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# MEDIEVAL INDIA

FROM SULTANAT TO THE MUGHALS

PART ONE  
DELHI SULTANAT:  
(1206-1526)

(REVISED EDITION)

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## PROBLEMS OF A CENTRALISED ALL-INDIA STATE—GHIYASUDDIN AND MUHAMMAD BIN TUGHLAQ (1320-1351)

The last years of Alauddin Khalji were disturbed by a painful disease, and intense struggle for power among the nobles. Malik Kafur, the *malik naib* or vice regent who had the complete confidence of Alauddin, gradually eliminated his opponents, and to clear his way to power had Khizr Khan, the heir apparent, imprisoned and then blinded. After Alauddin's death (1316), Kafur elevated a minor son of Alauddin to the throne, and assumed all powers. But Kafur was overthrown in a month's time, and another son of Alauddin, Mubarak Khalji, ascended the throne. In order to gain popularity, Mubarak Khalji abolished all the agrarian and market control regulations of Alauddin. However, he tried to maintain the position of Alauddin in the Deccan and Gujarat by sending expeditions there. Barani condemns Mubarak Khalji for being a homosexual and a pervert, though these "vices" were not unusual among the Turkish warrior class. The main criticism of Barani was of the sultan giving undue favour to a group of new Muslims, the Baradus, whom he calls "ignoble". The Baradus, who belonged to a warrior caste, forged ahead under their leader, Khusaru Malik, who assassinated the young Sultan, and assumed the throne himself (1320). The Khalji dynasty thus came to an end. Barani accuses the Baradus and their Hindu supporters of starting idol-worship in the palace, of insulting Islam and of strengthening the ways of infidelity day by day. Modern research does not support these charges. The Baradus did not try to monopolize power, and received the support of a sizeable section among the Alai nobility and the Muslims of Delhi. The standard of rebellion against them was raised by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq who

was the warden of the marches against the Mongols, and was an experienced warrior. The Baradus could hardly stand against him in battle, and within two month, they were defeated and dispersed.

The new ruler, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq was, however, destined to rule only for a short time. After setting the administration to order, and appointing his son, Ulugh Khan, to restore the Imperial position in Warangal, and sending a noble to deal with a rebellion in Gujarat, Ghiyasuddin marched on Bengal to reduce it to submission. As is well-known, on his return from the successful campaign, a pavilion erected by his son, Ulugh Khan (Muhammad Tughlaq), to welcome him, crashed and crushed, him to death (1325). Modern research does not support the idea that it was due to an intrigue on the part of the prince, or was the effect of lightning. The crash of the hastily erected building may have been due to the parading of captured elephants.

#### *i. Problems and Approaches*

As has been pointed out in the previous Chapter, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, and his son and successor, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, rejected Alauddin's policy of non-annexation of distant states and of being content with their formal submission and sending tribute regularly. Barani tells us that both Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad bin Tughlaq were highly ambitious. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was not prepared to leave a scrap of territory in India which was not subordinate to him and under his control. Thus, during their rule, the direct control of Delhi was extended to Warangal (Telingana), Mabar (Coromondal), Madurai (Tamil Nadu), and Dvar Samudra (Karnataka) upto the southern tip of India. Whenever a territory was annexed, Muhammad Tughlaq would appoint a set of revenue officials to assess it. It was with their help that the accounts of distant provinces and tracts were audited in the office of the wazir, "in the same (detailed) manner as the villages and towns in the doab." (Barani).

Such a rapid expansion of the directly ruled territories, and such a high degree of centralisation, had their own pitfalls which Muhammad Tughlaq was to realize later.

There are two other aspects which have a bearing on the character of the state with which Barani and other contemporary historians were concerned. The first was the question of the welfare of the people. Though Barani praises Alauddin Khalji for his control of the market and (wrongly) lauds him for crushing the Hin-

us, he criticizes him for his policy of "excessive bloodshed, harsh and tyrannical behaviour, and inflicting hardships on others in order to get his orders obeyed." In contrast to this, he praises Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq for his concern for the welfare of the people and his policy of moderation so that "the country might not be ruined by the weight of taxation, and the way to improvement be barred.. The Hindus were to be taxed so that they might not be blinded by wealth, and so become discontented and rebellious, nor, on the other hand, be so reduced to poverty and destitution as to be unable to pursue their husbandry."

Almost for the first time, we see a recognition of the importance of agriculture and handicrafts on the part of the state, and the need to continuously expand cultivation. Thus, the policy of welfare and humanitarianism put forward by Jalaluddin Khalji was reiterated and sought to be revived by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in a more positive manner. He extended this policy of mildness and generosity to the noble families of the time of Alauddin and his son, Kaiqubad. Many of these were leading lives of poverty and neglect. They were given posts and *iqtas*. The revenue-free lands held by theologians, some of them for long periods, were examined and many of them reduced. Those who had received large sums of money as gifts from the previous regime were called to audit, and most of them forced to return the sums.

Regarding the question of the relationship between state and religion, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, though a strict Muslim in his observance of religious practices such as the regular and public prayers, fasting during the month of Ramazan etc., did not accept the narrow interpretation of the *shara* regarding the humiliation and impoverishment of the Hindus advocated by some theologians. Muhammad Tughlaq also was strict in himself observing the injunctions regarding prayers, fasting etc., and was strict in seeing that others observed them also. He was a learned man, and had a deep understanding of many branches of knowledge such as philosophy, mathematics, *tibb* (medicines), religion etc. He was interested in Persian and Hindi poetry, and had read widely. Barani's criticism, which we may treat as a compliment, was that he was a "rationalist", that is, he would not accept anything except by logical proof. This meant that while he did not reject the essential articles of the Muslim faith, he was not prepared to accept many traditions and practices merely on the basis of faith. Barani accuses Muhammad bin Tughlaq of combining in his person the traditions of prophethood (*nubuwwat*) with sultanat, i.e. of trying to combine

spiritual and political authority. This charge has no basis, except that Muhammad Tughlaq refused to accept the spiritual authority of many theologians and mystics. It might be recalled that Barani also accuses Alauddin Khalji of wanting to set up a new religion, merely because he was not prepared to blindly accept the authority of the *shara*. Though not a believer in mysticism, Muhammad Tughlaq respected the sufi saints, and was the first sultan to visit the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer. He also built mausoleums over the tombs of many sufi saints, including Nizamuddin Auliya at Delhi.

That Muhammad Tughlaq was a man of an open mind, and not a blind dogmatist is also demonstrated by his associating with *jogis*, and Jain saints such as Raj Shekhar and Jinaprabha Suri. While in Gujarat, he visited some of the Jain temples there, and gave them grants. He is also known to have associated himself with some Hindu festivals, such as Holi.

Barani's criticism of Muhammad Tughlaq's faults of character cannot, however, be dismissed out of hand. He is accused of being hot and hasty in character, with an excessive reliance on his own judgement, without heeding the advice of others. Hence, many of his innovations were ill-considered, or launched without "adequate preparations". Barani, and the Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battutah, also accuse Muhammad Tughlaq of giving excessive rewards and punishments, and of appointing mean, low-born people to high offices.

## *ii. Experiments and Reforms*

The problems and approaches we have outlined above should be helpful in understanding the many experiments and reforms which Muhammad bin Tughlaq launched, and for which he is so well-known. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was keen to tone up the administration, and bring about uniformity in its functioning. Towards this end, according to Ibn Battutah, he issued large numbers of orders (*manshurs*). However, only a few of these appear to have been taken up seriously, or to have made an impact. These have been listed by Barani, and may be divided into two: (a) administrative and political measures, and (b) economic and agrarian reforms. Of course, each influenced the other, so that no rigid demarcation can be made between them.

## (a) Administrative and Political Measures: Exodus to Deogiri

One of the most controversial step taken by Muhammad bin Tughlaq early in his reign was his so-called transfer of capital to Deogiri which was renamed Daultabad, and the alleged orders of the sultan ordering a mass transfer of the people from Delhi to the new capital. A careful analysis of the contemporary and later sources show that Barani grossly exaggerated when he alleges that the steps led to the ruination of Delhi which, till then, had equalled the leading cities of the Islamic world, Cairo and Baghdad. Some others have alleged that the step was taken by the sultan to punish the people of Delhi who had become hostile to him. However, there is evidence that the step was not taken by Muhammad bin Tughlaq in a pique, but was the result of considerable thought, and had been carefully prepared for.

The motive of the step taken by the sultan has been set out by Barani himself, viz. that it was central to all parts of the empire. As we have seen, during the reign of Ghiyasuddin and the early years of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the direct rule of Delhi had been extended to cover almost the entire south. Since the days of Alauddin, Deogiri had been the virtual base of operations in the Deccan. Muhammad bin Tughlaq had spent a number of years in the south, both as a prince and as a ruler, campaigning, and was familiar with Deogiri which had a pleasant climate, being surrounded by hills. He wanted to have a second capital in the south so that he could control it more easily. According to a 17th century author, Ferishta, some of the councillors of the sultan suggested Ujjain in Malwa which had been made his capital by Raja Vikramaditya for the same reason. But the sultan preferred Deogiri, both because he was more familiar with it, and because it was already one of the great cities of India.

The decision to make Deogiri a second capital was apparently taken in 1327 when Muhammad bin Tughlaq passed Deogiri after his journey to the Karnataka to suppress the rebellion of his cousin, Gurshasp. In preparation for the new step, he planted trees on both sides of the road and at a distance of every two miles (a *karon*) set up halting stations. Provision was made for food and drink being available for the travellers at the station. Land was allotted from the income of which the staff working there could draw their salaries. We are told that at each station, a sufi saint was stationed, and a *khanqah* (hospice for the saint) built. Soon afterwards the sultan's mother was sent to Deogiri or Daultabad. The sultan's mother

was accompanied by many nobles, leading men of the city, and the entire royal house-hold including slaves, servants, and treasures. Sometime afterwards, the sultan summoned all the sufis,<sup>1</sup> ulema and grandees of Delhi. This is placed in the year 1328-29.

It is clear that no mass exodus of the population at Delhi was ordered. However, it seems that a good deal of pressure was exerted upon the people to migrate, the royal orderlies even inspecting their houses for the purpose. Those travelling to Daultabad were divided into caravans for purposes of convenience. The journey was long, and undertaken during the hot months, so that many people died on the way. Full preparations had been made for welcoming those who reached Daultabad. The city had been divided into wards (*mohallas*), with separate quarters for troops, the nobles, the civil servants, the judges and the learned men, the merchants and artisans. Mosques, markets, public baths etc. were built in each mohalla. The Sultan purchased the houses and dwelling of those at Delhi who had migrated and wanted the government to do so. Liberal grants were made to people, both at the time of their departure at Delhi and at their arrival at Daultabad where free boarding and lodging was provided to them.

Nevertheless, most of the migrants were not happy. They had got used to Delhi where many of them had lived for more than a hundred years, and which they regarded as their home. That many of the Turks had started looking upon India with love and affection is obvious from the writings of the poet, Amir Khusrau. For them, Daultabad was an alien land, full of infidels.

Meanwhile, Delhi was not deserted. Coins struck at Delhi, two Sanskrit inscriptions in *baolis* (sunken wells with steps) built by some wealthy Hindus in the environs of Delhi at this time prove it. But, we are told, many of the houses had been shut up, and the bad characters in the city started looting them. Hence, Muhammad bin Tughlaq invited sufis, learned men and others living in neighbouring cities to move to Delhi. In 1334, when Ibn Battutah visited Delhi, it was fully settled.

Nor was there any question of the capital being shifted from Delhi. Rather, Daultabad became a second capital, as coins struck at Daultabad testify. However, the Sultan's ambitious project soon struck a reef. In 1334-35, there was a serious rebellion in Mabar (modern

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1. The author, Yahya bin Sirhindi, says all the Saiyyids and sufis (mystics). But Ibn Battutah tells us that all sufis were called Saiyyids in the Delhi Sultanat.

Coromandal in Tamilnadu). The sultan marched to the south to suppress the rebellion. While he was at Bidar, there was an outbreak of bubonic plague in which many of his soldiers perished. Muhammad Tughlaq himself was taken ill, and retreated to Daultabad. Rumors spread of the sultan's death, and soon the entire south, including Mabbar, Dwar-Samudra (Karnataka), and Warangal (Telingana) were lost to the Delhi sultanat. Thus the *raison d'être* of keeping Daultabad as a second capital disappeared. It was around this time, i.e. between 1335-37, that the Sultan permitted the people at Daultabad to return to Delhi.

Thus, the exodus to Daultabad proved to be a costly failure, and brought misery to many people. However, its effects were felt largely by the upper classes, not by the people of Delhi. It is not clear why Muhammad bin Tughlaq ordered the sufis, clergymen and the learned people to migrate to Daultabad. Perhaps he felt that he or the state could not function in an atmosphere where mystics and men of Islamic learning were not present. He might also have felt that by their example, the sufis and the men of learning would spread Islam, and the hold of the sultan there become more secure. Whatever may have been his motives, one long-term effect of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's exodus to Daultabad was that many of the sufis and men of learning decided to stay back at Daultabad, so that in course of time it became a centre of Islamic learning. But the beneficiaries of this were not the sultans of Delhi, but the Bahmani rulers who established their rule in the area soon afterwards.

### **The Khurasan and Karachil Expeditions**

Although the Khurasan and Karachil expeditions, and the recruitment of a large army by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, are mentioned by Barani separately, we may take them together as they were interconnected.

The Khurasan expedition was closely connected to events in Central and West Asia, and with Muhammad bin Tughlaq's desire to make Sindh and the Punjab safe at all times from the danger of recurrent Mongol invasions. After the death of Chingez Khan, one branch of his descendants, the Chaghtai branch, had dominated Turkistan and Transoxiana, while another branch, led by Halaku, had captured Iran, Iraq etc. Ghur, Ghazni, Afghanistan etc. which provided access to India was a bone of contention between the two. However, both the branches were in decay at this time, the conditions in Transoxiana being unsettled after the death of Tarmashirin



whose invasion of India in 1326-27 has been mentioned earlier. We are told that Muhammad bin Tughlaq wanted to overthrow the descendants of Chingez. Khurasan was used vaguely to describe the area, and Barani adds Iraq and sometimes Trans-oxiana to it. To realise his objective, Muhammad bin Tughlaq invited and gave lavish grants to some of the leading men of those areas. He also raised a large army of 370,000 soldiers. They were paid by the grant of *iqtas* but, Barani says, no care was taken about enforcing the brand of the horses, or the description of the soldiers, or testing their swordsmanship. They were kept idle for a year, and then dispersed since it was not possible to pay them any longer.

The rapid raising of the army and its nature suggests that it was not meant to be a major enterprise, and perhaps only aimed at extending the sultan's control over Kabul, Ghazni, etc. Muhammad bin Tughlaq's interest in the area is shown by the fact that after the failure of Tarmashirin's invasion (1326-27), he frequently sent money to the government of Ghazni, and almost took the qazi of Ghazni into his pay, a fact which Barani deploras. However, conditions were not ripe even for this limited enterprise, and hence it was abandoned.

The Qarachil expedition (1333) is placed soon after the Khurasan expedition. This expedition was apparently aimed at the Kulu-Kangra region of Himachal. However, Barani quite wrongly links it to the Khurasan expedition and says that its conquest would have enabled him to capture horses (from Turkistan), and provide an easier road to Transoxiana! Some later writers, such as Badayuni and Ferishta, call it the expedition to China and Himachal. Medieval ideas of geography were very vague, and these historians thought that Khitai or old China was just across the Himalayas. As it was, the expedition proved a failure. The commander of the Delhi armies advanced too far into the mountains so that his retreat was cut off by the defending forces, and almost the entire army of 10,000 was destroyed. However, this expedition was not a total failure because, after some time, the ruler of the area patched up a treaty with Muhammad bin Tughlaq, agreeing to pay him a certain sum of money for the use of the territory lying at the foot hills. He also accepted the sultan's overlordship.

#### **(b) Economic and Agrarian Reforms**

*Token currency:* One of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's ambition was to reform the coinage and, according to a modern historian, Dr.

Ishwari Prasad, from his mints in different parts of the empire, various kinds of coins were issued which were unequalled in the artistic perfection of their design, execution and finish. An experiment which Muhammad bin Tughlaq launched after the exodus to Deogiri in 1329-30, was the token currency which has been little understood and much condemned.

He issued coins of copper and brass which were to exchange as equal with silver and gold. The idea of a token currency is known to everyone in the modern world, but it was a novelty in medieval times. However, it was not a totally new thing. Paper currency in China was known. The Mughal ruler, Kublai Khan, had introduced in the first year of his reign in 1260 a paper currency called the *chan* which had lasted throughout his reign till his death in 1294. It had been accepted by everyone including foreign traders. This fact was widely known, and it is referred to by Barani to explain the background of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's action.<sup>1</sup> Later, in 1294, an Iranian king, Qai Katu, had tried to introduce the paper *chan* in his country, but it had led to serious disturbances, and had to be discontinued after eight days.

There has been a great deal of controversy regarding the motives of the sultan in introducing the token currency. According to Barani, it was part of his ambition to conquer all the inhabited quarters of the world for which a huge army was needed and a large treasury to pay them. Thus, it was for the purpose of supplementing the treasury. But Barani contradicts himself when he goes on to say that the sultan's treasury had been exhausted by his reckless grant of gifts and awards. However, shortage of gold and silver could not have been a major reason for the step because, when the experiment failed, the sultan called in the token coins, and paid gold and silver in exchange for them.

The experiment failed largely because the sultan was unable to prevent forging of the new coins. Barani in his picturesque language says that the 'house of every Hindu became a mint'. Perhaps, what he implied was that the gold-smiths who were Hindus knew how to make alloys of copper and brass coins, and did so. The state suffered a big loss because the *khuts* and *muqaddams* in the rural areas paid the land-revenue in the copper and brass coins, and purchased arms and horses with the same currency. Soon, there was such an abundance of these new coins that their value depre-

1. This is referred to in the Rampur copy of Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*. In the later revised edition which became popular, this reference is omitted.

ciated rapidly and they became "as worthless as stones and potsherds". Trade and commerce began to be disrupted. Hence, in anger, Muhammad bin Tughlaq cancelled his orders, and redeemed the token coins by gold and silver coins. This could have been done only for the coins issued from the royal mints. The token coins issued by Muhammad bin Tughlaq were both in copper and brass. None of the earlier sultans had issued any coins in brass which was an alloy of copper with tin and zinc etc. According to an eminent modern historian, Professor Muhammad Habib, Muhammad bin Tughlaq had issued coins of bronze which had distinct inscriptions in Persian and Arabic to mark the new coins. Confusion arose because ordinary people could not easily distinguish between these and the forged coins. The forged coins brought by people for redemption, but not accepted by the government, lay heaped in mounds outside the fort for a long time.

The experiment if successful, would have led to an expansion of India's trade and commerce because there was a world wide shortage of silver at the time. This is reflected in the reduction of the silver content of the tanka by Muhammad bin Tughlaq from 178 to 140 grains early in his reign. The failure of the token currency must certainly have affected the treasury adversely. But it was not too serious a blow, or upset public life. It was given up by 1333, three years after its introduction. Thus, no issues of the token coins are available after 732 *hijri* or 1332-33. The token coins are not mentioned by Ibn Battutah who came to Delhi in 1334. This shows that the the entire episode had been speedily forgotten.

### Agrarian Reforms

The failure of these three experiments—the exodus to Deogiri, the failure of the Khurasan expedition, and the withdrawal of the token currency as also the disastrous result of the Karchil campaign must have affected the public reputation of the Sultan, as also his treasury. However, the resources of the empire were still vast, and the loss to the treasury must have been quickly made up. But it seems to have encouraged the practice of letting out big tracts of land on revenue-farming terms (*muqata*)—a development to which we shall revert later on.

Meanwhile, certain agrarian measures of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, epidemics, and a famine which lasted for six to seven years and affected large parts of the *doab* and Malwa, created serious public distress, and a widespread peasant uprising.

We are told that Ghiyasuddin had replaced Alauddin's system of measurement for the fields by sharing of the produce. This was advantageous to the peasant because it made allowance for a total or partial failure of crops. According to Barani, the Sultan's policy was that increase in the incidence of taxation was to be gradual, and such that it did not affect the prosperity of the peasantry. Instructions were issued to the officials to see that cultivation increased from year to year, and that the revenue also increased proportionately. We do not know what he actually charged from the cultivators, but there seems no reason to believe that he reduced it to one-fifth, as argued by some modern historians.

When Muhammad bin Tughlaq came to the throne, he attempted a substantial increase in the scale of the land-revenue demanded from the cultivators. Barani says that he increased it from "one to ten or one to twenty". This was only a figure of speech, and should not be taken literally to mean either increase from ten to twenty times, or one in ten or twenty, i.e. ten to five per cent. Barani elsewhere uses the words "one to hundred", or "one to thousand" to convey a sense of considerable increase. We are told that new cesses were levied, and the old cesses—grazing tax (*charai*), and house (*ghari*) tax were collected in a rigorous manner, the cattle being branded and the houses counted. Worse, when assessing the yield of a field, not the actual produce, but the standard yield was taken into account. Further, when commuting the state's share into cash, not the actual but the officially assumed prices were used.

These measures, we are told, led to the destruction of the peasantry and to an agrarian uprising which affected a large area near Delhi and the *doab*. Barani says that the Hindus, i.e. the peasants set fire to the grain heaps, and drove away cattle from their homes. Thus, "Whole regions were devastated. Cultivation was totally abandoned." The Sultan adopted the usual methods to suppress rebellion. Thus, *shiqdars* and *faujdars* (revenue collectors and military officials) were ordered to lay waste and plunder the country. In consequence, many of the *khuts* and *muqaddams* were killed, or took refuge in forests. The Sultan's troops surrounded the jungles and killed everyone whom they found within the jungle. Thus, the entire area from Kannauj to Dalmau was laid waste.

The range and extent of this agrarian rebellion need some explanation for we must remember that Alauddin Khalji had raised the land revenue in the *doab* to half, given no concessions to the *khuts* and *muqaddams*, and insisted on measurement which put the cultivators in a position of disadvantage when the rains failed, wholly

or partially. Yet the *khuts* and *muqaddams*, or the peasants had not risen in rebellion. Fear of drastic punishment by Alauddin is no answer, for Muhammad bin Tughlaq was no less severe. Even if we imagine that Barani exaggerated, as he often does, the reality of a wide-spread peasant rebellion cannot be denied. Does it mean that Muhammad bin Tughlaq had, in effect, raised the land revenue to more than half, the share demanded by Alauddin? If that was so, Barani, who was critical of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, would have said so. A possible explanation is that unlike Alauddin, Muhammad bin Tughlaq was not able to keep a tight control over the local revenue officials. Hence, in the name of realising the standard produce on the basis of officially accepted prices, many of them must have indulged in gross oppressions. Barani says, when peasants of distant regions heard of the ruin and destruction of the peasantry, and fearful that the same orders may be applied to them, they also rose in rebellion. However, this may have been an exaggeration for we do not hear that the rebellion spread to areas outside the *doab*.

Barani says that the contraction of cultivation in the *doab*, the ruin of its peasantry, the reduction in the number of grain-carriers (*banjaras*), and the failure of the grains to reach Delhi led to a famine. The rains, too, failed. Hence, the prices of grains rose very high.

To cope with the famine, relief camps were opened at Delhi, food-grains arriving from Awadh where there was no famine. Muhammad Tughlaq also advanced agricultural loans (*sondhar*) to dig wells and to buy seed and implements.

It seems that the famine began in 1334-35 and lasted for seven years. During this period, Muhammad bin Tughlaq found that the atmosphere of Delhi had become pestilential. Hence, the entire imperial camp moved to a place on the Ganges 80 kms away. This place was called Swarga-dwar ("Gateway to Heaven"), and the Sultan lived there for two years, food-grains being dispatched to him from Awadh. Many notable people from Delhi also moved to the areas where there was no famine.

After returning from Swarga-dwar, Muhammad Tughlaq conceived of a grand design to extend and improve cultivation. A Diwan called '*Diwan-i-Amir-i-Kohi*' was set up to take charge of a territory 30 *kroh* by 30 *kroh* (roughly 100 kms, by 100 kms). He planned to extend cultivation in the area so that "one span of land would not remain uncultivated." The intention was to bring barren (*banjar*) land under cultivation, not uncultivable (*usar*) land, as Barani asserts. Simultaneously, whatever was being cultivated would be improved.

In the words of Barani, "thus wheat would be sown instead of barley, and sugarcane instead of wheat", and "grape and date would be planted instead of sugarcane."

Thus, the scheme had two aspects; one, to extend cultivation, and second, to improve the crops. Both would have led to the realisation of higher land-revenue. To implement the scheme, 100 *shiqadar* were appointed. They were honoured, and given horses, and large sums of money for giving agricultural loans (*sondhar*). We are told that in this way, 70 lakh tankas and more were advanced by way of *sondhar*. Afif, who wrote in the time of Firuz Tughlaq, puts this figure still higher, at two crores.

Barani says that the entire scheme failed, and during three years, not a thousandth or hundredth part of wasteland was brought under cultivation. He ascribes this to the fact that the persons chosen to implement the scheme were incompetent. He calls them "greedy, impecunious men, without hope of salvation." Apparently, they had no understanding of local conditions, and spent the money meant on loans for their own expenses and needs.

If Muhammad bin Tughlaq had come back from his Gujarat expedition after suppressing the rebellion there, these men would have had to pay a heavy price. However, Muhammad bin Tughlaq died, and his successor, Firuz Tughlaq, wrote off the loans.

Nevertheless, the scheme cannot be called a total failure. The idea of extending and improving cultivation with the help of agricultural loans became a standard practice with later sultans, and became a part of the agricultural policy of the Mughals. Thus, both Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq helped in the evolution of an agrarian policy which matured fully under the Mughals.

### *iii. Rebellions and Changes in the Ruling Class*

In order to present the image of a ruler who was confused, went from one project to another which emptied his treasures, and the consequent discontent and outbreak of rebellions which the sultan was unable to control, Barani has lumped together all the rebellions which took place in Muhammad bin Tughlaq's vast empire during a period of 26 years. However, in order to assess the true extent of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's successes and failures, we may divide his reign into three unequal parts, the first two consisting of ten years each, and the third of the remaining five to six years of his reign.

During the first phase (1224-35), Muhammad bin Tughlaq was engaged in consolidating the vast kingdom he had inherited. The only expansion was the conquest of Kampil in south Karnataka following Muhammad bin Tughlaq's march to crush the rebellion of his cousin, Gurshasp. There were rebellions in Multan and Lakhnauti, which were crushed. There was also a rebellion in Sindh (Sehwan) which was brought under control after some time. Despite the failure of his schemes of exodus to Deogiri, Khurasan and Karchil expeditions, and the token currency experiment, the Sultan's prestige remained high, as Ibn Battutah testifies. According to him, the ruler of Delhi was one of the four most powerful rulers of the world at that time, the other three being China, Iraq and the king of Uzbeks.

The second decade (1236-45) began badly with a rebellion in Mabar, and famine in the doab. The failure of the Mabar campaign where epidemic played a role, led to the loss of all the other southern states. Bengal was also lost. The Sultan made little effort to recover these distant areas, either because he lacked the resources in men and money, or because he felt that the control and direct administration of these areas from Delhi was an impossible task in the given circumstances. The only area which he considered important, and to which he held on to was Daultabad.

During the period, there were a series of rebellions in north India, and also in the Daultabad region which can be linked either to the discontent of the old nobles, or grasping revenue policies. What are called the *sadah* nobles also became disaffected during this period. Perhaps, the most important rebellion of the old nobles was by Ainul Mulk, who had been a close friend and associate of the Sultan, and been made governor of Awadh. He had provided the sultan with provisions while at Swarga-Dwar and had suppressed a rebellion at Kara (near Allahabad). Muhammad Tughlaq became suspicious of the growing popularity of Ainul Mulk who had also given shelter to some revenue defaulters. Hence, he issued orders for his transfer to Daultabad, which was the occasion of the rebellion. Although Muhammad bin Tughlaq ultimately pardoned Ainul Mulk, the conflict showed the deep division between the Indian and foreign elements. Ainul Mulk was an Indian, and the bulk of the forces of the wazir who was an enemy of Ainul Mulk were foreigner—Persians, Turks and Khurasanis. These divisions were aggravated further because Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave great patronage to foreigners whom he called "*aziz*" or friend, (*pl. aizza*) and to whom he gave lavish gifts.

Among the foreigners to whom Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave patronage were Mongols. Many of these had come to India as soldiers or lower grade officials. The lower grade officers came to be called *sadah*. *Sadah* or hundred (centurian) was the term used in the Mongol military for one who commanded a hundred men. But in India, the word *sadah* began to be used as a territorial divisions, to signify a hundred villages. This, apparently, was the basis of the pargana which emerges as an administrative unit around this time. The *sadah* amirs were, however, not all Mongols. Afghans and others were also to be found among them.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq's approach towards the nobility was, however, not based on racial, or on narrow religious considerations. He welcomed not only those families which had been settled in India for long, and had served previous rulers but also admitted to the service persons from the artisan or other classes/castes despised by the Turks, such as gardeners, barbers, cooks, weavers, wine-distillers, musicians, etc. Some of these were converts, and some were Hindus. Thus, Barani mentions Kishan Bazran Indri who was made governor of Sehwan (Sindh). Barani says that these people were given high status, offices and territories to govern. Thus, Najba, a singer, was given charge of Badaun, then Gujarat and Multan; Aziz Khammar, a wine-distiller, was given charge of Malwa. Their elevations to high posts was deeply resented by the old nobles, and by the *aizza*. It is not that these people were incompetent, or were still carrying on their old family/caste professions. They had evidently risen on the basis of merit. But they were not soldiers. Hence, they failed whenever they had to deal with rebellions. Barani not only severely criticises Muhammad bin Tughlaq for appointing these low, ignoble people, but pours scorn on "the clerks and grain-merchants (*bania*) who could not distinguish the front (reins and accoutrements) of a horse from its tail."

Thus, Muhammad bin Tughlaq's nobility was very heterogeneous in character, and could not be an instrument on which the sultan could lean in times of difficulty. Even though the low-caste appointees, and many Turkish and Hindustani nobles, remained loyal, the Mongol and Afghan *sadah* amirs behaved differently. Muhammad bin Tughlaq also tried to induct into the administration members of the religious classes, especially the sufis. Towards this end, he even entered into matrimonial relations with some of them. However, most of the sufis wanted to keep aloof from the state, and did not welcome this. In anger, Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave drastic punishments and executed some of them. Barani says that he put



many theologians (*ulema*), shaikhs, saiyyads, sufis and *qalandars* (wandering saints) to death. In retaliation, and for his association with the *yogis* etc., the qazis issued a *fatwa* making it legal for anyone to rebel against the Sultan. In order to counter this propaganda, Muhammad bin Tughlaq decided to seek a formal rescript from the Caliph, making his rule legal in the eyes of the orthodox. He found out that a relation of the Caliph of Baghdad who had been killed by Halaku, the Mongol chief, in 1258, was living at Cairo. Representatives of the Caliph, and a descendant of his, reached Delhi in 1339, and were given a lavish reception. Muhammad bin Tughlaq went so far as to substitute the name of the Abbasid caliph in his coins. Later, he also received a formal rescript (*manshur*) from the Caliph. But all this could hardly change the attitude of the orthodox elements towards him.

Some of the rebellions which took place during this period, such as the one at Kara, and another at Bidar, was because the Sultan had given the area on contract (*muqata*) to some persons on the basis of their promising large sums of money which, however, they failed to collect from the peasants. In the process, they tried to squeeze the local officials or the *sadah*. Rebellions in Malwa and Gujarat later on were also connected to this phenomenon.

Despite the Sultan's concern with these repeated rebellions, they were contained. The Sultan remained at Delhi during this period. That his prestige remained high is shown by the embassies he received during this period from leading countries, such as China, Egypt, Khurasana, Iraq, Transoxiana, and even some African countries.

It was during the third phase (1346-51), that a series of rebellions broke out at Kulbarga and Malwa. A more serious rebellion broke out later at Gujarat, and at Bidar by Hasan Kangu. Muhammad bin Tughlaq decided to lead in person the campaign against Gujarat because of its economic and strategic importance, although the rebellion was led by low grade *sadah* amirs. In his absence, Daultabad was lost and the Bahmani kingdom born. Muhammad bin Tughlaq remained in Gujarat for two-and-a-half years, spending the later years campaigning in Saurashtra and then moving to Thatta (lower Sindh) in pursuit of the rebel, Taghi, a former slave of his, who had been given shelter by the Jam of Thatta. Amazingly, in this rather futile campaign, he accepted the help of 5000 Mongols sent by Altun Bahadur, the ruler of Transoxiana. Muhammad bin Tughlaq died before reaching Thatta. Meanwhile, a council of regency set up by him functioned at Delhi. There were no rebellions in the north during the Sultan's prolonged absence.

Despite his many limitations, Muhammad bin Tughlaq bequeathed a large empire with a functioning administration to his successor. While his rash and hasty temperament, his suspicious nature, and giving excessive punishments added to his difficulties, his main problems arose from an empire which had become too large, and in which he tried to impose a uniform and highly centralized system of administration. Some of his experiments and reforms also had a long term significance. His experiment with a token currency was a bold step, but one which was much beyond his time. He did, however, indicate a direction for agricultural expansion and growth. Finally, he tried to take the first faltering steps towards a composite ruling class consisting of Hindus and Muslims. Even more importantly, he tried to rise above the narrow limitations of caste, inducting into service not only people of land-owning classes, but men belonging to low, or artisan classes.