Chapter IV

Military Systems of Mahmud Ghaznavi and Indian Rulers: A Comparative Study

The Army

The Army of the Sultan consisted of cavalry, a majority of two-horse troopers, infantry, the number of which was small because it was not so swift and mobile, the body guard of the Sultan and an elephant force.

“The body guard of the Sultan consisted chiefly of slaves, who from the nature of their position, were considered to be more devoted to their masters, than any class of soldier”.

They were under the direct command of Sultan. Other units had their own separate commanders and administrative officers. Their banner had the insignia of a lion and spears.

The elephants troops were also under the direct command of Sultan. The elephant drivers (Pilwan) were mostly Hindus and their commander was called Muqaddam-i-Pilbanan. The Sultan personally reviewed the elephants every year and ordered weaker ones to be sent to India to recover
their weight and strength. All most all the elephants had either been captured in Indian wars or received as tribute from Hindu Rajas.

**Numerical Strength of the Army**

For lack of proper records it is impossible to ascertain exactly the numerical strength of the Sultan Mahmud’s army. “When Mahmud defeated Abdul Malik bin Nuh, the Samanid at Marv, he was in command of at least 32000 horses”. In 1015-16 he advance to Balkh at the head of an army said to have numbered one lac soldiers, while in 1023 when he reviewed his army in the plain of Shabhar it was 54,000 in numbers. “The strength of the army, therefore, in times of peace can be placed roughly at 100000, including both the cavalry and infantry. In times of war, however, the number was greatly swelled by the contingents supplied by feudatory princes, fresh recruits, volunteers, and local militia”.

“The total number of the slaves was about 4000 but it is not known how many of these formed the bodyguard of the Sultan. The number of the elephants in his army was approximately 1700.

**Recruitment System**

The army was mainly recruited from Transoxiana but as the preponderance of my one element would have been fraught with danger, Arabs, Afghans, Dailamites, Khurasanis, Ghuris and Indians were also enlisted. This not
only acted as a check on the insubordination of any one of the different sections but also served to create a spirit of emulation among them to excel each other in courage and velour on the field of battle.

**Ranks**

The military service under the Sultan was highly organized. “The Sultan was his own commander in chief. The next highest office under him was that of the commander of the troops of Khurasan, which was held throughout his reign by his brother Nasar and Yusuf successively. Beside this every province had a commander of the local troops who was usually a Turkman. His duties were chiefly military but if the province happened to be on the frontier, he was also required to collect the tribute from the neighbouring feudatory rulers. The ‘Arid’ was appointed in the same manner as the ‘wazir’. But as an additional precaution he was required to leave a son as hostage at the court of the Sultan before he was invested with the insignia of his office”.

“Every provincial army had its own Arid whose duties were on a small scale, similar to those of the Sahib-i-Diwan, Arid. He had assistants called Naib-i-Arid and a Katkhuda i.e. Quarter-Master to help him in the administration of the army. The Arid or his assistant drew money to disburse bistgani to the troops. There was a Sahib-i-Barid or Master of the post attached to every army and his duty was to report to the Sultan all
matters of importance that occurred within his knowledge”.  

Organization

Service in the army was graded, “The lowest officer was the Khail-Tash, who was the commander of ten horses. Ten Khail-Tash made ‘Quide’, who was the commander of hundred horses. Serhang was the officer of five hundred officers. Serhang works under Hajib, who was the officer commanding of the army. While all the troops in a province were under the Sipah-Salar”. Promotion was given on the strict principle of merit and efficiency and even a trooper could rise to the position of a commander in course of time.

Rations

Provision of rations in the field area was the duty of every soldier. When proceeding on an expedition every soldier was required to make his own commissariat arrangements and for this he received his salary in advance, “but the expedition was directed to a distant country the Sultan, as a measure of precaution made additional arrangements for the requirements of the journey”.  

Weapons

The time of Mahmud was very tough. It was a time when science and technology were taking shape. The means of transporation and
communication was not as advance as we have today. The weapons of this period were also in the development process. The science and technology was making a base in the field of weapon technology. The use of cannon and fire arms had already been started. The chief weapon of Mahmud’s army was sword. Sword was a weapon by which a soldier shows his martial abilities.

**Sword**

Swords were of different types and characteristics, some of them were as, Chiene, Rusi, Khazri, Roomi, Fringi, Yemni, Sulemani, Shahi, Ailaie, Kashmir; and Hindi. The Hindi sword was most famous in all of them. The Hindi sword have different names as permags and Mauje Darya (wave of river). The paramag was the most famous and precious sword. Indian soldiers used Pralike, Trawat and Rohinya type of swords. These swords were hard and their strokes were deep.

There was a sword called ‘Tourman’ this sword was named to a king. Tourman was the king of Kabul in the beginning of 10th century. Afghan tribes wholly uses this sword. Commonly the swords were made of iron, silver, and copper. “Qila Chori” was the most favourite sword of the Sultan Mahmud. Sometimes Mahmud had used his sword as spear also.

**Shield**
Shields were necessary with every sword. It was commonly made of leather of the animals like deer, elephant and rhinoceros. Shields made of rhinoceros leather was very precious. Hindus who refrained themselves from the use of leather used shields made of silk and iron. These shields were embroidered and decorated by gems. The shield mad of willow was called ‘Phiri’. The diameter of the shields were 17 to 20 inches.

**Bow**

Bow was one of the most important weapons of the army. There were many types of bows, some of them were as, Chachi, Khwarizmi, Parvanchi, Ghazinchi, Lahorey, Karory, Hindu and Kohi, all these bows were same except Kohi Bow, and this bow was made of horn. Hindu bow was made of bamboo.

Bows were usually made of horn, ivory and iron, bows string that was called zeh or chilla was made of silk or leather.

**Arrow**

Arrows were prepared with the help of willow and reed. Arrows made of reed was very light, and very easy to throw. An expert archer inserts it into the iron. Partie, a kind of arrow, was made by the tail of eagle or voluptuous. Some time arrows were poisoned. Arrows whose tips were made of bone were called, ‘Tir ka Pikan’. Tips were usually manufactured
by the bone of cow, buffalo and ass. Some archers threw arrows with the help of barrel. This tactics was called ‘Nawak’. Turkash was used to keep arrows. A Pikan kash (arrow picker) was kept by every soldier to remove arrows from his body.

**Spear**

Spears used by troops were made of reed and willow. Reeds were light and very easy to throw. If the bones were added in them it makes deep wound. The spear which was used by the rider was used to be long. The lower part of this spear was made of bamboo and its head was made of iron.

**Mace**

Mace was also used by Ghaznavite soldier. Mace was a 2½ feet long iron rod. Three iron balls were fitted upon the head of this rod. Shashpar, a kind of mace, which has only one ball.

**Sling**

It was a weapon through which stones were thrown. In this weapon there was a small net of silk in which the stone was kept and thrown to the enemy. If this stone dashed with the enemies’ chest or forehead, it becomes fatal.

**Kamand**

Kamand was very helpful in climbing over the walls of fort. Once a
Ghaznavite soldier had caught an enemy’s soldier with the help of Kamand, it creates a panic and stampede in the foes army.

**Chakar**

It was a rounded piece of metal. In which there was a hole in its mid-part in which a hand can easily enter. Its edge was very sharp. It was thrown by hand. When it comes from upside it cut everything that came in his way.

There were some heavy weapons also to break the heavy gets of forts and strong walls. Chief weapons are as follows.

**Minjanique: Catapult**

Catapult was a very old weapon. History ascertains that it had been used by Macedonian troops in battle of Hydespus. It was a weapon by which stones were thrown. Catapult have many kinds, Minjanique, Aourous, this could move to every side, Minjanique-a-Deva, this was a heavy catapult, Minjanique Ghauri and Menjanique Rawa.

**Airadah**

It was a small or light catapult. It have of four kinds. One was Airadh Yekruwi, this airadh could shoot at only one side. Second, it Airadh Gardan, it was rotating Catapult, third type of catapult was Airadh Khifta, it was kept fix it could not move, Airadh Rawan, this was a moveable catapult.
Both weapons Minjanikh and Airadh were being used to make hole in the walls of fort or it was also used for burglary.

**Kharak**

This weapon had also been used to make big holes in wall of forts with the help of heavy spears. Kharak was a movable weapon pulled by soldiers.

**Charakh Bow**

It was a kind of bow used with the help of wheels or Charakh (gear) big and heavy arrows that a normal soldier could not throw were thrown with the help of this weapon.

**Kaman Raad**

It was the naphtha arrow; this throws arrows with balls of fire powder. These arrows makes fire in the lines of enemy.

**Small Arms**

Small arms were also used to fight close quarter battles (CQB). Some of them were as follows:

**Jamdahar**

It was a knife. Its blade was straight and a little wide.

**Khanjar**

It was a knife. Its handle was like sword and its blade was curved.

**Karad**
It was a big knife. Its length was 2.5 feet and its blade was 2 inches wide.

**Gupti Karad**

It was a knife. Which was kept concealed in a stick.

**Chaku**

It was small and folding knife. It was double edged also.

**Tufang Dahan**

It was probably a pipe through which a soldier throws small balls of mud and iron.

**Pusht Khar**

It was gloves of iron by which a soldier strikes on head and face.

**Khar Mahi**

This device had iron thorns on an iron rod.

**Advance**

Today the term generally used is ‘Advance to contact’. Advance does not mean normal movement. Advance means to contact, destroy and repel the enemy. Such movements are advanced to contact in the military sense.

It Is tactical in its nature and serves the aim of the strategic planning. Different armies have different characteristics of their advance to contact movement.
Mobility and speed were the main characteristics of the Mahmuds army. In his second attack on India he left Ghazni in September 1001 and in the same month he was seen fighting against Jaipal in Peshawar. After capturing Peshawar he came down to India and indulge in battle and after finishing it the reached Ghazni in April 1002.

In his IVth attack on India he started from Ghazni on 31 December, 1008 and at Wahind he fought a successful battle against Anand Pal and followed the fleeing enemy up to Nagarkot encircled the fort captured it and got plenty of wealth as booty and his army reached back Ghazni in June 1009 A.D. fifth time Mahmud started from Ghazni in March 1014 fought at Narvin against Bhim Pal captured the Nanda fort then fought against Trilochanpal near Jhelum and victoriously reached back Ghazni in August 1014. During this movement his army had to March through snow also and face the difficulties of supplies and ration as well. The speed of his army was not influenced by any geographical or climatic factor on certain occasions the troops had to cross as big rivers as Jamuna but they maintained their speed and quick mobility.

The historical records of Mahmud’s army are full of praise for its speed of movement.

Dress
During the reign of the Sultan Mahmud there was no strict law of uniform for the regular army. In this period much stress was given to training and on art of war. Armours were a prominent feature of Mahmud’s Army. Armours were used by every soldier and every officer. There was no regular uniform for the army.

The armours which were used by the soldiers are as follows:

Zarah

It was a long iron chain shirt used by kings and princes.

Khod

It was a helmet used to protect head.

Joshan

Joshan was used for the protection of chest.

Dastana

They were gloves used for the protection of hands and had often been made of leather with their upper cover made of iron.

Chaltaque

It was an iron shirt for common soldier.

Khiftan

It was a long shirt made of leather. Due to absence of a uniform, it was
very difficult to differentiate own troops from enemies troops during the thick of the battles.

**Bands**

The importance of war music in the army was realized by every general. That is way bands have been used by every army.

The importance of music in the reign of Mahmud was great. Six kinds of musical instruments were used by his army.

Kaos
Baoque
Chang
Arghaon
Saran
Naferi

Details are not available about these musical instruments. Bands were also used by the army. As written in historical accounts, two types of bands were used:

Damama
Dahal

Bands were used at the time of advance when army moved from head quarters to battle field bands were also played, to enhance the morale of soldiers.
Camps

The numerical strength of army had been large during this period. So, where this large army encamped, was very important. Basically, this place was distant from the battle field. The arrangement of camps was superb.

The armies were moving in groups. There were groups as elephants group, army personnel cavalry, and groups of helper like blacksmith, cobbler and fishermen. They encamped themselves according to their ranks.

Arrangement of Camps

The arrangement of camps during war time was same as the organization of the army. In the area where a camping was made, the king lived in the centre of the camp. Beside the king’s camp big official and ministers used to live. Royal ladies were camped behind the king’s camp. After the women camp weapons were stored and beside this animals and their masters encamped.

Before encamping anywhere, it was kept in mind that the place had natural protection. Natural protection like river or mountain or Jungle.

Camps were usually made of cloth and to beautify them beautiful scenery and flowers were embroidered upon them. Two types of camps were famous, one; Sarcha:- it was used by royal people and were made of red cloth. Other was Siwan: it was used by the bureaucrats and ministers and its colour was white. Sometime it was embroidered by blue colour.
Flags

The value of flags in the army was very important in the ancient and medieval period. There was a concept that unless until the flag was upon the army, the army could never be defeated.

During the Ghaznavide period two types of flags were used by the army. The black colour flag was used by the king and officers. The red colour flag was used by the soldiers and lower class officers. Flags had plain and no emblem was made on them.

Inspection, Supervision and Guidance

In the defence forces inspection and periodic supervision and guidance are of utmost importance for maintaining and improving the overall efficiency of the troops. From times immemorial to date supreme and senior commanders have been very particular in their inspection. Inspections are not sample affairs they are highly technical and psychological in their nature. A good commander raises the quality and efficiency of his forces by his pains taking efforts in his inspection. Inspections are of various types, periodic inspection, general inspection, detailed inspection and surprise inspection. Inspections are not meant for finding faults. They serve the purpose of supervision and guidance. Inspections also raise the confidence of the troops in their leader and creates a feeling of attachment.
and regard towards their general. Inspection are carried out by offices of various ranks, starting to the lowest to the highest commander.

Every commander has got his own peculiarities and whims according to which he carries out inspections.

Mahmud Ghaznavi was very particular regarding inspections of his forces. He had organized the work of inspection and laid down the rules for the conduct and record of the inspection. The responsibility of the inspection was given to ‘Sahib-i-Diwan Arz or Arid’. He was required to supervise and inspect the entire forces and maintain a record of the general condition and details of all the troops. Which specially indicated their absence, leave, sickness, and death. It was a sort of progress report and other duty of Arid was to maintain a high standard of the forces for maintain a high standard of the forces for which he used to carry out inspections regularly. This inspection was done at least once a year, and there was a laid down drill for the annual inspections. Hundred percent strength of the forces used to assemble in the field of Sahbahar near Ghazni out of the civil area of the kingdom. And the entire forces were inspected by ‘Arid’. Sometimes Mahmud personally watched this work of inspection. Gardezi remarks “Sultan Mahmud ordered for the inspection of the army in 414 H. 54 thousand cavalrymen assembled for the inspection in the field of Sahbahar among them were those cavalrymen also who were hosted away from the
country and elephant riders also”. There were 1300 elephants mounted with various weapons and apart from these others animals like camels and horses were no less in number. Mahmud was very particular elephants. When their health reduced they were sent to India for recoupment.

**Advisory Committee**

Sultan, like his ancestors was an autocrat he believed in “the shadow of God on earth”. The whole life of Sultan Mahmud was an untiring application to hard work and although the wazir was officially responsible for the smooth running of the machinery of the state, the Sultan nevertheless personally supervised every department of government, and was by his extraordinary ability to control and check the laxity in administration which was habitual to his officers. Whenever any act of tyranny or extortion was brought to his notice he awarded punishment on the offenders. His frequent marches across the length and breadth of his empire continually reminds his distant provincial offices of their vigilant masters at Ghazni. The Sultan kept a watchful eye on the doings of the high dignitaries of the empire, particularly his military commanders. It was thus only by means of ceaseless energy that the Sultan could maintain peace and order in his vast empire and keep under control all the affairs.

The Sultan was not bound to consult his ministers in state affairs, but in practice he followed the divine commandments which bid Muslims consult
each other in all matters. Whenever he was confronted with a serious situation, he called a council of all the important civil and military officers to hear their opinion and advice.

The wazir was expected to speak first but being afraid of declaring his mind before the Sultan, he endeavoured to shift the responsibility to the commanders of the army on the plea of their better knowledge of military affairs.

The Sultan was prepared to hear only that advice which was acceptable to him, while his counselors afraid of provoking him if their advice proved disastrous spoke in a guarded manner. Thus the council was actually a deliberative and consultative body and the Sultan was not bound either to ask or accept its advice.

**The Five Ministers**

“The kingdom of Ghazni being a dependency of Bukhara in its earlier days was administered as a part of Samanid Empire”.

Sultan Mahmud adopted and continued the system of administration which was already in operation, without making any appreciable alteration or improvements in it. “He had five important ministers who were in charge of:

1. Diwan-i-Wizarat or Finance Department
2. Diwan-i-Ard or War Department
3. Diwan-i-Risalat or Correspondence Department
4. Diwan-i-Shughl-i-Ishraful-i-Mamlukat or Secret Service Department
5. Diwan-i-Wakalat or House Hold Department

Mode of Appointment

Every appointment in the state was made with the help of wazir. “Before assuming charge of an office every officer had to enter into a “Muwada” or covenant with his royal master”. The terms of the covenant differed with the nature and importance of the office. “The ‘Muwada’ contained the following important conditions:

a. The Sultan would overlook bona fide errors of judgment in the execution of his duties.

b. The Sultan would not give credence to bad reports against him.

c. The war and household department would work under his general supervision.

d. The Sultan would not allow the deputies or princes and provincial governors to extort money from his subject.

e. The Sultan would leave to Ahmad the appointment of the deputies of the chief secret agents and the masters of the post”. The above written ‘Muwada’ was prepared at the time of the appointment of his wazir named Ahmad. This ‘Muwada’ was prepared by his another wazir called Hasan Al-Maimandi.

The important offices in the state were not the monopoly of any particular
class and were open to anyone who had the necessary qualifications. “A regular hierarchy of official was thus established and man who entered the service as a clerk might rise to the position of a wazir in the course of time”. 13

The Wazirs of Sultan Mahmud

“Sultan Mahmud’s 1st wazir was Abdul Abbas Fadl B. Ahmad was the Sahib-i-Barid of Marv under the Samanids. He was the commander of the troops in Khurasan.

Shamsul-Kufat Abdul Qasim Ahmad B. Hasan Al-Maimandi, the successor of Abdul Abbas Fadi was a man of great scholarship. He was a foster brother of the Sultan Mahmud and had been brought up with him. He designated as Sahibe Divan-i-Khurasan, Mastawfi-i-Mamalik and Amil of the provinces of Bust and Rukhkhaj. He was a strict disciplinarian.

Ahmad was succeeded in office by Abu Ali Hasan b. Muhammad b. Abbas commonly known as ‘Hasanak’. He had been in the service of Sultan Mahmud since his childhood and had gradually risen to the position of ‘rais’ of Nishapur in 1023 in 1025 the Sultan appointed him wazir in place of Ahmad”. 14

Intelligence System

The intelligence department was called as “Diwan-i-Shughi-i-Ishraf-i-Mamlukat”. The head of this department had numerous agents called
Mushrifs all over the country. He was invariably able, by lavish grants of money and promise of future favours, to induce the trusted slaves and servants of important offices, and foreign princes to spy on their own lords”. Persons of both sexes served as spies and travelled to foreign lands in disguise to collect useful information for the Sultan”.

A large number of Mushrifs called Mushrifan-i-Dargah were attached to the court and their duty was to keep a sharp look out on the doing of ministers and courtiers. Even the sons of Sultan did not escape this secret surveillance and their most trusted slaves and servants were usually in the pay of this department but sometimes the Sultan was outwitted by the princes who also had their secret agents among the confidential servants of their fathers. There were numerous spies in the household department of the Sultan and their reports were taken down by special Mushrifs.

“The system of spying played some part in the daily court life, when the Sultan wanted to communicate a verbal order to an officer he usually sent two men, one of them being Mushrif on the other, to guarantee that the message and its reply were correctly delivered”.

The Musrifs were appointed by Sultan in consultation with the ‘Sahib-i-Diwan-i-Ishraf-i-Mamlukat’, while their assistants were nominated by the wazir from among those in whose loyalty and integrity he had full confidence. They were paid handsome salaries to preclude the danger of
their being tempted to accept the gold of the officers whose indiscretions they were expected to report.

**Discipline and Punishment**

It has generally observed that the army is much more efficient that the civil organizations. Efficiency has always been the share of the army and it is an agreed fact that the efficiency of the army is the result of its discipline. Discipline is a psychological make up of mind which makes an individual duty oriented. Discipline can not be instilled in troops by rigorous and stringent devices. It is said that discipline is always from within and not from without. It is a will to be faithful obedient loyal, dutiful and efficient. Discipline in the name of a spirit.

Thus, discipline leads to efficiency and many factors like, good supervision, correct training, high morale, belief in commanders, and system of rewards and punishments.

Mahmud was no less particular in award of punishment to his troops and the severally of punishments designed by Mahmud can easily be estimated by the punishment awarded by his grandson to the horsemen who lost courage in the battle field. A basket containing barley was hung and they used to go through out the town with contempt in a procession.

**Strategy and Tactics**
Strategy and tactics although interdependent but both of them are different from one another. In words of Clausewitz, “Tactics is the theory of the use of military forces in battle. Strategy is the theory of the use of battles for the object of war”.\textsuperscript{17}

Liddllehart defines strategy as the “Art of distributing military means to fullfil the ends of the policy”.\textsuperscript{18} In sample words it can be said that strategy is the over all plan of war with reference to the main purpose of war whereas tactics is concerned with the design and plan of individual battles. In case of Mahmud Ghaznavi it is difficult to deal with his strategy, and tactics separately. The reason is that he himself made the strategy and tactics in such away that the two got confused. This confusion appears to be well planned and designed by Mahmud himself.

A study of the battles of Mahmud shows that his plan has always been to defeat the enemy and capture maximum booty. He did not fight with the intention of conquering to rule. He came like a storm and in the shortest time captured as much wealth as much he could do and swiftly went back. The correct nomenclature for his battle would be raids in the real sense. With this aim he planned his strategy and in accordance to his strategy he designed his tactics.

His aim was not to conquer to rule, therefore, he was not kind to civilians of the area and he never captured those spots which may help him to
control and rule a particular area. He was always found interested in capturing forts and temples all of which he visualized as being gold mines.

An unscrupulous student of History can easily remark that in the battles of Mahmud there is scanty evidence of the art of warfare or high strategic and tactical insight. As a matter of fact the battles of Mahmud were not other battles which are meant to defeat to conquer and to rule. Mahmud’s aim has always been clear cut. It was to capture maximum wealth. With this aim in view when we study the battles of Mahmud we find that the designed his war technique to suit his ends in maximum the mobility of his forces, the speed of his action, the terror spread in techniques, keeping the forts in view were the main methods of the war.

In the modern terminology his tactics was the shock tactics and his attacks were Blitzkrieg type.

However, Mahmud’s army used to be carefully organized on the lines of armies of Ghazni. In the battle field Ghaznavite armies were normally organized into four divisions:

(i) Moqaddama – Advance guard

(ii) Maimana – The Right Flank

(iii) Maisara – The left Flank

(iv) Qalb – The Centre.
Utbi, the author of Tarikh-i-Yemni, states that on “the occasion of Narwin battle Mahmud Ghaznavi organized his army as follows, when the king reached near his objective he organized the ranks and files of his cavalry men and he made divisions – the right flank, the command of the right flank he gave to his brother Amir Nasar bin Nasiruddin. And the command of left flank was given to Arsalan. The divisions commander of advance guard Abdullah Mohammad bin Ibrahim Taiy. Arab Horsemen were a part of Advance guard. The central command was under the command of Altutmash and the other ranks in this division were mostly the soldiers from the band of king’s slaves”.¹⁹

Thus we find that Mahmud was very careful towards the battle organization of his army. He gave full attention and came to the selection of division commanders as well as other ranks. As a matter of facts the main aim of Mahmud battles compelled him to avoid prolonged pitched battle. He was always successful in reaching his objective in a very short time. And he never deviated from his aim.

The entire battles of Mahmud reflect a spirit of commando action. If we took at an analysis of strategy and tactics of Mahmud’s battles we very clearly finds the elements of the following in generally the most of the battles.

(i) Shock tactics
(ii) Methodology of raids

(iii) Principles of Blitzkrieg

(iv) Manner of Commando action.

**Warfare in Medieval India**

In ancient India there was a highly organized system of Military administration. The state maintained a powerful standing army and it was well looked after. Chandra Gupta Maurya had a huge force consisting of six lakhs infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants, and 8,000 chariots. The total strength of his army was 6,90,000 men, excluding camp followers and attendants. The administration of this army was in the hands of a body of thirty persons which was divided into six boards, each consisting of five members and looking after one department of the army. The departments were: (1) Admiralty; (2) Transport, Commissariat, etc.; (3) Cavalry (4) Infantry; Chariots and (6) Elephants. The thirty members of these six boards were collectively responsible for the whole military organization. It may be presumed that the system continued for a long time. But it seems to have deteriorated considerably in the beginning of the medieval age and under the Rajputs it was replaced by a kind of clannish organization. As the country in the beginning of the medieval age was divided into many small independent states, which could not maintain large armies its military strength must have declined considerably. Moreover, it seems that
the standing armies had yielded place to feudal levies which were manned by baronial chiefs. With the advent of the Turks the composition and management of the army improved greatly, and so also the system of warfare. The Muslim invaders and Muslim Sultans were primarily military men and were mostly well-mounted archers. Their horses and arms gave them indisputable military superiority over the Indian troops of that age. The Arabian horses were proverbial in history and Turkoman horses were even better. “The Turkoman horse is the noblest in the whole of Central Asia”, writes the Cambridge Medieval History, “and surpasses all other breeds in speed, endurance, intelligence, faithfulness and a marvellous sense of locality. The Turkoman horse is tall with a long narrow body, long thin legs and neck …….. on their predatory expeditions the Turkomans often cover 650 miles in the waterless desert in five days ……………. They owe their power to the training of thousands of year in the endless steppes and deserts, and to the continual plundering aids, which demanded the utmost endurance and privation of which horse and rider were capable.21

Net only the organization of armies, but military tactics also were greatly improved the Sultan of Ghazni. In fact they brought new tactics with them from their homeland in Afghanistan and Central Asia. These consisted in employing mounted archers as light troopers for harassing and bewildering the enemy and causing confusion in his ranks by archery fire, and then
charging him with heavy armoured cavalry. The squadrons of the Sultan’s army were divided into five divisions, viz., right wing, centre, left wing, advance-guard and reserve, and used to be drawn up in the form of a crescent. These would not attempt to come close or make a frontal attack, but large bodies of their mounted archers would hover round and ply their arrows against the Indian army. The Indian army was on the other hand usually posted in a long formation and was traditionally divided into three parts – right wing, centre and left wing. I had no advance-guard and no reserve. It was the practice of the Muslim army to steal-late round the Rajput wing and to molest the fighting Indian army from behind. In the moment of its confusions the Turkish horsemen would pour a cloud of arrows and then the horns of the crescent would enclose the Indian rear.²²

Whereas the Rajputs prided themselves on their swordsmanship and looked upon the battle as a tournament to display their skill and chivalry, the Arabs and the Turks fought to win and believed that everything was fair in war.²³ The Hindus averse to taking advantage of the enemy’s weakness and to resort to feints and manoeuvres in which the Arabs and Turks were adepts. In order to divert the Indian army the Turkish hordes had no scruples in swooping down upon the Indian cities and divesting the land with fire and sword. Their tactics were to confuse and frighten the people. Moreover, the Arabs and Turks were inspired by a great religious
enthusiasm which made them feel and believe that God had made them. His instruments in purging the world of idolatry and making it safe for Islam. These beliefs had given them an inspiring ideology which was as essential as military training and equipment.²⁴

**Improved Fortification**

Along with development of the military organization and art of warfare there was a great improvement in the manner and system of fortification during the medieval age. This was the result of the introduction of artillery and the general advance of civilization. Forts were fortified with large pieces of cannon and their management and defence were entrusted to commandants with well-defined duties. At the head of the commandants there was a supreme commandant who divided the gates and the fort-walls among his colleagues for the purpose of supervision and defence. As a rule the superintendent of artillery was posted inside the royal fort and was responsible for its defence.

**Scientific Siege Operations**

There was a corresponding improvement in the art of conducting the siege. The enemy fort was completely surrounded and batteries were set up all round to batter the walls and effect breaches in the enemy defences. Mines were dug to near the foot of fort-walls, and these were filled with gunpowder and exploded. At the same time large balls were fired from the
batteries so as to paralyze the defence and strike terror into the heart of the people inside the fort. The sabat (or covered ways) of two parallel wall of the length of bow-shot was erected near the foot of the fort. From the top of the sabat heavy gans were fired at the people and at the concentrations of defence inside the fort. The sabats served as protection for the besiegers, particularly those who were engaged in the work of digging mines and exploding them. This method was successfully tried by Akbar at Chittor in 1567-1568.

The new mode of siege operation remained in force throughout the Mughal period. Some slackness did creep into the Mughal military organization during the reigns of Akbar’s successors until the system became ineffective about the middle of the 18th century. The system became obsolete after the introduction of western military science in the land.

References

2. Ibid., p.193.
3. Ibid., p.193.
4. Ibid., p.194.
5. Ibid., p.194.
10 Ibid., p.172.
11 Ibid., p.172.
12 Ibid., p.173.
13 Ibid., p.174.
14 Ibid., pp.174-75.
16 Ibid., p.180.
18 Ibid., p.8.
20 *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp.64-65.
23 Mark Prophet Muhammad’s words that “*war is a kind of deception (al harh Khada).*” Vide Sarkar, Military History of India, p.35.