

॥ नामूलं लिख्यते किञ्चित् ॥

# इतिहास दर्पण ITIHAS DARPAN

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## अखिल भारतीय इतिहास संकलन योजना

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# ITIHAS DARPAN

Volume XX (1) (Varṣa Pratipadā)

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## Three Glorious centuries of Hindu History : Early Indo-Islamic History (c. CE 640-1000) of Afghanistan and North-West India

R.T. Mohan \*

### PROLOGUE

Within one hundred years Islam spread, conquering with ease and speed, vast areas in three continents. The Arabs had their covetous eyes on the fabulous wealth of India, but they were deeply frustrated when their army, considered invincible till then, sent to occupy the Hindu state of Zabulistan (South West Afghanistan) was trapped and completely destroyed by Rutbil – the reigning Kshatriya King (c. 698 CE). Another “magnificently equipped” army sent to retrieve the Muslim honour, turned mutinous. The Arabs did not attack Afghanistan after that.

It was three centuries later (c. 1000 CE) that the <sup>Khyber Pass</sup> Koh Hindu Kush, successfully defended by India till then, could be penetrated by Muslim (Turkish) forces. Meanwhile, protected against foreign attacks, India could enjoy great peace and prosperity during the ninth and tenth centuries. India's international trade flourished.

If the history of protracted resistance by India in Afghanistan is incorporated in the text books, the students will have a correct picture. They will understand that the litany of defeats starting in the eleventh century, with Mahmud Ghaznavi's raids, was the closing phase of a long successful struggle by India. It was not an almost uncontested walk over as today's narration depicts it.

It is time to rectify this imbalance and correct this historical wrong.



We have taken a long step from Harsha to Mahmud, and surveyed 350 years and more of Indian History in a few paragraphs. I suppose much could be said of the long period which would be interesting. But I am ignorant of it, and so it is safer

for me to preserve a discreet silence.<sup>1</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru noticed this intriguing hiatus – which may be called the “zone of silence” – during his “Quest” for Indian History. Other historians also confirm this gap. “Of the history of the Kingdom of Punjab, with its capital at Bathinda

(Waihind?) little is known”. (Wolseley Haig)<sup>2</sup> “It is indeed difficult to determine what other kings existed in Punjab during this period (CE 800-1000).” (C.V. Vaidya)<sup>3</sup> In respect of the centuries preceding the appearance of the Ghaznavids, there is complete darkness about the political situation in north-west India, which then had Koh Hindu Kush (in modern Afghanistan) as its political and physical frontier. This is strange when we consider that important political developments had been taking place in this region. Here we try to revisit the history of these momentous centuries and also investigate the reason for the silence of historians during the last millennium.

Afghanistan was the cradle of Vedic civilisation. There are specific references in the *Rgveda* and the *Mahābhārata* to certain rivers,

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tribes and rulers which leave no doubt that the Indo-Aryans in Punjab were intimately associated with (the present) Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Although subject, like the Punjab, to the influences of the Persians, the Greeks, the Parthians, the Scythians and the Kushanas, Afghanistan – particularly the region south of Koh Hindu Kush – remained Indian in culture and predominantly within the political orbit of India. After routing the Greeks, the Mauryas extended their control up to the Koh Hindu Kush and even beyond. During Fa Hian's visit (about CE 400) to Udayan – the country around Kabul – the language then spoken there was the language of Central India and the dress, the food and the drink of the people were the same. Buddhism was then flourishing.<sup>5</sup> However, by the time of Huen Tsang's visit in the seventh century, Buddhism was on the wane there and Brahmanism in the ascendant,<sup>6</sup> just as in the rest of India. He did not notice any sign of the Islamic wind till then (CE 644).<sup>7</sup>

During the seventh century a new religion – ISLAM – came up in Arabia. Soon this religion spread, conquering with speed and ease Syria (635), Iraq, Egypt (639), Persia (640), Tripolitania (647) – up to north-west Africa (670). Khurasan and parts of Central Asia (west and north of the Koh Hindu Kush) also came under the Arab caliphate. With the rapid fall of the great Persian Empire, the Caliphate had a common border with “Al Hind”. What was the political situation in Afghanistan during that period?

At Kapisha (situated about 60 miles north of Kabul), Huen Tsang found an able king of Kshatriya caste ruling over an extensive kingdom. He was powerful enough to bring under his control ten independent principalities. When the Arabs started probing the western frontier of Afghanistan, two Hindu kings were ruling over southern Afghanistan. Rutbil (variously mentioned as Ratbil, Reital, Zunbil, Ranthal etc. by Muslim chroniclers)<sup>8</sup> was the hereditary designation of the Kṣatriya<sup>9</sup> king of Zabulistan – south-western Afghanistan. With his capital at Bust (now in ruins) his territory extended westward up to the border of Persia (Iran). A Buddhist dynasty (named as the Turk Hindu Shahis by Al-Beruni)<sup>10</sup> ruled over south eastern Afghanistan, with capital at Kabul. They were closely associated and the Muslim chroniclers often refer to this whole region, south of Koh Hindu Kush, as the Kingdom of Kabul.

#### Arab Failure in Sothern Afghanistan

“In southern and eastern Afghanistan, ... the Arabs were effectively opposed for more than two centuries, from CE 643 to 870, by the indigenous rulers, the Zunbils and the related Kabulshahis of the dynasty which became known as the 'Turk Shahis'.”<sup>11</sup> Zabulistan was then the frontline state of India bordering eastern Persia (Iran). The province of Sistan, adjoining Persia, was then under the sovereignty of the Rutbil. Even this outlying province did not yield without spirited contests. Subsequent campaigns launched by the Arabs from Sistan had varying degrees of success due to stiff resistance by the Hindu rulers of Zabul and Kabul. There were several raids – sometime sufficiently deep into the region – yielding great booty, mainly 'slaves and beasts'.<sup>12</sup> But annexation of territory was indeed slow, frustrating the Arabs then used to rapid acquisitions everywhere else.

After Abdul Malik took over the reins of the Caliphate (684-705), Hajjaj ibn Yusuf was made the governor of Iraq (CE 694-714). He infamously brought to his office a policy of extreme cruelty to fellow human beings.<sup>13</sup> Later, whole of eastern Caliphate, (western border of Al-Hind) also came under the authority of cruel Hajjaj. In CE 698, Obaidullah ibn Ali Bakra “received orders from Hajjaj to invade the country (of Rutbil); and, peremptorily, not to return until he had completely subjugated, or destroyed the whole province. In compliance with his instructions, Obaidullah entered the territory of the prince of Kabul ... Artfully retiring before his invaders until he had engaged them sufficiently within his country, this prince detached his troops into the rear; and blocking up the defiles, completely cut off the retreat of the Mahomedan army. In this situation, exposed to the danger of perishing by famine, Obaidullah condescended to purchase the liberation of himself and followers, from the snare into which he had so imprudently led them, for a ransom of seven hundred thousand dirhams.” By depositing the stipulated ransom in to hands of the agents of Rutbil, he was permitted to withdraw from the country without molestation. Obaidullah had to promise never to raid the Rutbil's territory again and he died of the grief at the plight of his forces: many of them had died of thirst and hunger.

To retrieve the Muslim honour, Hajjaj next despatched Abdur Rahman son of Mohammad



ibn Ashath at the head of a 'magnificently equipped' army of forty thousand men to invade the territories of Rutbil. Around CE 700, Zabulistan was penetrated with some success. "But having loaded his followers with booty, instead of remaining to secure the contest, he returned into Sistan, from whence he dispatched to acquaint Hajjaj with the success of the expedition." He was vehemently denounced by Hajjaj "for turning away from *Jihad* against the infidels" and threatened that he would be removed from his command unless he completed his assignment before the end of the year. In no mood to face Rutbil's forces at the battle front, Abdur Rahman's principal commanders "entered into a resolution to unite with their general, in open hostility to his government." It was a rebellion (*fitna*) against the Caliphate – the most powerful seat of power of its times. In order to strengthen his power, he conducted a treaty with the enemies of faith (Rutbil), in which it was stated that if his expedition be attended with success, Rutbil should be absolved from every species of tribute provided the latter would agree to afford him asylum in the event of the failure of his campaign against the Caliph. The Umayyad throne and the autocratic rule of Hajjaj were jeopardized for a while when the Arabs of both Basra and Kufa joined Abdur Rahman.<sup>14</sup> But the episode ended with the restoration of Umayyad power in Sistan when Abdur Rahman and his allies were crushed in 704. We skip the details of protracted skirmishes.

Abdur Rahman retreated to Zaranj (Sistan) where the governor was of his own creation but the gates of the town were closed against him. So he continued to retreat to Bost whose governor was also his own appointee. Here he experienced at first most friendly reception but after his forces had dispersed he was loaded with fetters for being delivered over to the mercy of Hajjaj. When Rutbil heard of this treachery, he hastened at the head of his troops and secured the release of Abdur Rahman who continued to experience the most humane and generous treatment from his preserver. The interest which this contest excited throughout the Caliphate invested Rutbil with a celebrity and he is hero of many Arab stories of the holy war. Rutbil was a formidable foe who had made Sistan an ill-omened frontier for the Arabs.<sup>15</sup> Sustained political intervention by Rutbil brought the Islamic expansion to a halt and for about one-and-a-half century no lasting gains were made by the Arabs in

these territories. Both Hindu states of Kabul and Zabul could preserve their sovereignty.<sup>16</sup>

This signal failure was an unprecedented ignominy for the Arab forces that had by then conquered vast regions without a set-back. The only other comparable event occurred a few decades later (732) when, over the Alps, the French successfully pushed back the Arabs trying to cross over from Spain to France – thus saving Europe from the Islamic tsunami. Edward Gibbon has summed up the situation in these words.

*"When the Arabs first issued from the desert they must have been surprised at the ease and rapidity of their own success. But when they advanced in the career of victory to the banks of Indus and the summit of Pyrenees, when they had repeatedly the edge of their scimitars and the energy of their faith, they might be equally astonished that any nation could resist their invincible arms, that any boundary should confine the domination of the successor of the prophet."*<sup>17</sup>

**India was the first nation that could resist the "invincible arms" of the Arabs when the latter were still in their elemental fury. It would be another 300 years that the Ghaznavids managed to breach the Khyber Pass and annex Punjab.**

#### **Arab Campaigns Against Sindh**

Exasperated by the Arab failure in southern Afghanistan, Hajjaj turned his attention towards another frontier region of Al-Hind – namely Sindh. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his *Humanity at Door's Death* and Maulana Nadvi in his *Indo-Arab Relations* state that between 638 and 711 the Arabs launched as many as fifteen attacks against Sindh. The details of these are available in *Chachnama*.<sup>18</sup> The earliest raids under Caliph Umr (634-43) to pillage Thana (near Bombay), Broach and Debal (near Karachi), were by sea. Later there were at least six campaigns through the Bolan Pass and Kaikan (Quetta). These were under the Caliphs Ali (655-660) and Muaviya (661-679). Raids into a rich country like India were lucrative for attackers as also the state, which received one fifth of the booty – the rest being distributed among the soldiers. It also kept the trouble makers busy elsewhere. The leaders of raiding parties could often collect riches and slaves though some of them were killed. However, the brave people of this hilly frontier of Sindh did not yield any territory.



Unable to retrieve the Muslim honour in Afghanistan, Hajjaj sent Ubaidullah bin Nabhan against the port of Debal (near Karachi?) but the Muslims were slaughtered to a man. He then wrote to Budail (or Bazil) to proceed to Debal and he was provided with a "large army." The residents of Debal sent a person to Dahar (the Brahman king of Sindh), informing him of the arrival of Budail at Narun (on his way to Debal). Dahar hastened to send his eldest son Jaisiya (Jaya Singh) with 4000 soldiers on horse and camel, who came by hurried marches to Debal. A pitched battle ensued. In the end the Muslim army was routed, Budail killed and many Muslims taken prisoners. Hajjaj was severely afflicted by this disaster and vowed to avenge this indignity of an ignominious defeat. With meticulous preparations he sent a large army by land and sea under his son-in-law – Imdad Mohammed bin Qasim. His last words to Mohammed were, "I swear by God that I am determined to spend the wealth of the whole of Iraq, that is in my possession, on this expedition and the flame of my fire will never go down until I take revenge" (of Budail's death).

Having defeated the Arabs on several occasions, two of these very recent, Dahar seems to have taken this campaign also lightly: to him it was a grand match of chivalry and honour. This is the picture that emerges from the narration of the history by his enemies (*Chachnama*)<sup>19</sup>. Dahar was killed in a battle and the Arabs could advance up to Multan, facing obstinate resistance, and long sieges, at each town/fort, particularly in Upper Sindh. The Arabs had got a foothold in Al-Hind but the neighbouring Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan and Gujrat managed to confine the Arabs within Sindh. Details of occupation of Sindh by the Arabs, and its subsequent history, are available in our history books.

#### **Non-Arab Muslim Kingdoms of Afghanistan**

In theory, the Caliph as the successor of the Prophet was the fountainhead of all political authority. All Muslim kings and tribal chiefs were subordinate to him and his sanction alone could provide legal basis for their authority. With the waning of the political might of the Caliphate, its governors in Khurasan set up their own strong kingdoms and threatened the Caliph militarily to seek his sanction for the ruler-ship of the territories of the caliphate conquered by them.

**The Samanids** (c. 819-1005). Saman Khuda, a converted Persian Zoroastrian king of Bukhara was the founder of the Samanid dynasty. It was the first native dynasty to rise in the region, virtually independent of the Caliph. The Samanid rule was acclaimed over a large region. Transoxiana and Khurasan prospered with a notable expansion of industry and commerce. Samanids were great art patrons and they turned Bukhara and Samarkand into famous cultural centres rivalling Baghdad. It was the new main centre of power in the region. The Samanids started employing Turkish slaves from beyond the frontier (Jaxartes) into army and other offices of the state. By the latter part of the tenth century, as the Samanid Amirs (rulers) were themselves occupied with 'high culture' they gave the direction of their army, including governorships of the provinces, to the Turkish generals. Ultimately, a Turk Hajib (doorkeeper) established an independent principality at Ghazni, which in its wake threatened almost every kingdom between the Oxus and the Ganges.

**The Saffarids.** Yaqub-i-Lais the 'Saffar', an upstart from Sistan, established himself as its Amir (r. 867-879) and became too powerful to be controlled by the Samanids or the Caliph. He started encroaching on the territory under the sovereignty of Rutbil of Zabulistan. Ultimately, Rutbil assembled his armies and marched towards Yaqub, in 870. When Yaqub came in front of 'huge hordes of the enemy' he decided to avoid a clash and use stratagem and deception. He managed to assassinate Rutbil by treachery on the ruse of paying homage to him.<sup>20</sup>

**As a consequence of this treachery the Hindu kingdom of Zabulistan, which had carried on heroic resistance against Muslim arms for more than two hundred years, ceased to exist. Its residents were converted to Islam. The western border of the adjoining Hindu state of Kabul, ruling astride the Khyber Pass, thus became the north-western frontier of India. It would also play a role as heroic as Zabulistan for more than a century but, perhaps lulled by this long spell of security, India failed to protect itself when the Islamic whirlwind reached the mainland.**

During this period, the *Kshatriya* Buddhist Hindu Shahi dynasty of Kabul had been replaced by a Brahman dynasty.<sup>21</sup> From here we take up the account by Abu Rehan Mohamad, commonly known as Al Beruni. He has recorded that "Hindus



had kings residing in Kabul." Sixty generations of this dynasty ruled there with the title of "Shahis of Kabul". The last of these kings was Lakutzman (Katorman) and his Minister was Kallar, a Brahman. Katorman's thoughts and actions were evil. The Minister put the king in prison for correction and administered the state himself starting a new dynasty. According to Al Beruni, Kallar was succeeded "by the Brahman(s) Samand (Samantadeva), whose successor was Kamalva (Kamalavarman), whose successor was Bhim (Bhimadeva), whose successor was Jaipal, whose successor was Andpal (Anandapala), whose successor was Nardjpal (Trilochanapala) who was killed in A. H. 412 (CE 1021). His son Bhimpal succeeded him and after five years under him the sovereignty of Hind became extinct and no descendant remained to light a fire on the hearth."<sup>22</sup>

Al Beruni remained in India for many years and was a contemporary of Trilochanapala (c. 1011-1021). This brief account has been found to be correct whenever it has been possible to cross check it from other reliable data. These kings are known as Brahman Hindu Shahis to distinguish them from the previous dynasty of Turk Hindu Shahis.

The first four rulers in this list of Brahmana Hindu Shahis appear to have adequately protected the Shahi state of Kabul. The Samanids (819-1005) held almost the whole east of the Caliphate under their sway and were in conflict with all other neighbouring kingdoms. Yet they do not appear to have come in conflict with the Shahis of Kabul and, consequently, there is no mention of the Shahis in the Muslim chronicles of the period. This makes it difficult to reconstruct their history. Apart from the very useful information left by Al Beruni, a few references about them are available in early sources like *Jami-ul-Hikayat* of Mohammad Ufi and *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. The gaps in this fragmentary knowledge have to be bridged with speculative theories and hence this is a challenging period for a researcher. In this endeavour the Shahi coins and related stone inscriptions which became available from time to time are of great help.

From the nineteenth century several Indian and foreign scholars, like Princep, Cunningham, Thomas, Stein, Smith, Elliot, Macdowall, Vaidya, Ray, Habib and Nazim had given useful information and suggestions (theories) about the Shahis but their history was not the exclusive or even the main

concern of these celebrated researchers. Yet this corpus of knowledge has formed a very useful base for subsequent writers, both in the field of history and numismatics. Since 1970, four books have been written exclusively about the *Shahis of Afghanistan*.<sup>23</sup>

**Kallar:** Reverting to Al Beruni's list, Kallar (or Spalapatideva of the coins) is deemed to have ruled with "power and glory", without assuming the title of king. There was no further incursion by the Arab raiders into the Shahi capital of Kabul and therefore Muslim chronicles make no mention of Kallar. He introduced the Bull and Horseman type of coins. The bull (*nandi*) and the trident (*trishul*) showed that the new rulers were devotees of *Shaivism* – conveying a break with the earlier state-patronized Buddhism. The king on horseback with a raised weapon (lance) tended to convey a strong message about the might of the new administration.

**Samantadeva:** Kallar was succeeded by Samantadeva. He is to be identified with Lalliyashahi of *Rajatarangini* – which gives a colourful description of this mighty ruler.

*Alakhana's support, the illustrious Lalliyashahi – who (placed) between the rulers of the Darads and Turushkas as between a lion and a boar ... in whose town of Udabhandanda other kings found safety ... whose mighty glory (outshone) the kings in the North, just as the sun-disc (outshines) the heavens ...*<sup>24</sup>

With the Hindu state of Zabulistan having been lost, the Shahis transferred their capital from Kabul to Udabhandapura (Waihind, Und), situated fourteen miles above Attock, on the right side of river Sindh. This was a timely strategic move.

**Kamlavarman:** Samantadeva was succeeded by his son Kamlavarman, probably around 895. Amr-i-Lais, brother of Yaqb-i-Lais had taken over the Saffarid Kingdom which still controlled Zabulistan. Amr was clashing with the Samanid ruler of Transoxia (probably instigated by the Caliph) and kept clear of the neighbouring Brahmana Shahis. But a governor sent by him to Zabulistan created a piquant situation. Fardaghan, the governor "led his army to a large Hindu place of worship called Sakawand, took the temple, broke the idol in pieces and overthrew the idolaters."... "when the news of the destruction of Sakawand reached Kamlu, who was Rai of Hindustan, he collected an innumerable army and marched towards Zabulistan" in whose



territory Sakawand was located. According to a narration by Mohamad Ufi, which has been routinely reproduced by most writers, Fardaghan spread a rumour that a large army from Amr was on its way and by this intelligence Kamlu halted where he was.<sup>25</sup> However a recent researcher has established that this oft-quoted narration by Ufi was short of the “whole truth”. According to *Tarikh-i Sistan* two Indian Kings (Rai of Hindustan) combined their forces and launched a united invasion of Ghazni.<sup>26</sup> *Rājatarāṅgini* records an instance of a *Shahi-Vigraha* (palace coup?) in which a rebellious Shahi (*ajnaatikrami*) usurped the throne of Udabhanda and the state of Kashmir intervened to re-instate Kamalavarna.<sup>27</sup>

**Bhimadeva** next succeeded to the Shahithrone. Dewai Stone Inscription describes him as *gadahasta, paramabhataraka, maharajadhiraja, parmashvaraShahi Sri Bhimadeva*.<sup>28</sup> He issued a gold coin which has *Shahi Sri Bhimadeva* on the obverse and *SrimadGunanidhi Sri Samantadeva* on the reverse. This unique gesture is a very sentimental and touching tribute to an ancestor.

'The Khujaraho Stone Inscription of the Chandelle King Dhanga VS 1011 (CE 954-55)', imparts an interesting piece of information: “The lord of Bhota (Tibet) obtained (the image of Vaikuntha) from Kailash. From him the King of Kira received it as a token of friendship. The Shahi received it from him. From him (i.e. from Shahi) afterwards Herambapala (=Mahipala) obtained it for a force composed of elephants and horses.”<sup>29</sup> It further states that ultimately Yashovarman set up the image in a beautiful temple at Khujaraho. Mahipala (c. 914-948), a king of the Gurjara-Prathara dynasty of Kannauj was contemporary of Bhimadeva who is identified as *the Shahi* of this Inscription. It clearly demonstrates that Bhimadeva was fully conscious about the need for defence preparedness and did strive to maintain an impressive level of his cavalry and other fighting forces. Taking advantage of the weakening of the Saffarid Kingdom, the Shahis had stepped up activities on their western frontier and installed friendly Hindu rule in Ghazni. Lawiks, the Hindu rulers of Ghazni came to him for safety and succour.

Bhimadeva had only one daughter and no son. She was married to “King Simharaja, the lord of Lohar and other strong holds” – the area broadly identified by modern Punch and Rajauri in Kashmir.

Didda, the daughter of Simharaja out of this wedlock was married to Kshemagupta the King of Kashmir (950-958). 'Illustrious BhimShahi', the maternal grandfather of this queen, built a richly endowed temple '*BhimaKeshva*', near Martand in Kashmir.

Like several other savants and sovereigns, in his old age, Bhimadeva decided to dedicate himself to god *Shiva* by committing ritual suicide. He was then ruling supreme in the region, unmolested by any of his neighbours. Since it was a pre-meditated decision he could decide about a suitable successor.

**Jayapaladeva:** The statement by Al Berunithat Jayapala was the successor of Bhima, is confirmed by the 'HundSIab Inscription of the Time of Jayapaladeva'. According to that Inscription (verses iii, vii and xi) “*To the north of Indus ... there is (a city) by name Udabhanda ... Therein dwelt the chief of kings, Bhima ... who was burnt by himself ... by Shiv's desire, but not through the terrible enemy ... The king of (that country) is (now) Jayapaladeva.*”<sup>30</sup> Ferishta has recorded, “Jeipal ... of Brahman tribe reigned at that time over the country extending in length from Surhind to Lumghan and in breadth from the kingdom of Kashmir to Moulton.” 'Barikot Inscription of the Reign of Jayapaladeva' describes him as “*parambhataraka, maharajadhiraja, parmashvara Sri Jayapaladeva*”<sup>31</sup>... the same epithets as for Bhimadeva.

As stated earlier, by the middle of the tenth century the Turkish slaves began to acquire power in the Samanid Kingdom and Alaptagin, a Hajib (doorkeeper) established an independent principality in Ghazni (961) which gradually grew in power. Jayapala sent his son with a large army to re-install Lawik at Ghazni but Lawik and his ally were killed in a battle that took place at Charkh – a place on one of the routes from Kabul to Ghazni. Sabuktagin, the Turk hero of this battle became the Sultan of Ghazni. “In the first twelve years of his reign he had extended his frontier to the Oxus on the north and approximately to the present boundary between Persia (Iran) and Afghanistan.” Sabuktagin was simultaneously nibbling at the border territories of the kingdom of Udabhanda and conflict with 'Hind' could not have been postponed for long. Jayapala decided to push back the Turks and put an end to this menace. He twice attacked Sabuktagin but failed. Afghanistan part of the Shahi kingdom, beyond the Khyber Pass was



lost to Hindu India – for ever. Subsequent history of the obstinate resistance by Jayapala, his son Anandapala and grandson Trilochanapala is recorded in books of Indian History, even though it is the victor's version only.

### **Puzzles of the History of Hindu Shahis**

The history of these Brahmana kings, as reconstructed in bits from various sources by different historians has left many unresolved issues. For lack of space we have skirted them because each such issue would need an analysis of various contending views. The order of succession of kings as indicated by Al Beruni and stone inscriptions is acceptable. But the mutual relationship between these kings has nowhere been mentioned. And, who was Jayapala? How did he acquire, so smoothly, the vast territory between Sirhind and Kabul, while his Shahi predecessors had been ruling over the (Afghanistan) territory north/west of the river Sindh? During that period who were the masters of (western) Punjab, between the rivers Satluj and Sindh – about which Jawaharlal Nehru and others have expressed their ignorance?

The history of the Mohyals – a sub-sect of SarasvataBrahmanas of Punjab – as collated from their oral, bardic and written sources provides very credible and convincing answers. For this we are depending on *Gulshane Mohyali* published by Raizada Harichand Vaid (Urdu, 414 pages) at Lahore in 1923. He has stated that his narration, particularly about the kings of Punjab in the ninth and tenth centuries, had been taken from the (Persian) manuscript of the book *Twarikh Saheb Numa* by late Lala Ganesh Dass. His version follows.

After dethroning Laktuzman, the Brahmana Vazir Kallar set the administration in order and installed a chief who was “victorious, brave and tried-at-the-battlefield (*jangazmuda*)” on the throne of Kabul with the consent of other noble men of the court.

Till recently, there had been no record of any battle at which a commander of Kabul state may have won laurels during the period in question. But a stone inscription found recently (CE 2001) at Mazar-i-Sharif makes mention of a king who “having occupied the earth, markets and the forts by eight-fold forces” had the image of *Shiva* with Uma installed at Maitasya by ParimahaMaitya<sup>32</sup> (Great Minister i.e. Kallar). During that period the Kabul

Shahis had recovered the 'northern provinces', which had been under the Saffarids since CE 872 and this description fits with the “*jangazmuda*” successor of Kallar.

According to *Gulshane Mohyali*, Samantadeva was not the son of Kallar. Kamalavarman was the son and Bhimadeva the grandson of Samantadeva. Coming to Punjab, a militant Brahmana chief named Raja Bachan Pala established his dynasty in Punjab during the first quarter of the ninth century. He was succeeded by his son Ran Pala, grandson Bir Singh, followed by great grandson Prithvi Pala. Two Brahmana kingdoms of Kabul and Punjab functioned like a political confederacy, providing a credible balance-of-power against the Samanids of Central Asia and the Gurjara Pratiharas of Central India and enjoying tax benefits from international trade passing through their territories.

“When this valiant ruler (Bhimadeva) died without a male heir, his kingdom was placed under the domination of Prithvi Pala, the ruler of Punjab.” Prithvi Pala died within one year and his son Jayapala succeeded to the combined kingdom of Kabul and Punjab. On coronation, Jayapala assumed the additional name-ending “deva” used by the preceding dynasty of Kabul Shahis, in addition to the “pala” name-ending of his ancestral dynasty, and styled himself as Jayapaladeva. The Kabul component of the kingdom having been lost during his life time, his successors Anandapala, Trilochanapala and Bhimapala did not use the “deva” name-ending. The present-day Chhibber/Datt/Vaid castes of Mohyal Brahmanas claim the dynasties of Dahar of Sindh/Bhimadeva of Afghanistan/ Jayapala of Punjab, respectively, as their ancestors.

**These details from the history of the Mohyals (*Gulshane Mohyali*) admirably provide the missing links to join the gaps in the jigsaw-puzzle-history of the Brahmana Shahis.**

Having encapsulated the history of Zabul, Kabul and Punjab during the period c. CE 650-1000, we now come to the question why It had been excluded from the narration of History of India during the foreign rule of a thousand years? Al Badaoni has written a history of India which he calls *Muntakhabu-t-Twarikh* (Selections from History).<sup>33</sup> He begins with Sabuktigin ignoring the earlier failure of the Arabs and the Samanids in reaching



mainland India for more than three centuries. He explains, “the first of the Emperors of Islam who were the cause of the conquest of Hindustan were Nasiru-d-din Sabuktigin whose son was Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi ... and in the reign of whose sons Lahore became the seat of Government, so that Islam never again lost its hold on that country ... accordingly I deemed it right to commence the history with an account of that monarch whose end was glorious.”(emphasis added) The Muslim historians thus had a reason to suppress the not-so-glorious history of Islam in Afghanistan. In their turn, it was very convenient for the British rulers who had been propagating the theory that Hindus had been traditionally hosting all invaders without any effort to resist. The 'secularists' who were in control of research, writing and teaching of history in India after Independence did not try to remove the veil.

But it is painful that the 'nationalist' historians have also not made the slightest effort to highlight this glorious chapter of Indian history – a

unique feat by Hindus of vanquishing the Arabs, who had not tasted any defeat till then (CE 700), and continuing to protect the strategic Khyber Pass from powerful Muslim kingdoms that arose in Central Asia after the Arabs. Dissemination of this knowledge will restore a certain balance in our perception of Early Indo-Islamic history which, at present, reads like a litany of defeats and persecutions. There is the problem that the syllabus was so designed by the British that it is not taught in the classes at any level. Furthermore, even the senior most teachers (Heads of Departments of Ancient History) in the Universities have neither read nor taught this and so, as guides, they are probably not encouraging their Ph. D. students to venture to explore the history of this area and era. It is time that the events comprising this Glorious Chapter of India History is appropriately included in the syllabus of history as also in the text books being taught in schools and universities.

### GENEALOGY

#### The Brāhmaṇa Hindu Śāhis Of Kabul and the Punjab

##### Pāla rulers of the Punjab

1. Bachan Pāla
- |
2. Ran Singh
- |
3. Bir Singh
- |
4. Prithvi Pāla

##### Deva Śāhi rulers of Kabul and Gandhāra

1. Kallar alias Spalapati Deva (from c.840 CE)
- |
2. Sāmanta Deva alias Vakka Deva (c. 860 - 895 CE)
- |
3. Kamalavarman (c.895–921 CE, with a gap of two years.)
- |
4. Bhima Deva (c. 921 – 964 CE)

##### Pāla Śāhi dynasty ruling the combined Kingdom of Kabul and the Punjab

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 5. | (5) Jayapāla Deva (c. 964–1002 CE)                           |
|    |  |
| 6. | (6) Ānandapāla (c. 1002–1011 CE)                             |
|    |  |
| 7. | (7) Trilochanapāla (c. 1011–1021 CE)                         |
|    |  |
| 8. | (8) Bhimapāla (c. 1021–1026 CE):<br>Extinction of Śāhi rule) |

##### Non-ruling generations of Pāla Śāhis

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 9. Given refuge )→<br>under Kashmir) | Rudrapāla Du rapāla                     |
|                                      |   |
| 10.                                  | Jyeṣṭhapāla                             |
|                                      |   |
| 11. Given refuge →<br>under Ajmer    | Anangapāla                              |
|                                      |   |
| 12.                                  | Gorakh Rai (Died at Taraori in 1192 CE) |
|                                      |   |
| 13. Ganesh Dev                       | Brahma Dev                              |



**Note:** The figures in brackets indicate the order of succession of the *Sāhi* rulers. The numbers on the extreme left refer to the successive generations of the *Pāla* clan.

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2. *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, pp. 506-507.
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4. Thakur Prasad Verma, 'Madhya Asia avam Bharat: Aitihasikavam Sanskriti Sambandhonki Gatha', *Itihas Darpan* (Vol. XV (2), pp. 27-28).
5. *Travels of Fah-Hian and Sung-Yun, Buddhist Pilgrims from China to India (400 AD and 518 AD) translated from Chinese* by Samuel Beal (London, 1869), Chapter VIII, p. 26.
6. In every 'country' (region) through which Huen Tsang passed (Nagar, Gandhara, Udyan, Takshasila) he deplored the fact that the 'non-Buddhists were very numerous' ... 'a few being Buddhists': Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India (629-645 AD)*, (London, 1904).
7. Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans* (Karachi reprint, 1988), p. 94.
8. According to David Price, because of similarity in the letters *Re* and *Va* in Persian, this name may possibly have been *Vittel*, as the name *Vitteldas* is very common among the Hindus: *Mahomedan History ...*, (London, 1821), Vol. I, p. 454.
9. The Rutbils, later uprooted by Yaqub-i-Lais, were from the same ethnic stock as the Bhatti Rajputs: James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (Delhi, reprint 2002), Vol. I, p. 72. Also see C.V. Vaidya, *History of Mediaeval Hindu India*, Vol. II, p. 159: "As there was a Brahman dynasty in Kabul, so there was a Kshatriya dynasty in Kandahar."
10. E.C. Sachou, tr. *Alberuni's India* (Indian Edition, New Delhi, reprint 1981), Vol. II, p. 13.
11. Andre Wink, *Al Hind* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, reprint 1999), p. 112. "One thing is now proved, that princes of the Hindu faith ruled over all these regions in the first ages of Islamism, and made frequent attempts, for centuries after to reconquer them": James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (Delhi, reprint 2002), Vol. II, p. 175 fn.
12. "Biladuri informs us that under the Caliphate of Muaviya Abdu-r Rahman son of Samra penetrated to the city of Kabul and obtained possession of it after a month's siege... The King of Kabul made an appeal to the warriors of India and the Mussalmans were driven out of Kabul": H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians* (Indian Edition, Kitab Mahal), Vol. II, p. 415.  
Also see Abdur Rahman, *The Last Two Dynasties of the Shahis* (Islamabad, 1979) (Delhi reprint 1988), quoting several sources like Tabri, Azraqi and Biladuri, pp. 85-86
13. Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate, its Rise and Decline*, p. 362.
14. Bosworth, C.E., *Sistan under the Arabs, From the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Saffarids (651-864)* (Rome, 1968), pp. 60, 63.
15. H.A.R. Gibbs, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, (1923) p. 41.
16. This account of the Arab invasion of Zabul is based on the narration of Major David Price in his book *Mahomedan History ...* (London, 1821), Vol. I, Chapter XIII, pp. 454-463. Digitized by Google, it is now available on Internet for free download. Alongside each relevant page/paragraph Price has indicated *Khalast-al-Akhbar* by Khondamiras his authority. Born in Herat in 1475 CE, *Khalast-al-Akhbar* was written by him in 1499-1500. He was one of the greatest historians of his times. He came to India in 1528 and entered the service of Emperor Babar. After his death Khondamir served his son Himayun. This event is referred, among several others, by H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians* (Indian Edition, Kitab Mahal), Vol. II, pp. 416-417; James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. II, pp. 174-175, foot notes. Andri Wink, *Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, reprint 1999), pp. 122-123 quoting C. E. Bosworth's *Sistan Under the Arabs. From Islamic conquest to the Saffarids (654-864 AD)* (Rome, 1968).
17. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter XIX, pp. 487-88.
18. *Chachnama* was originally written by Ali ibn Hamid Kufi (originally of Kufa in Syria but subsequently a resident of Uch). It was later translated in Persian. Mirza Kalichbeg Ferdunbeg, Deputy Collector, translated it into English from the Persian translation (Karachi, 1900). It is now available free on Internet. English translation of important extracts available in H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians* (Indian Edition, Kitab Mahal), Vol. I.
19. A very readable account has become available recently: *ECHOES AMONG RUINS: Revisiting the Brahman Dynasty of Ancient Sindh* by Vinay Mehta. www.echoesamongruins.com.
20. Nuruddin Mohammad Uffi, 'Jami ul Hikayat' in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians* (Indian Edition, Kitab Mahal), Vol. II, pp. 176-78. Also *Tarikh-i-Ghuzida*, Ch, IV, Sec. I.
21. "As we learn from the Chinese pilgrim (Huen Tsang), the king of Kapisha was a *Kshatriya* or a pure Hindu. During the whole of the tenth century the Kabul valley was held by a dynasty of Brahmans, whose power was not finally extinguished until towards the close of the reign of Mahmud Ghaznavi. Down to this time, therefore, it would appear that a great part of the population of eastern Afghanistan, including the whole of Kabul valley, must have been of Indian descent ... The idolaters were soon driven out, and with them the Indian element, which had subsisted for so many centuries in Eastern Ariana, formally disappeared." Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India, The Buddhist Period*, p. 14.
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23. Yogendra Mishra, *The Hindu Shahis of Afghanistan and the Punjab AD 865-1026* (Patna, 1972); D.B. Pandey, *The Shahis of Afghanistan and the Punjab*, Delhi, 1973; Abdur Rahman, *The Last Two Dynasties of the Shahis* (Islamabad, 1979) (Delhi reprint, 1988); R.T. MOHAN,



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  26. Abdur Rahman, *The Last Two Dynasties of the Shahis*, pp. 110-116 quoting *Tarikh-i-Sistan*, pp. 255-266. Also Andre Wink, *Al Hind*, p. 125: "Muslim control of Zamindawar remained imperfect until the end of ninth century, and in Ghazni the Saffarid governor was again expelled by two Indian princes in 890-900 CE."
  27. M.A. Stein, English translation of Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, V. 232-233.
  28. From D.R. Sahni, 'Six Inscriptions in the Lahore Museum' *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. xxi, no.44, 1931-32, pp. 298-299.
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  30. R.T. Mohan, *AFGHANISTAN REVISITED, The Brahmana Hindu Shahis of Afghanistan and the Punjab (c. 840-1026 CE)* The text of the Hund Slab Inscription of the Time of Jayapaladeva as also other Inscriptions, and description of the coins, quoted here are available in this book.
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  32. 'Mazar-i-Sharif Inscription of the Time of the Shahi Ruler Veka', *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, July 2001, pp. 81-86. Reproduced in R. T. Mohan, *AFGHANISTAN REVISITED ... Appendix - A*, pp. 162-63.
  33. Badaoni, *Muntakhabu-t-Twarikh*, translation by George S.A. Ranking (Patna, 1973 Edition).

