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978-1-107-45659-4 - The Life and Times of: Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna

Muḥammad Nāzīm

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*The Life and Times of*  
SULṬĀN  
MAḤMŪD OF GHAZNA

BY

MUḤAMMAD NĀẒIM

M.A., PH.D. (CANTAB.)

*With a Foreword*

BY

THE LATE

SIR THOMAS ARNOLD

والله هو المحمود

*God alone is the Glorified (al-Maḥmūd)*

Signature of Sulṭān Maḥmūd

*Mujmalu't-Tawārikh*, f. 279 b

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*To*

*My Esteemed Teacher & Friend*

PROFESSOR REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON

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## FOREWORD

AMONG the finest products of the literary activity of the Indian Muhammadans has been their historical literature. It includes such noteworthy contributions to autobiographical self-revelation as the *Futūḥāt-i-Fīrūẓ Shāhī*, and the *Tūẓuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, the numerous contemporary chronicles by court historians, as well as the comprehensive works compiled in a more critical spirit by later writers. This literary tradition has been revived in recent years by a new school of historians—men acquainted with modern methods of research, trained to weigh evidence and arbitrate between conflicting points of view. A number of valuable contributions to historical science have been published by this younger group of Indian historians, and the present work will give to its author an honourable place among them. None of his predecessors has ventured to write the separate memoir of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna. The difficulties that have hitherto faced the student of the reign of this great conqueror may be illustrated by the bewildering account of his expeditions into India which Sir Henry M. Elliot appended to the second volume of *The History of India as told by its own Historians*. Considerable courage was needed to undertake such a task, and the competent reader will at once recognise the excellent character of the achievement, for no such extensive survey has hitherto been attempted and the sources drawn upon have included a large number of hitherto unpublished manuscripts. As practically the

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whole of Sulṭān Maḥmūd's life was taken up with fighting, a recital of his various campaigns must necessarily constitute a large part of the task of his biographer, and Dr Muḥammad Nāẓim, in order to give a clear and intelligible account of these campaigns, has adopted the admirable device of putting them in their geographical setting, thus enabling the reader to follow the progress of the contending armies free from the confusion which a rigidly chronological sequence of events would have implied, while the demands of such a purely temporal order of events are satisfied by the detailed summary which he has provided in his Appendix N.

For the student of Indian history, Dr Muḥammad Nāẓim's book will not only shed light upon a hitherto obscure period in the annals of that country, but will clear up many confusions and misunderstandings, to the discussion of which his Appendices and many of his notes are devoted. To a wider circle of readers the work should prove of interest as coming from the pen of a modern enlightened Muhammadan scholar who defends the subject of his memoir from the accusation of fanaticism, so commonly connected with his name.

T. W. ARNOLD

## PREFACE

IN these days sober students of history busy themselves with the problems of social, economic and political evolution of nations rather than with tiresome stories of wars and battles; but there are some wars which will always command an absorbing interest because of their far-reaching consequences, and some of the wars of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, particularly his expeditions to India, are assuredly deserving of such interest. He was the first sovereign to give practical shape to the idea of a Muslim empire in India. The flood-gates of the north-western passes, which were opened by his victorious armies, continued for centuries to pour down streams of Muslim invaders into the plains of India, till the tide of their conquest was stemmed by the advent of the English.

Notwithstanding the numerous scattered notices of Sulṭān Maḥmūd in modern historical works, he has not so far received due attention from Oriental scholars. This book, which was originally presented as a thesis for the Degree of Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge, is intended to supply the desideratum to some extent; and though it does not profess to be exhaustive, an attempt has been made in it to sift and arrange the huge mass of material relating to the period of the Sulṭān, to give an accurate and impartial study of his life and work, to determine the exact chronology of his reign, to identify localities captured by him, to construct an outline of his system of administration, to exonerate

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## PREFACE

him from the charge of fanaticism so often levelled against him, and to show that his wars in India were not the haphazard movements of a predatory warrior but were the result of a well-considered programme of conquest and annexation. I have based the account on trustworthy authorities, and have scrupulously excluded from it anything that could not be authenticated. Consequently numerous details that have been passed off as established facts have been omitted. As I believe that most of the modern historians and critics of Sulṭān Maḥmūd possessed only a superficial knowledge of his career, I have not considered it worth while to enter into lengthy discussions of their arguments, and have contented myself with drawing attention in the foot-notes to some of their most obvious mistakes.

I have not dealt with the literary history of the period of the Sulṭān, partly because the subject is so vast that it requires detailed and exclusive study, and partly because much has already been done in this direction by eminent scholars like the late Professor E. G. Browne, Shamsu'l-'Ulamā Mawlavī Muḥammad Shibli Nu'mānī, and Professor Maḥmūd Khān Shīrānī.

In the transliteration of Arabic and Persian words, I have adopted the system approved by the Oriental Congress of 1894 and recommended by the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society of London. I have followed the same system in writing place-names, but I have retained the familiar spellings of such well-known places as Delhi, Lahore, Jhelum, Muttra, Kanauj, etc. Certain inconsistencies will, however, be observed in the transliteration of Sanskrit and Hindī names but I hope they are not such as to mislead the reader. In

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converting Ḥijra dates, I have followed the extremely useful tables entitled *An Indian Ephemeris* by L. D. Swamikannu, Dīwān Bahādur (Government Press, Madras, 1922).

In the preparation of the Map which is intended to give roughly the extent of the empire of Sulṭān Maḥmūd, I have largely drawn upon the material collected in the *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* by Guy Le Strange, but I have omitted the names of places which could not be identified, or for the position of which sufficient indication was not given by Oriental geographers.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor Reynold A. Nicholson for kindly looking through the book and suggesting numerous improvements. To his profound scholarship and extensive reading I am indebted for much information that would otherwise have remained unknown to me. My sincere thanks are also due to Dr U. M. Daudpota, Principal of the Sind Madrasah, Karachi, and Mawlavī Badru'd-Dīn, Lecturer in the Muslim University, 'Alīgarh, for valuable help in elucidating abstruse Arabic passages, to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press for undertaking the publication of the work, and to the Secretary of the Press for the courtesy with which he received and carried out my frequent suggestions and alterations.

M. NĀẒIM

10th March, 1930