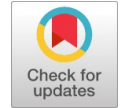


Mongol Invasions During the Reign of Alauddin Khalji: The Role of Zafar Khan



Syed Bashir Hasan

Abstract: *Mongols had been a constant problem for the Sultans of Delhi. During Alauddin Khalji's reign, there were in all six major invasions. The Sultan took strong action against them. His brave general, Zafar Khan, who had become a terror for them gave strong resistance to them. While fighting with them at Kili, Zafar Khan lost his life. This brave general displayed great sense of loyalty for the Sultan as well as for his country by rejecting a greater rank offered by the Mongol general in his country.*

Keywords: *Mongols, Delhi Sultanate, Khalji, Army, Kotwal, Battle Plan, Route.*

I. INTRODUCTION

For the Sultans of Delhi, the north-west frontier had been a constant problem. Mongols had been a threat to them since 1221. The policy of the Sultans of Delhi towards the Mongol problem kept on changing from time to time according to the political situation of the Sultanate of Delhi. While the Sultanate was in its initial stage of establishment, Ilutush adopted the policy of aloofness, later his successor Razia resorted to some sort of appeasement policy and when the Sultanate of Delhi was firmly established, the Sultans of Delhi began to show strong resistance. With the coming of Balban on the throne, the phase of strong resistance began. Balban posted his son, Prince Muhammad at Multan to defend the frontier. During his reign, the Mongols were interrupted on the frontier region and their incursions were repulsed vigorously. Alauddin Khalji gave strong resistance. The Mongols suffered heavy losses during his reign. During the reign of Alauddin Khalji, there were in all six major invasions of the Mongols and their target became Delhi. The Mongols had to face stronger resistance and offensive of the Delhi army during his reign. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the role of Zafar Khan, Alauddin Khalji's brave general who had become a great terror to the Mongols, in fighting and driving away the Mongols from the territories of the Sultanate of Delhi.

Alauddin Khalji's new established rule had not been even stabilized when in AH 696 (1296-97), the second year of his accession, he experienced the first Mongol inroad into his territory. Dawa, the ruler of Mawar-un Nahr, sent an army of one lakh Mongol soldiers under the command of Kadar.[1]

The invading army crossed the river Sind and entered the territory of the Sultanate of Delhi. When Alauddin Khalji came to know of the Mongol invasion, he sent his brother Ulugh Khan along with Zafar Khan against the Mongols. The imperial army encountered the Mongols in the environs of Jalandhar. In this battle, the Mongols were badly defeated. About twenty thousand Mongols were killed and the Delhi commanders sent their heads to the capital. A large number of the Mongols were also captured in this battle.[2] This victory of the imperial army not only enhanced the prestige of Alauddin Khalji but also established reputation of Zafar Khan as a brave general against the Mongols.

In the third year of Alauddin Khalji's accession when the Sultan's two commanders Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan were engaged in the Gujarat campaign, the Mongols attacked again. This time the Mongol army led by Saldi and his brother[3] had captured Siwisan (modern Sehwan). Since Zafar Khan had already established his bravery against the Mongol army headed by Kadar, Alauddin assigned the task of dealing with the Mongols to him again who was posted as governor of Samana. Zafar Khan with a large army marched to Siwistan and laid siege of the fort which had been occupied by the Mongols. The Mongols began constant barraging of arrows from inside on the besiegers but the valiant Zafar Khan displayed great courage. He did not even use manjaniqs. Instead, he used ladders and other equipments to enter into the fort. The intrepid Zafar Khan entered the fort and conquered it by attacking the Mongols with swords and arrows. Saldi and his brother and all other Mongols who were captured were sent along with their women and children in fetters and chains to the capital. Zafar Khan's valiant generalship in this campaign against the Mongols leading to the Delhi army's victory created terror in the hearts of the Mongols. Barani says that at this moment, Sultan Alauddin also became jealous of Zafar Khan's bravery and began to see him as a second Rustam in India. The Sultan's brother Ulugh Khan, having false pride of his bravery, also had a strong feeling of hostility towards Zafar Khan.[4]

Alauddin Khalji did not get a long respite from the Mongol invasions. Towards the close of the third year of Alauddin Khalji's accession, the Mongols set out for Hindustan again. Qutlugh Khwaja, son of Zud-ul Ain (perhaps Dawa) with an army of 20 tumans [5] (200,000 soldiers) began his march from Mawar-un Nahr with preparations for a severe contest. The Mongol army crossed the river Indus and marched quickly towards Delhi. Since the Mongol commander's target was to conquer Delhi, he did not plunder the territories or collected booty on his way.[6] His targeted movement towards Delhi caused fear in the capital.

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The Delhi soldiers posted at Multan shut themselves in the fortress, however, they made attacks on the Mongol camps during the darkness of nights. While the Mongol army on its march towards Delhi, the terror-general for the Mongols, Zafar Khan was at Kuhram. As a loyal officer of Alauddin Khalji Zafar Khan invited Qutlugh Khwaja to battle with him first and then go to the victorious emperor of Hindustan. The Mongol commander sent a reply to Zafar Khan saying 'Kings only fight Kings' and asked Zafar Khan to face him under his King [7] at Delhi. Alauddin Khalji got the information about the movement of the Mongol army under Qutlugh Khwaja late and he had a week or two for preparation of battle with the Mongols. He summoned his officers [8] asking them to reach quickly to the capital.

Alauddin Khalji had a core group of sincere advisors and confidants. Of them, Alaul Mulk, the Kotwal of Delhi, at this critical moment came forward and advised the Sultan to avoid battle and instead adopt the way of diplomacy. Though Alauddin Khalji appreciated the sincere advice of Alaul Mulk, he exhibited firm determination and courage and decided to face the Mongol army in the battlefield. [9] The Sultan proceeded from Siri to Kili where the Mongols had pitched their camps and arranged his army there to fight the Mongols. Qutlugh Khwaja also placed his army in front of Alauddin Khalji's army. [10] Isami has given a pre-battle arrangement of both the armies at Kili. In the Delhi army, the Sultan placed himself in the centre and Akat Khan stood in front of the Sultan. Nusrat Khan was placed on the left and the Sultan placed his brother behind Nusrat Khan. Zafar Khan was placed on the right and a detachment of experienced Hindu warriors stood with him. On the Mongol side, Qutlugh Khwaja, the commander of the Mongol army took up his position in the centre. Hijlak was placed on the left and Tamar Bugha [11] commanded the right wing. [12] Qutlugh Khwaja gave 10,000 soldiers to Targhi to hide in ambush and attack where it was needed. [13] Both the armies, thus arranged, stood face to face, ready for battle. But Alauddin Khalji was not in a hurry to initiate the attack. Zafar Khan, the valiant general of Alauddin Khalji, who had created a terror in the hearts of the Mongols, in his haste for battle attacked Hijlak's army standing in front of him. Zafar Khan and his soldiers drew their swords and made a vigorous attack on the Mongol army. His attack forced the Mongols to retreat. Zafar Khan pursued the Mongol army to 18 karohs. The left wing of the Sultan's army commanded by Nusrat Khan and Ulugh Khan did not give their support to Zafar Khan. Thus, encouraged by the stationary position of the Delhi army, Targhi placed his 10,000 soldiers between Zafar Khan and the Delhi army which stood unmoved as per the orders of the Sultan. Zafar Khan fought bravely. In the fierce fight, Zafar Khan and his men attacked the receding army in the front and the soldiers under Targhi [14] in the rear. Isami writes that Zafar Khan was able to kill 5000 soldiers of Targhi with his sword and arrows. [15] Since Qutlugh Khwaja was well aware of the military talent and intrepidity of Zafar Khan, he sent a message to Zafar Khan, while the deadly battle was going on, asking him to come to his side. He communicated to Zafar Khan that his father will bestow upon him greater dignity than that the King of Delhi has given to him. Zafar Khan did not pay heed to the offer of Qutlugh Khwaja [16] at a critical moment of danger to his life. His soldiers remained loyal and

continued to obey his commands. During the entire course of the battle, Zafar Khan continued to encourage his men and boosted their morale and they all fought with him till the last. The valiant Zafar Khan ultimately died fighting fiercely with the Mongol army. [17] Zafar Khan's vigorous assault terrified the Mongols and in the darkness of night, they began their return march in quick moves to reach their country. The terror of Zafar Khan remained in the hearts of the Mongols for many years. Describing Zafar Khan's terror in the hearts of the Mongols, Barani remarks that if the horses of the Mongols did not drink water they would say: 'Perhaps you have seen Zafar Khan that you are not drinking water. [18]

II. CONCLUSION

This was the last major role of Zafar Khan as a military general against the Mongols. Throughout his career after Alauddin Khalji's accession on the throne, he took up the command of the imperial army against the Mongols with great intrepidity whenever the Mongols attacked the Indian territories. He remained loyal to the Sultan and his country and could not be lured by the gigantic offer of greater power and position in the Mongol court. In all of his actions and battles against the Mongols, Zafar Khan inflicted severe losses and humiliation of defeat on the Mongols.

DECLARATION

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Authors Contributions	I am only the sole author of the article.

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2. Barani has not given any exact figure of the Mongols killed in this battle. He states that 'a large number of Mongols were killed and their heads were dispatched to Delhi; Barani, p.250. Amir Khusrau has given the number as 20,000 while Firishta has recorded their number as 12,000, Mohammad Habib, The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji (tr. of Khazainul Futuh), Bombay: D.B. Taraporewala, Sons & Co., 1931, pp.23-4; Amir Khusrau gives the name of the place of battle as Jaran Manjur; Firishta, Vol.I, p.184.

3. Barani has not given the name of Saldi's brother. Barani, p.253; Isami says the other person's name was Biloch. See Isami, Futuh-us Salatin, Translation and Commentary; Vol.II, ed. Agha Mahdi Husain, Bombay; Asia Publishing House, 1976, p.421.
4. Barani, pp.253-4, Barani's statement that Alauddin Khalji became jealous of Zafar Khan's bravery in Siwistan against the Mongols seems doubtful because Zafar Khan was placed in a frontal position against the Mongols which suggests great trust of Alauddin Khalji for him.
5. 'Tuman' means 10,000, see F. Steingass, A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1973, p.325; Barani, p.254. The figure of Qutugh Khwaja's army is given by Barani at other place as one lakh, see Barani, p.256.
6. Ibid., p.254.
7. Isami, Vol.II, pp.428-30.
8. Ibid., p.430; Barani, p.255.
9. Barani, pp.255-9.
10. Barani, p.259; Isami, Vol.II, pp.430-1.
11. He was a brother of Dawa Khan, Isami, Vol.II, pp.426 (fn.2), 431.
12. Isami, Vol.II, 430-1.
13. Ibid., p.435.
14. Barani, p.260; Isami, Vol.II, pp.434-9.
15. Isami, Vol.II, p.438.
16. Barani, pp.260-1.
17. Ibid., p.261; Isami, Vol.II, p.440.
18. Barani, p.261.

AUTHOR PROFILE



Dr. Syed Bashir Hasan graduated from Shia Degree College (Arts) (Lucknow University) in 1984. He obtained M. A. in History (1986), M. Phil. (1989) and Ph. D. (1992) degrees from Aligarh Muslim University. While still pursuing his Ph. D., he joined service as Senior Research Assistant in the Department of History of Aligarh Muslim University in 1991. Since then, he is Faculty in the Department, now holding the post of Associate Professor. He has so far 35 research papers to his credit. His papers have been published in reputed journals of History. He has been cited by eminent Professor Irfan Habib and Professor Shahabuddin Iraqi of AMU in their well-known works. He has been repeatedly cited by Professor Shalin Jain (JNU, New Delhi) and Nandini Chatterjee (Associate Professor, University of Exeter, U. K.) and Professor Nishat Manzar (JMI, New Delhi). Dr. Syed Bashir Hasan has presented more than 30 papers in national and international seminars. His research papers mostly concentrate on medieval Malwa covering the Muslim Kingdom of Malwa and the Suba of Malwa under the Mughals.

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