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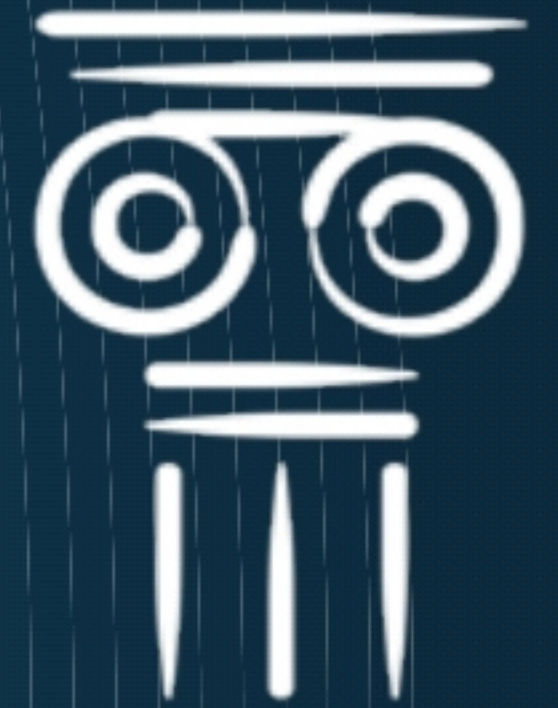
The Mamluks

LESSON 2 OF 2



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MAMLUKS (THE DELHI SULTANATE)

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THE MAMLUK SULTANS

With Qutbuddin Aibak, began the period of Mamluks or the slave dynasty. Mamluk is an Arabic word meaning “owned”. It was used to distinguish the imported Turkish slaves meant for military service from the lower slaves used as domestic labour or artisan.

The Mamluk Sultans ruled from AD 1206 to 1290.

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Qutbuddin Aibak (AD 1206-1210)

- Qutbuddin Aibak was a Turkish slave who had risen to high rank in Muhammad Ghori's army. After Muhammad Ghori's death in AD 1206, the control of his Indian possessions was passed on to Qutbuddin Aibak. Aibak was the first independent Muslim ruler of Northern India, the founder of Delhi Sultanate. Aibak had to face many revolts from Rajputs and other Indian chiefs. Tajuddin Yalduz, the ruler of Ghazni, claimed his rule over Delhi. Nasiruddin Qabacha, the governor of Multan and Uchch aspired for independence. Aibak was able to win over his enemies by conciliatory measures as well as a display of power. He defeated Yalduz and occupied Ghazni.
- The successor of Jaichand of Kanauj, Harishchandra had driven out the Turks from Badayun and Farukhabad. Aibak re-conquered both Badayun and Farukhabad.
- Qutbuddin Aibak was known as "Lakh Baksh" due to his generosity . Most of the scholars consider Aibak as the real founder of Muslim rule in India.
- In AD 1210, Aibak died of injuries received in a fall from his horse while playing chaugan (Polo).

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Itutmish (AD 1210-1236)

- The credit of consolidating the Delhi Sultanate lies largely with him. When Itutmish ascended the throne, he found himself surrounded with many problems. Other commanders of Muhammad Ghorī like Yalduz, Qubacha and Ali Mardan rose in defiance again. Itutmish took up the task of consolidating his position.
- In AD 1226–27 Itutmish sent a large army under his son Nasiruddin Mahmud which defeated Iwaz Khan and brought Bengal and Bihar back into the Delhi Sultanate. Similarly a campaign was also launched against the Rajput chiefs. Ranthambore was captured in AD 1226 and by AD 1231 Itutmish had established his authority over Mandor, Jalore, Bayana and Gwalior.
- There is no doubt that Itutmish completed the unfinished work of Aibak. The Delhi Sultanate now covered a sizeable territory. Besides this, he also organised his trusted nobles or officers into a 'group of Forty' (Turkan-i-Chahalgani). These were Turkish amirs (nobles) who advised and helped the Sultan in administering the Sultanate.
- Itutmish also obtained a 'Letter of Investiture' in AD 1229 from the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad to gain legitimacy.
- He gave the Sultanate two of its basic coins– the silver 'Tanka' and the copper 'Jittal'. To affect greater control over the conquered areas Itutmish granted iqtas (land assignments in lieu of cash salaries) to his Turkish officers on a large scale. The recipients of "iqtas" called the "iqadars" collected the land revenue from the territories under them.
- After the death of Itutmish, 'the group of forty' assumed great power in its hands. For a few years they decided on the selection of Sultans one after the other. The group was finally eliminated by Balban.

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Raziya (AD 1236-40)

- The problem of successor troubled Iltutmish during his last days. Iltutmish did not consider any of his sons worthy of the throne. His own choice was his daughter Raziya hence he nominated her as his successor.
- But after his death his son Ruknuddin Firoz ascended the throne with the help of army leaders. However with the support of the people of Delhi and some military leaders, Raziya soon ascended the throne. Despite her obvious qualities, The nobility realized that, though a woman, Raziya was not willing to be a puppet in their hands, therefore the nobles started revolting against her in the provinces. They accused her of violating feminine modesty and being too friendly to an Abyssinian noble, Yaqut.
- She got killed after she was defeated by the nobles. Thus her reign was a brief one and came to end in AD 1240.

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Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-66 AD)

- The struggle for power between Sultan and the Turkish Chiefs “Chahalgani” which began during the reign of Raziya continued. After Raziya’s death, the power of Chahalgani increased and they became largely responsible for making and unmaking of kings.
- Behram Shah (AD 1240-42) and Masud Shah (AD 1242-46) were made Sultans and removed in succession. After them, in AD 1246, Ulugh Khan (later known as Balban) placed the inexperienced and young Nasiruddin (grandson of Iltutmish) on throne and himself assumed the position of Naib (deputy).
- To further strengthen his position, he married his daughter to Nasiruddin. Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud died in AD 1265. According to Ibn Battuta and Isami, Balban poisoned his master Nasiruddin and ascended the throne.

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Balban (AD 1266-87)

- The struggle between the sultan and the Turkish nobles continued, till one of the Turkish chiefs, Ulugh Khan, known in history by the name of Balban, gradually arrogated all power to himself and finally ascended the throne in AD 1266. Balban was determined to break the power of the Chahalgani.
- To keep himself well informed, Balban appointed spies in every department. He also organised a strong centralized army
- Balban was undoubtedly one of the main architects of the Sultanate of Delhi, particularly of its form of government and institutions. By asserting the power of the monarchy, Balban strengthened the Delhi Sultanate. But even he could not fully defend northern India against the attacks of the Mongols. Moreover, by excluding non-Turkish from positions of power and authority and by trusting only a very narrow racial group he made many people dissatisfied. This led to fresh disturbances and troubles after his death.
- Balban died in AD 1287. After his death the nobles raised his grandson Kaiquabad to the throne. He was soon replaced by his son, Kaimurs, who remained on the throne for a little over three months. During Balban's reign, Firoz had been the warden of the marches in north-west and had fought many successful battles against the Mongols. He was called to Delhi as Ariz-i-Mumalik (Minister of War).
- In AD 1290 Firoz took a bold step by murdering Kaimurs and seized the throne. A group of Khalji nobles led by him established the Khalji dynasty. Some scholars call this event as the 'dynastic revolution' of AD 1290. It brought to an end the so called slave dynasty and Firoz ascended the throne under the title

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Thank you