-Jahan Lodi, Khan-i-Khanan Farmuli, Khan-i Khanan Nuhani, Mahmud Khan Lodi and

1. F.I. 179-180.

2. TA.I. 341.

3. TA.II. 107.

4. B.I. 357.

5. A. 42-44.

Umar Khan Sarwani, while ⁶Isa Khan Lodi, 'Alam Khan Lodi, Rai Ganesh, Shaikhzada Muhammad Farmuli and Mubarak Khan Nuhami supported Barbak Shah of Jaunpur.⁶ When Sikandar Lodi died, one of his sons, Ibrahim Lodi, was supported in his bid for leadership by Khan-i Jahan Nuhani, Haibat Khan,⁷ Dar^{Ma}ya Khan Nuhani, Nasir Khan Nuhani, Shaikhzada Muhammad Farmuli, Sa'id Khan Lodi, ⁹Adam Kakar, Ismail Jilwani, Kabir Khan Lodi and Bahadur Khan Nuhani,⁸ whereas Fath Khan Sarwani, Azam Huamyun Sarwani and Imad ^ul Mulk supported the claim of Jalal Khan Lodi, Ibrahim's brother.⁹ The war of succession between Islam Shah Sur and his brother ^zAdil Khan Sur witnessed the following split within the former network of alliances: ^zAdil Khan Sur was supported by Mahmud Khan Sur, Khwass Khan, ^zIsa Khan Niazi, Qutb Khan, Jalal Khan Jallu, Par Khan Nuhani, ^zAlam Khan Miyana, Barmazid Gur, Shahbaz Khan Niazi, Shams Khan Niazi, ^z~~Zia~~ ^{2ia} Khan Niazi and Kamal Khan.¹⁰ Islam Shah was supported by ^zIsa ^zKhan Hujjab, Ghazi Khan Mahalli and ^zAzam Humayun Niazi.¹¹ Islam Shah's death split his supporters creating two rival groups, one including his son Fir^uz, aided by Taj Khan Karrani¹² and the other comprising

6. TA.I. 315-317.

7. B.I. 326.

8. N. 120; TA.I. 344-346.

9. TA.I. 343-345.

10. Dorn, 1828, p. 151; TA.II. 111; B.I. 375-379.

11. TA.II. 107-110; B.I. 378-379.

12. TA.II. 118.

Mubariz Khan Sur - cousin to Islam Shah, aided by Shamshir Khan - brother of Khwass Khan, Daulat Khan, Pahar Khan Sarwani and Ibrahim Khan Sur.¹³ Farid Sur, while fighting his brother Sulaiman, was aided by his other brother, Nizam Khan Sur.¹⁴

Each of the wars of succession enumerated above ended only when the leader of a rival faction was rendered politically and often physically powerless. Thus Barbak Shah was imprisoned by his successful rival, Sultan Sikandar;¹⁵ Jalal Khan, rival of Ibrahim Lodi, was executed by the latter¹⁶ following an abortive attempt to divide the kingdom.¹⁷ Islam Shah forced his brother 'Adil Khan to flee from his realm.¹⁸ Firoz was murdered by his successful rival Muhammad⁹ Adil Shah.¹⁹ Sulaiman Sur was evicted from his parganas by Farid.²⁰

Members of a rival network could be absorbed into the group of the successful contender. Thus the supporters of Barbak Shah Lodi - Rai Ganesh and Muhammad Farmuli, turned to support his rival Sikandar Lodi²¹. Fath Khan

13. TA.II. 119; B.I. 418.

14. A. 44.

15. TA.I. 317.

16. N. 247.

17. N. 230.

18. TA.II. 110.

19. B.I. 418.

20. TA.II. 89.

21. F.I. 180.

Sarwani and A'zam Humayun Sarwani deserted Jalal Khan Lodi in favour of his rival Sultan Ibrahim.²² Khwass Khan and Qutb Khan rejoined Islam Shah, although they had originally supported 'Adil Khan Sur, Islam Shah's rival.²³

Once one of the contenders for leadership became successful in his bid for power, he could begin to fight against other existing groups. Thus Bahlul Lodi, having ascended the throne of Delhi, turned against the ruler of Multan;²⁴ later both he and his successor Sikandar Lodi became involved in a protracted struggle against the sultans of Jaunpur and their allies.²⁵ Sikandar Lodi fought successfully against the Hindu rulers of Dholpur, Mandrail, Antargarh and Narvar.²⁶ Ibrahim Lodi successfully fought the ruler of Gwalior whom he deposed.²⁷ Sher Shah, having evicted Humayun from India, fought successfully against, and deposed, the ruler of Malwa, the Raj of Raisen and the Baluchi chiefs of Multan.²⁸

Leaders of one group might attempt to evict the supporters of a rival leader. Bahlul Lodi ejected from Shamsabad its pro-Sharqi hakim Juna Khan and installed in his stead his own supporter Rai Karan.²⁹ Sikandar Lodi

22. TA.I. 344.

23. TA.II. 107 and 110.

24. Y. 11.

25. TA.I. 301-320.

26. TA.I. 324-328.

27. Hameed ud-din, 1961d, p. 317.

28. A. 177 and 190 and 165.

29. TA.I. 303 and 307.

evicted from Bayana a supporter of Husain Sharqi of Jaunpur, Sultan Ashraf Jilwani and gave the fort to his own supporter Khan-i-Khanan Farmuli.³⁰ The same ruler took the fort of Agra from an ally of Husain Sharqi, Haibat Khan Jilwani.³¹

Successful leaders of one group did not always depose their less successful rivals. Sometimes they might allow them to carry on their rule provided that the defeated leaders recognized the authority of the victor through real or symbolic submission. Thus Bahlul Lodi forced the hakim of Mewat to give up seven parganas which were in his possession. The hakim of Sambal, Dar^hya Khan Lodi was made to succumb in the same manner.³² Sometimes a leader of a group was made to recognize the authority of another leader, although we are not informed as to the way in which this subordinate position was expressed. Thus we hear that ⁴Isa Khan Turkbacha of Kol, Mubarak Khan of Saket, Rai Pratap of Kampili, Patiali and Bhogaon^N and Qutb Khan Afghan of Rapri are said to have recognized the authority of Bahlul Lodi. At a later period Ahmad Khan Jilwani of Bayana and Rai Tilok Chand assumed the same subordinate position.³³ The Rai of Dholpur paid a tribute to Bahlul Lodi; so did Iqbal Khan of Bari and Rai Man of Gwalior.³⁴ The Rai of Tirhut recognized that authority of Sikandar Lodi as did also the Rai of Bhatta, Rai Salivahan and Mubarak Khan of Nagaur.³⁵

30. TA.I. 316-317.

31. F.I. 180.

32. TA.I. 302.

33. TA.I. 308 and 311.

34. TA.I. 312.

35. TA.I. 319-320; Dorn, 1828, pp. 57-58; B.I. 321.

In their competition against rival groups each of the leaders could attempt to support one of the internal rivals of the head of the hostile network. Sikandar Lodi interfered in the internal struggle in Malwa between Shihab ^{al}~~ad~~-din and his rival Mahmud Shah. As a result Chanderi, till then a part of Malwa, became a dependency of the Lodi ruler.³⁶ On another occasion the rivalry between Muhammad Khan of Nagor and his relatives ⁹Ali Khan and Abu Bakr resulted in Muhammad Khan's recognition of Sikandar Lodi's authority. He introduced Sikandar Lodi's name into the khutba to prevent the latter from recognizing the claims of ⁶Ali Khan and ⁹Ali Bakr who had fled to Sikandar Lodi's court.³⁷

Once the leadership of a group was established, the ruler had to be able to counter moves within his network of alliances aimed at destroying his power. The danger of a conspiracy or a revolt was constantly present. Bahlul Lodi's "vassal" Rai Pratap revolted against him and joined Sult^{an}~~an~~ Muhammad Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur; so did Ahamd Khan of Mewat and Rustam Khan of Kol, who had formerly recognized Bahlul Lodi's authority.³⁸ Sikandar Lodi was faced by a conspiracy of twenty two amirs who intended to depose him and to elevate his brother Fath ^hKan Lodi to the _g

36. F.I. 185; TA.I. 330.

37. B.I. 321.

38. TA.I. 304 and 306-307.

throne in his stead. Ibrahim Khan Lodi was confronted with a revolt headed by his uncle ⁴ Alam Khan Lodi, who was supported by Sher Khan Lodi, Jalal Khan Lodi, Dilawar Khan Lodi, Mahi Khan, Ismail Khan Jilwani, Sulaiman Farmuli, Biban Jilwani, Dar¹ya Khan Nuhani, Muhammad Nuhani and Shaikh Jamal Farmuli.⁴⁰ Another revolt against Ibrahim Lodi was headed by Muhammad Nuhani, who attracted the support of Nasir Khan Nuhani and Maruf Farmuli.⁴¹ Yet another revolt against Ibrahim Lodi was headed by Islam Khan Sarwani, backed by ⁴ Azam Humayun Lodi, Sa'id Khan and Daulat Khan Lodi.⁴² Sher Shah was faced with a revolt of 'Alam Khan Miana and with a possible conspiracy of Khizr Khan Turk, who married a daughter of the last sultan of Bengal and used to seat on an elevated platform, two moves interpreted by Sher Shah as demonstrations of the former's wish to declare independence.⁴³ Islam Shah lived through three conspiracies against his person, one of Sa'id Khan Niazi, another led by Iqbal Khan and yet another headed by Baha ^{al} ~~ud~~-din.⁴⁴ The same ruler had to quell two revolts against his rule, one led by A'zam Humayun Niazi, who was aided by Sa'id Khan Niazi, Khwass Khan and ¹ Isa Khan Niazi,⁴⁵ and the other instigated by Sulaiman Khan who revolted in

39. B.I. 317.

40. BN.II. 456-457.

41. BN.II. 523.

42. N. 128-130; TA.I. 351-352.

43. A. 200 and 172.

44. B.I. 382 and 410 and 413.

45. B.I. 379-386.

Bengal.⁴⁷ Muhammad⁹ Adil Shah Sur had to face the uprising of Taj Khan Karrani who was supported by his brothers; of Muhammad Khan Sur;⁴⁸ of Ibrahim Khan Sur, who had the backing of Rai Husain Jilwani, Bihar Khan Sarwani, Haji Khan⁴⁹ and Ghazi Khan Sur.⁵⁰ Another revolt against Muhammad⁶ Adil Shah Sur was led by Ahmad Khan Sur supported by Taj Khan Kasi, Shahbaz Khan, Nasir Khan, Haibat Khan and Ghazi Khan Tamuri.⁵¹ Still another revolt against this ruler was headed by Baz Bahadur of Malwa.⁵² Nizam ud-din informs us that Hemu, the wazir of Muhammad 'Adil Shah, revolted against his master and proclaimed himself ruler under the title of Rai Vikramadjit; he was supported by Shadi Khan Kakar.⁵³

Revolting amirs could appeal to leaders of other groups to come and aid them against their former sovereigns. Thus Rai Pratap, Ahmad Khan of Mewat and Rustam Khan of Kol appealed to the Sultan of Jaunpur for help against Bahlul Lodi.⁵⁴ Daulat Khan Lodi, the hakim of Punjab, and Alam Khan Lodi, asked Babur to partake in their revolt against Ibrahim Lodi.⁵⁵

47. AN.III. 432.

48. TA.II. 121-124.

49. TA.II. 121-122.

50. B.I. 462-463.

51. TA.II 122-123; AN.I. 336; TA.II. 80-81; B.I. 460; AN.II. 59.

52. TA.III. 421-422.

53. TA.II. 131-132.

54. TA.I. 304 and 306-307.

55. TA.I. 351-352; P.I. 331.

Although revolting amirs endeavoured to find alternative candidates for leadership from among the members of the previous leader's family,* they did on certain occasions choose one of themselves to the position of Sultan, irrespective of their family connections with the reigning house. Thus Bahadur Khan Nuhani proclaimed himself sultan under the title of Muhammad Shah at the time of Ibrahim Lodi's rule.⁵⁶ A'zam Humayun Niazi declared himself Sultan during the reign of Islam Shah.⁵⁷ Baz Bahadur elevated himself to the position of sultan struggling against his former sovereign Muhammad 'Adil Shah.⁵⁸

We have already mentioned the fact that political groups formed during the Afghan period were not "closed systems". Amirs of one leader could revolt and appeal to the leader of another group for aid against him. Yet another characteristic of this open-ended political system was the possibility for an individual to pass from the service of one leader to that of another. Thus when Haibat Khan Kakbur was expelled from the service of Sikandar Lodi, he entered the service of Sultan Mahmud of Malwa; he then

* It may be interesting to point out that even after the destruction of the Lodi empire and the death of Ibrahim Lodi, a member of the same dynasty, Mahmud Lodi, was able to rally support and to fight against the forces of the Timurid Babur. Only when he failed did Sher Shah succeed in his bid for the throne of Delhi (BN.II. 468 and 537; A. 86-86).

56. N. 130.

57. B.I. 379-380.

58. TA.III. 421-422.

passed into the service of Muzaffar Shah of Guj^arat only to return to the court of Ibrahim Lodi.⁵⁹ Alam Khan Lodi, a son of Bahlul, joined the service of the Sultan of Guj^arat, came back to the employ of Ibrahim Lodi, then revolted against him proclaiming himself Sultan 'Ala ^{al}ud-din. He later fought against the Mughal Humayun, and in 1535 he went back to Gujarat where he became wazir to sultan Mahmud Shah. When evicted from this position by his rivals, he entered the service of Sher Shah. When the latter died he returned to Guj^arat, became involved in a political struggle and was forced to flee to Patan where he was killed by the local ruler I'timad Khan with whom he quarrelled.⁶⁰ Dilawar Khan Lodi left the service of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi and entered that of the Timurid Babur.⁶¹

Another characteristic of the political culture of the Afghan period⁵ is the ethnically heterogeneous composition of supporters of each of the rulers. Afghans, non-Afghans, non-Afghan Muslims and non-Muslims were to be found in the entourage of each of the Afghan rulers. Bahlul Lodi was supported by a number of non-Afghan Muslims: Ahmad Khan of Mewat, 'Ali^x Khan Turk Bacha and Iqbal Khan of Bari.⁶² There was also a number of Hindu "nobles" in the service of this ruler - Rai Pratap, Rai Karan, Rai Tilok Chand and Rai Ganesh.⁶³ Among the non-Afghan supporters of

59. A. 162-163.

60. Halim, 1951 pp. 217-221.

61. BN.II. 567.

62. TA.I. 302 and 299; N. 167.

63. TA.I. 301-302 and 311 and 315.

Sikandar Lodi was Tatar Khan of Jehtra.⁶⁴ His Hindu supporters included Rai Ganesh, Rai Bhid and the Rai of Tirhud.⁶⁵ Among Ibrahim Lodi's non-Afghan supporters were Hasan Khan Mewat and Fir~~oz~~ Khan.⁶⁶ His Hindu follower Rai Vikramadjit died in his service in the battle of Panipat.⁶⁷ One of the important amirs of Sher Shah was the non-Afghan Khwass Khan.⁶⁸ Among the Hindu supporters of the last Sur Sultan was his wazir Hemu who had begun his career under Islam Shah.⁶⁹

All rulers were supported by some members of their respective families. Bahlul Lodi's entourage included his cousin Qutb Khan Lodi, his sons Bayazid, Barbak Shah, 'Alam Khan and Nizam Khan, and his grandson Azam Humayun.⁶ Sultan Sikandar Lodi was supported by his brother Jalal Khan, his cousin Khan-i-Jahan Lodi and by two of his own sons - Ibrahim Khan and Jalal Khan.⁷⁰ Sher Shah was aided by his sons Qutb Khan,⁹ Adil Khan and Jalal Khan.⁷¹ Among the supporters of Islam Shah was his cousin Mubariz Khan.⁷²

64. N. 173 and 190.

65. TA.I. 315 and 318 and 319.

66. BN.II. 523 and 477.

67. Pandey, 1956, p. 179.

68. A. 107.

69. B.I. 387 and 389 and 418.

70. Siddiqi, 1977, p. 46.

71. A. 112 and 147.

72. B.I. 416-418.

Motives for the formation and dissolution of political alliances

We have described the ways in which various individuals might have arranged, dissolved or re-arranged their alliances during the Afghan period. Despite the relative abundance of information about this aspect of behaviour of politically active individuals, there is almost nothing to guide us on the question of why these alliances were formed and why they were so unstable.

One of the motives of an individual to join a particular leader might have been an expectation to receive material benefits. Indeed rulers and would be rulers did offer their existing and prospective supporters stipends, land grants and cash gifts.⁷³ Leaders might promise their supporters food, clothing, booty and horses should they agree to aid them against their rivals.⁷⁴ The more important services could be paid for by means of a حکومت ایمہ، مدد معاشی نا ثبات a مناسبت bestowed on a loyal follower.⁷⁵ Payments could also be

73. For example Bahlul Lodi awarded his followers with stipends (وظیفہ) (N. 143) and cash grants (مواجب) (TA.I. 294). He also distributed among his followers land grants (جاگیر) (A. 7-8). Sher Shah and Islam Shah gave to their supporters ready money (نقد) and land grants (ایمہ، مدد معاشی) (B.I. 384).

74. See for example A.25.

75. For example Sher Shah gave to his amir Shuja'at Khan the حکومت of Mandu and a مناسبت of twelve thousand horses (A. 182). Sher Khan was appointed to the office of نا ثب to Sultan Muhammad of Bihar (A. 47).

made in the form of what appears to be symbolic presents. A ruler could thus bestow on his follower the title of amir⁷⁶ or other honorific names like Azam Humayun, Sher Khan, Khan-i Jahan or Khan-i Khanan. Honorary presents could also take the form of red tents or special garments of honour (خلسه) distributed among the ruler's followers.⁷⁷

Although rulers did remunerate their followers, we cannot say with any degree of certainty that the expectation of payment was the only or even the main reason why certain individuals gathered around a particular leader. There might have been additional considerations, unrecorded by our medieval historians, such as certain personality characteristics of a specific leader, his "luck" in the past, his family connections or his particular religious or political programmes. We know even less about the possible motives of followers who decided to revolt against their leaders or about the reasons for the fact that alliances between individuals tended to be so unstable and were so easily dissolved. Our medieval historians do not explain why Da'ud Khan Lodi, Hatim Khan Lodi, Raja Vikramadjit, Malik Dad Karrani, Firuz Khan Mewati or Lad Khan Lodi⁷⁸ supported Ibrahim Lodi while so many other

76. Bahlul awarded the title of amir to certain of his Afghan followers (A. 7-8).

77. The title of Azam Humayun was given by Sher Shah to his supporter Haibat Khan (A. 186). Sher Shah himself received the title of Sher Khan from his own sovereign Sultan Muhammad of Bihar (A. 47). Sher Shah gave red tents to Mallu Khan of Malwa and to Azam Humayun (A. 186). Special garments (خلسه) were distributed by Sikandar Lodi on the occasion of his succession to the throne (N. 171).

78. BN. II. 467; BN.II. 477-8.

nobles turned against him and went so far as to call for aid from Babur. We do not know why the revolt in Bihar, headed by Muhammad Nuhani, was opposed by another member of the "family" - Nasir Khan Nuhani, or why Ibrahim Lodi could still command the support of Mustafa Farmuli, Firoz Khan Saranghani and Bayazid Farmuli all of whom came to aid Ibrahim against the Bihari rebels.⁷⁹

We have pointed out that during wars of succession members of the same family were known to fight each other. We have records of Muslims fighting against fellow Muslims, Afghans confronting Afghans. It therefore seems that neither religion nor kingship nor a common Afghan origin could be of decisive importance in explaining why on certain occasions some individuals banded together and fought against other groupings of individuals. The motives for this behaviour remain obscure.

The impact of political instability on social order and on the working of institutions of government

The extant literary sources for the Afghan period do not, of set purpose, comment upon the possible effects of the political instability of the period upon the lives of those not connected with court and sultans but whose lives, possessions or welfare might none the less be at risk.

79. BN.II. 527; N. 130.

Nor do our Persian sources help³ us in understanding in what ways government institutions operated during periods of political crisis, civil wars and foreign invasions. We do not know what was the fate of the supporters of defeated leaders once the latter's rule was terminated. We are informed, for example, that Sultan Ashraf of Bayana was expelled by Sikandar;⁸⁰ that Rai Karan replaced the pro-Sharqi governor of Shamsabad Juna Khan;⁸¹ and that Qadir Shah of Malwa was deposed by Sher Shah.⁸² Yet in all these instances our medieval historians do not advise us as to what kind of impact (if any) did these political changes have upon the fate of the followers and beneficiaries of the unsuccessful leaders or upon individual not directly connected with the court.

Our sources leave us in the dark on the question of the possible influence of the wars of succession on the social and economic aspects of the lives of "common people". Was the damage ~~wreaked~~ ^{wreaked} by wars of succession between the supporters of Sikandar and Barbak Shah, between Ibrahim and Jalal ud-din or between Islam Shan and 'Adil Khan, confined to the narrow circle directly connected with the unsuccessful pretenders, or was it a cause of major distress and upheaval in the areas where the struggle occurred?

80. TA.I. 316-317.

81. B.I. 307.

82. A. 175.

Yet another question to which medieval historians do not address themselves is concerned with the ways in which institutions of government came into being and were maintained during periods of political instability. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani informs us that Sher Shah had 113,000 parganas, in each of which there were appointed at least five officials.⁸³ Abul Fadh adds that Sher Shah introduced the measurement system (ضبط) to replace the collection of land revenue in kind.⁸⁴ Neither reveals how Sher Shah could have nominated 565,000 officials and introduced the measurement system in his empire while simultaneously fighting first for his own political survival and then for the expansion of his empire. It seems inexplicable that the time of Sher Shah's reign, which witnessed an almost continuous military struggle among contenders for power, could be referred to as a peaceful period in which, according to Bada'uni, "an old man could sleep on a road with a tray of gold beside him without fearing for his life or being afraid of possible robbery."⁸⁵

Medieval historians leave us wondering at the apparent contradiction between the existence of a well-functioning system of government and what appears to have been a period of considerable political chaos. 'Abdullah says that Ibrahim Lodi ordered his amirs to pay their taxes in kind rather than in cash.⁸⁶ What the historian does not

83. A. 210; A. 228.

84. 'Ain, 296.

85. B.I. 363.

86. The problem of Ibrahim Lodi's tax reforms is discussed by Richards, 1965, pp. 47-67.

explain is when could Ibrahim have published this command and how it could have been enforced during a period the chief feature of which was the ^{existence}~~substance~~ of a continuous revolt of amirs accompanied by a process of disintegration of the Lodi empire.

Was the Afghan Empire a "Segmentary State"?

Though neither medieval nor modern historians have attempted to examine the impact of political instability on the social order and on the feasibility of the operation of institutions of government, a group of 20th century historians have proposed a theory which takes into account the instability of the political system in pre-modern India and which explains the dynamics and the structure of pre-industrial Indian polity in a novel way. We shall examine how far this theory, the theory of the "segmentary state", is relevant to the Afghan period and to what extent it is capable of explaining its political dynamics.

The characteristics of a "segmentary state" are said to be as follows:

1. "The territorial sovereignty² is recognized but limited, forming a series of zones in which authority is most absolute near the centre and increasingly restricted toward the periphery, often shading off into a virtual hegemony.
2. There is centralized government, yet there are also numerous peripheral loci of administration over which the centre exercises only a limited control.

3. There is specialized administrative staff at the centre, but it is repeated on a reduced scale at all the peripheral loci of administration.

4. Monopoly over the use of force is successfully claimed to a limited extent and within a limited range by the central authority, but legitimate force of a more restricted order exists at all the peripheral loci.

5. Several levels of subordinate loci may be distinguished, organized ~~py~~ramidally in relation to the central authority. The central and peripheral authorities reflect the same model and the latter being the reduced images of the former. Similar powers are repeated at each level, with a decreasing range.

6. The more peripheral subordinate authority is, the more chance it has to change its allegiance from one power pyramid to another. Segmentary states are thus flexible and fluctuating."⁸⁷

7. "The state in India did not control a monopoly of coercive, administrative and judicial powers; rather administrative police, civil activities were often dispersed, sometimes resting with the virtually autonomous or independent local overlords, and at other times with kin groups or civil servants."⁸⁸

87. Fox, 1971, p. 56.

88. Fox, 1971, p. 57.

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8. In segmentary state "individual, family, group, may be considered absolute authority within the political system. Power and authority most frequently are distributed among vertically or hierarchically ordered groups ... no one group or individual, because of the nature of the value system, the economy, technology and the social structure, can dispense completely with the other groups. Consensus and balance are achieved through conflict and through awareness that there are always other groups ready to step in. The systems seem to be perpetually on the verge of breaking apart."⁸⁹

9. "Local political institutions which bear responsibility for many local political decisions are based on a segmentary lineage system."⁹⁰

Criticism of the theory of "fragmentary state"

The historians who have proposed the theory of the "segmentary state" have not defined clearly their own principal terms of reference - "centre", "periphery" and "subordinate loci of power organised pyramidally". It is not clear whether these terms refer to a form of organisation of the segmentary state or to a geographic division of the state into fewer independent units.

89. Fox, 1971, pp. 55-56.

90. Fox, 1971, p. 57.

The authors of the "segmentary state" theory also failed to define what they meant by "monopoly of coercive administrative and judicial powers" as opposed to its "dispersal".

As far as the Afghan period in India is concerned we do have some evidence which seems to contradict the assumption made by the proponents of the "segmentary state" theory that the power of the "centre" was absolute near the centre and increasingly restrict^{ed}~~ive~~ towards the periphery. If we identify the "centre" of the state with the person of the sultan, it appears that our sources depict the sultans as effective rulers over all of their domains. Sultans are able to punish insubordinate or corrupt officials. Thus Sikandar Lodi deposed the hakim of Delhi Ashgar ^{for} "bad actions" (^{بد عملی و زشت کرداری})⁹¹ and Sher Shah Sur intervened on behalf of his soldiers when he was informed that one of his amirs Shujat Khan attempted to cheat them⁹².

Sultans are depicted as attending diligently to all state affairs⁹³.

When Farid Sur asks his patron Daulat Khan to intervene with the Sultan Ibrahim Lodi so that the latter would permit Farid Sur to occupy his father's paganas, Daulat Khan is unable to achieve the fulfilment of his request⁹⁴ which shows that sultans' powers were not "devolved"

91. N. 189.

92. A. 228, 231.

93. See for example A. 205 (on Sher Shah) and *N.* 222 (on Sikandar Lodi).

94. A. 41-42.

on his amirs who then could make decisions irrespective of sultans' wishes.

Even when sultans did permit their "officials" to fulfil certain functions, they appear to have reserved for themselves the right to supervise them at will.

Thus when Sher Shah commanded the muggadams to be responsible for any theft committed in their villages, he also retained the powers to execute them should they fail to produce the culprits.⁹⁵ Bahlul Lodi threatened to punish those of his amirs who would cause the migration of Afghans from India.⁹⁶ This again stresses the point that sultans were depicted as being able to supervise and intervene in all state affairs.

Proponents of the segmentary state theory have also claimed that the control ^{and/} peripheral authorities reflected the same governmental model. As we have already stressed far too little is known about "central" and "provincial" governments under the Afghan sultans, to enable us to prove or disprove that the latter was the reduced image of the former.

To conclude: a close look at the assumptions of the "segmentary state" theory and the confrontation of these assumptions with the available historical evidence, suggests that some of the assumptions of this theory are contradicted by known evidence while others cannot be either proved or

95. A. 220-121.

96. A. 7-8.

disproved.

Summary: The predominant pattern of political behaviour during the Afghan period appears to be characterized by a network of unstable personal alliances among individuals with heterogenous religious and ethnic backgrounds. From the extant evidence it is not clear why these alliances came to be created nor why they were dissolved.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The interpretative frameworks offered by medieval and modern historians with regard to the Afghan period differ in many respects. The two groups of historians appear, however, to share one common characteristic, namely that their respective theoretical outlooks seem to them to be far more important than the question whether their theories do in fact explain all known facts or whether there is in existence evidence capable of invalidating their theories. In their respective historiographies facts and hypotheses seem to co-exist on the same plane. Historical evidence does not appear to stimulate historians into re-thinking their outlook. It is not that evidence which seems to refute the interpretative schemes offered is excluded; such evidence is duly noted down, but does not appear to have any influences on the theories formulated. The theories of both medieval and modern historians appear to be independent of historical reality, which they presumably set out to explain.

The underlying assumptions of medieval historiography

Medieval historians accepted both the form and the theoretical approach to history writing as it had been developed by their Muslim predecessors, in the Islamic world in general and in the Indian subcontinent in particular.

Medieval historians abandoned the effort to identify the source from which they derived their information and to verify its truth-value. Although Muslim historians believed that "historical truth ... was considered ensured by the unimpeacheable character of the succession of men through whom a given item of information was transmitted..."¹ and although their histories were presumably written from "authority" being no more than a "repetition of what someone already knows rather than a discovery of something hitherto unknown but existing hidden in evidence"², they, similarly to their Muslim predecessors, did not "provide criteria for reliability of their sources independent of their own preference and decision."³

All extant medieval histories contain dynastic, ^Nanalistic, biographical and anecdotal elements; the proportion in which these elements appear varies within each of the chronicles and among them.

F. Rosenthal, a scholar of Muslim historiography, observes that Muslim historians "stressed the concrete 'factual' elements in history, isolated from its environment and as much as possible unmodified by human thought process. Simple statements, isolated events, superficial if colourful characteristics, run next to each other and left without any

1. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 411.

2. Hardy, 1961, p. 125.

3. Hardy, 1961, p. 125. The only exception to the validity of this observation is Abbas Kahn Sarwani's insistence that he had his own sources of information which invalidates the truth of the "litter story" - see above, p. 29

explicit elaboration of their inner casual connections."⁴
 Our medieval historians appear to follow this manner of writing; their histories have the characteristics common to Muslim historical works - they are "fundamentally episodic".⁵

Another traditional element of Muslim historians' approach to history writing was retained by our medieval chroniclers, namely their concentration on the "administrative and military exploits of rulers and statesmen."⁶ P. Hardy, whose work centers on the problems of pre-Mughal Muslim historiography in the Indian subcontinent, has observed that "the aim of Indo-Muslim historiography is in this period to present the past as a succession of deeds, events and episodes involving the great and the powerful of the Muslim community; the deeds of Sultans, officials, sufi saints are the main subjects of their work."⁷ Hardy's evaluation seems to be true not only of the pre-Mughal historiography but also of the Afghan period as expressed in the writings of medieval historians.

In their perception of the past as eternal present medieval historians follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. They appear not to have accepted the possibility of a change or a development within human society. As P. Hardy puts it - for medieval historians the "past is

4. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 408.

5. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 408.

6. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 408.

7. Hardy, 1961, p. 126.

succession of time instants, or of untouching moments rather than a story of change, of process, of becoming. The present follows the past but it is not outcome of the past."⁸ Human actors in the field of history appear to medieval historians to be endowed with stable personality characteristics which remain unmodified throughout their life experiences. History consists of a series of acts of individuals each repeating moves already known, assuming the roles of "Sultan", "amir", "wazir", or saint, and each qualified as either "good" or "bad". The names of individual players may change, but the story of their activities is repeated again and again. Good sultans are pious, devoted to their subjects; they wage wars against infidels. Bad sultans are concerned with the hedonistic pursuit of pleasures, pay no attention to the state affairs and show little interest in religious precepts. Good amirs aid their sultans and exhibit literality to saints and to faqirs; bad amirs are ungrateful and revolt against their masters. The saints and the learned advise rulers and amirs how to perform their duties in harmony with traditional Muslim wisdom while peasants cultivate their land and pay taxes and soldiers defend the society.

The significance of history lies not in human acts but in their relationship to and their expression of God's intentions toward the Muslim community.

Through their choice of material our medieval historians manifest their acceptance of the traditional view

8. Hardy, 1961, p. 126.

that "history can teach by both positive and negative examples. It can teach political leaders how to govern property... it is instructive and edifying ... providing the truth of Islam and correctness of the view of the world expounded by it."⁹ History forms part of "religiously determined structure of the world and society."¹⁰

Each of the Sultans appears to be judged by our historians according to their compliance or non-compliance with Islamic moral norms and his ability or will to follow Muslim precepts of government.¹¹

Another traditional element of medieval historiography is its assumption that history may not only be edifying but that it also provides entertainment for readers;¹² hence our historians produce stories which exhibit "a sense of the dramatic".¹³

Perhaps because the only significant history is the history of the Muslim community, medieval historians demonstrate a traditional lack of attention toward a detailed description of social, economic and financial arrangements and exhibit a "disinclination for facts in all their detail and in all their manifold variety."¹⁴

9. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 411.

10. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 411.

11. Hardy, 1964, pp. 59-63.

12. Rosenthal, 1968, p. 411.

13. This point is elaborated Hardy, 1960, p. 118.

14. Hardy, 1960, p. 115.

Yet, though medieval historians appear to have accepted the tenets of traditional Muslim historiography, the actual events described by them do not seem to corroborate the validity of their interpretation. The world they describe and to which they attempt to apply their historiography is not that of Muslim community at large; it even does not comprise all the Muslims living in the Indian subcontinent.

The story of Muslims in northern India under the Afghan domination was characterized by frequent wars among Muslims. It is difficult to see how God's intentions and guidance of the Muslim community manifested themselves in the way power was achieved, maintained and lost throughout the Afghan period. Strangely enough, knowledge of these facts did not encourage medieval historians to rethink their historiography. They continued to view the activities of the rulers, amirs and scholars as if political fragmentation did not exist and as if Muslims did not fight against each other. God was assumed to act and intervene directly in human history and Sunni precepts of proper government were considered to be binding; and yet medieval historians must have known that rulers came to power through betrayals and through wars against other Muslims and that they continued through their reign to fight and kill other Muslims.

Perhaps medieval historians did not dare to question their historiographical assumptions because of the intimate relationship between historical interpretation and their religious beliefs. Expressions of doubt in the traditional

precepts of historiography might have been a step in the direction of religious heresy. We can perhaps assume that this conflict was resolved through the adoption of a system whereby although the story was told, no morals were drawn. In other words it can perhaps be said that medieval historians engaged in writing a history of Muslims which however was not an Islamic history. Orthodoxy was maintained at the price of intellectual creativity. The issue of relations between moral precepts and political reality was evaded and a facade was maintained to the effect that Muslim community continued to live and to be governed according to eternally valid precepts.

Latent assumptions inherent in the works of modern historians

Medieval

historians of the Afghan period appear to share two traits with 20th century Muslim historians of medieval India. P. Hardy observes that Muslim historiography of medieval India was not an outcome of a "convolution within Muslim culture itself. It is imitative, not original"; it is a "response to western thought as mediated by the British".¹⁵ He also maintains that modern historians of medieval India do not exhibit a real "academic interest in the past ...". Their interest is in "similarity rather than in dissimilarity between past and present."¹⁶

15. Hardy, 1961a, p. 306.

16. Hardy, 1961 a, p. 307.

The use by modern historians of such terms as "absolutism", "autocracy", "feudalism", "chief justice", "bureaucracy", points clearly toward the source of inspiration of their historiographical assumptions i.e., Europe and its political, administrative and judicial developments. Modern historians appear to look for similarities between the developments in Europe and those in Afghan India.

The approach of modern historians is anachronistic as they seem to believe that factors such as "tolerance", "nation", "Hindu-Muslim rapprochement", "Hindu and Muslim communities" played the same part in the political dynamics of 15th and 16th century northern India as they do in modern India. Moreover, modern historians conceive the Afghan period in what appears to be an a-historic mode of thinking: the political dynamics of the Afghan period seem to them to be manifested through a manichean struggle between forces of order and of disorder, of "good" and "evil".

We feel that the fact this type of interpretation has persisted for a comparatively long time calls for an explanation. P. Hardy maintains that modern historians of medieval India tried to justify the activities of Muslims in India. For them "whatever Muslims did in medieval India was right if not in terms of religion then in terms of politics".¹⁷ Though an apology for the past might have been one of the motives for that specific form of interpretation, we must still look for a reason why this framework of thought was offered by 19th century British historians and why it has been maintained since that time.

17. Hardy, 1961a, p. 307.

Perhaps we could suggest that Afghan Sultans acting as "enlightened autocrats" and "legislators", who preside over a centralized bureaucracy and show tolerance to individuals of different creeds are not historical personalities at all but qualities of the British viceroy, the near contemporaries of modern historians, read into the activities of the Afghan rulers. By the same token the "Afghan empire" with its well defined geographical boundaries, its central and provincial governments and a judicial system of courts and courts of appeal may be but a projection into 15th and 16th century northern India of the British empire in India and of its institutions. Behind the apparently historical analysis of 19th and 20th century historians of the Afghan period looms large the issue of the contribution of British rule in India toward the development of the subcontinent. Both British and non-European historians appear to have accepted the view that the characteristics of an ideally good government comprise a centralized bureaucracy, a hierarchic judiciary system and a secular mode of rule. The aim of such government is to attend to the well-being of all subjects, irrespective of their creeds. Whilst British historians maintained that this ideal state came into being during British domination of India, their non-European colleagues have come to believe that the British did no more than continue a system devised long before their arrival to the subcontinent.

Conclusion

It seems to us that because of the nature of the extant historical sources for the Afghan period, their vagueness, dogmatic approach and lack of information in so far as motives of politically active individuals and institutions of government are concerned, and unless new historical sources of a different nature come to light, the student of history, who wishes to understand this period with reference to such categories of human experience as personal motives, alternative choices of action, ambitions, political programmes, social ends, cultural achievements, must remain dissatisfied. P. Hardy's view that "all periods of history are obscure but some are more obscure than others. Among these some, the history of medieval Muslim India from the Ghurid conquest to the Mughal invasion should be numbered."¹⁸ seems to be justified as far as the Afghan period is concerned.

18. Hardy, 1958, p. 181.

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