

THE KARĀKHĀNID AND SELJUQ NARRATIVES IN ĀDĀB AL-HARB WA'L- SHAJĀ'A: A HISTORICAL AND MILITARY ANALYSIS

ĀDĀBU'L-HARB VE'Ş-ŞECĀ'A'DA KARAHANLI VE SELÇUKLU KISSALARI: TARİHÎ VE
ASKERÎ BİR ANALİZ

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Abstract

Written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century by Fakhr-i **Mudabbir** and presented to the Delhi Turkish Sultan İltutmish, *Ādāb al-Harb wa al-Shajā'a* is one of the most comprehensive treatises on the art of war composed about the Turco-Islamic armies. The work addresses various subjects such as the ethics of warfare, campaign organization, defensive equipment and offensive weapons, military organization, battle formations, and leadership. While examining these topics in detail, the author enriches his narrative by incorporating narratives selected from the history of Islamic states. These narratives should not be regarded merely as didactic stories; rather, they function as valuable historical evidence of the military, political, and social structures of their time. Mudabbir particularly recounts episodes concerning the Karākhānids, Ghaznavids, and Saljūqs, which are of special significance for Turco-Islamic history. Many of these accounts are not preserved in other historical sources, which enhances their significance for the study of Turco-Islamic history. The author's sustained attention to Central Asian and Iranian traditions is also crucial for understanding the continuity within the Turkic political tradition. This study evaluates the narratives related to the Karākhānid and Saljūqs from historical, political, and military perspectives. Employing a textual analysis method, the narratives are compared with other historical sources and analyzed within the framework of military history. In addition, the historical reliability of these accounts is assessed through a comparative approach. In the introductory section, brief information about the author is provided, and the different manuscripts and publication history of *Ādāb al-Harb wa al-Shajā'a* are discussed. Furthermore, the significance of the work within the context of Turco-Islamic history is emphasized, and examples from contemporary military literature are presented. The first section of the article analyzes three narratives concerning the Karākhānids found in the fifth, eleventh, and fifteenth chapters of the work. The first narrative deals with the battle that took place near Balkh between the Ghaznavids and the Karākhānids. In this context, various evaluations are offered regarding the structure of the Karākhānid army. The next narrative examines the siege of Samarqand, which occurred during the political and military struggle of the Karākhānid ruler 'Alī Tegin in Transoxiana against Mahmūd of Ghazna and other Karākhānid rulers. In addition, information is provided about Karākhānid internal politics and military organization, and it is explained how individual military success could result in victory. The rivalry among members of the dynasty, regional struggles for control, and the military components of the state are also evaluated. Moreover, while narrating how the skill of an accomplished archer contributed to victory, the types of defensive and offensive weapons mentioned in the text are examined. The final Karākhānid narrative in the fifteenth chapter addresses the political and military dimensions of the Karākhānid-Ghaznavid rivalry, particularly in relation to Karākhānid expansion efforts in Khurāsān within the framework of the Ghaznavids and the Hindūshāhīs. The second section of the study examines three narratives concerning the Saljūqs found in the sixth and eleventh chapters of the work. The narrative in the sixth chapter discusses Saljūq-Ghaznavid relations within the framework of diplomacy, focusing especially on how war was prevented through the diplomatic mission of Mihter Rashīd. The dialogues in the text are compared with historical sources, and the reliability of the narrative as well as its narrative strategy are discussed. The subsequent narrative recounts the conflict between the Saljūqs and the inhabitants of the town called Herāmetīn in Bukhārā. This incident is analyzed in the context of military discipline, urban defense, and social resistance. In the same section, atten-

tion is given to the art of archery, centers of weapon production, and the role of individual military skill in warfare. The final narrative discusses the political and military relations between the Saljūq Sultan Sanjar and the Ghaznavid Bahrāmshāh. It evaluates the influence of the Saljūqs on internal Ghaznavid struggles and describes the impact of Bahrāmshāh's skill in archery on the Saljūq sultan. By evaluating narratives concerning both the Karākhānids and the Saljūqs that are rarely attested in other sources, the study makes a meaningful contribution to the historiography of medieval Turco-Islamic history.

Keywords: Medieval History, Fakhr-i Mudabbir, Ādāb al-Harb wa'l-Shajā'a, Karākhānids, Saljūqs.

ĀDĀBU'L-HARB VE'Ş-ŞECĀ'A'DA KARAHANLI VE SELÇUKLU KISSALARI: TARİHİ VE ASKERİ BİR ANALİZ

Öz

On üçüncü yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde Fahr-i Müdebbir tarafından kaleme alınarak Delhi Türk Sultanı İltutmüş'a sunulan *Ādābu'l-Harb ve'ş-Şecā'a* adlı eser Türk-İslām orduları hakkında telif edilmiş en kapsamlı harp sanatı risâlelerinden biridir. Müdebbir, eserinde hükümdarlık ve yönetim, harp ahlâkı, savaş stratejileri ve taktikleri, sefer organizasyonu, savunma teçhizatı ve taarruz silâhları, askerî teşkilâtın yapısı, savaş düzeni, ordugâh düzeni, kumandanlık vasıfları ve ordunun disiplin anlayışı gibi pek çok konuyu tafsilatlı bir biçimde anlatmaktadır. Müellif ele aldığı bu teorik çerçeveyi tarihî kıssalarla destekleyerek anlatımını tarihî bir derinlik içinde sunmaktadır. Bu kıssalar, sadece bir öğüt veya hikâye değil, dönemin askerî, siyasî geleneğini ve sosyolojik yapısını günümüze taşıyan birer vesikadır. Müdebbir'in özellikle Karâhânîler, Gazneliler ve Selçuklulara dair anlattığı kıssalar, başka kaynaklarda yer almaması sebebiyle Türk-İslâm tarihine ışık tutan son derece kıymetli birer vesikadır. Müellifin Orta Asya ve İran merkezli Karahanlı ve Selçuklu geleneklerine bu denli geniş yer ayırması, Türk devlet geleneğindeki sürekliliğin anlaşılması açısından büyük önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışma, söz konusu eserde yer alan Karâhânî ve Selçuklu devletlerine ilişkin kıssaları tarihî ve askerî perspektiflerden değerlendirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada metin tahlili yöntemi esas alınmış; kıssalar hem tarihî kaynaklarla mukayese edilmiş hem de askerî tarih perspektifi çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca rivayetlerin tarihî güvenilirliği karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın giriş kısmında müellifin hayatı, ilmî çevresi ve eserini kaleme aldığı tarihî bağlam hakkında bilgiler verilmiş, *Ādābu'l-Harb ve'ş-Şecā'a*'nın günümüze ulaşan yazma nüshaları, farklı kütüphanelerde muhafaza edilen metin varyantları ve modern neşir süreci üzerinde durulmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra eserin Türk-İslâm askerî düşüncesi içindeki yeri ve önemi vurgulanmış; dönemin askerî tarih alanında yazılmış eserlerden farklı örnekler verilmiştir. Çalışmanın birinci bölümünde, eserin beşinci, on birinci ve on beşinci bâblarında yer alan Karâhânîlere dair üç kıssa ayrıntılı biçimde tahlil edilmiştir. İlk kıssa, Belh civarında Gazneliler ile Karâhânîler arasında vuku bulan muharebeyi ele almakta; bu vesileyle Karâhânî ordusunun teşkilât yapısı, süvari ağırlıklı gücü, kumanda hiyerarşisi ve savaş meydanındaki taktik uygulamaları değerlendirilmektedir. İkinci kıssa, Karâhânî hükümdarı Ali Tegin'in Mâverâünnehir'de Gazneli Mahmûd ve hanedan içindeki rakipleriyle giriştiği siyasî ve askerî mücadele bağlamında Semerkant kuşatmasını konu etmektedir. Bu çerçevede Karâhânî iç siyasetindeki rekabet unsurları, bölgesel hâkimiyet arayışları ve askerî organizasyonun karar alma süreçlerine etkisi incelenmiş; ferdî askerî maharetin stratejik neticeler doğurabileceği ele alınmıştır. Müellifin mahir bir okçunun ustalığını tasvir ettiği pasaj üzerinden, metinde zikredilen savunma araçları ile taarruz silâhlarının teknik özellikleri de ay-

rica ele alınmıştır. On beşinci bâbdaki son Karâhânî kıssası ise Karâhânî-Gaznelî rekabetinin siyasî ve askerî boyutlarını, bilhassa Horâsân'daki nüfuz mücadeleleri ile Hindûşâhîler bağlamında değerlendirmektedir. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde, altıncı ve on birinci bâblarda yer alan Selçuklulara dair üç kıssa incelenmiştir. Altıncı bâbdaki rivayet, Selçuklu-Gaznelî münasebetlerini diplomatik çerçevede ele almakta; özellikle Mihter Reşîd'in elçilik görevi sayesinde muhtemel bir savaşın önleniş sürecini ayrıntılarıyla ortaya koymaktadır. Metindeki diyaloglar tarihî kaynaklarla mukayese edilerek rivâyetin güvenilirliği ve anlatım stratejisi tartışılmıştır. Muteakip kıssa, Buhârâ'daki Herâmetîn kasabası halkı ile Selçuklular arasında yaşanan çatışmayı konu almaktadır. Bu hadise askerî disiplin, şehir savunması ve toplumsal direniş bağlamında analiz edilmektedir. Aynı bölümde okçuluk sanatı, silâh üretim merkezleri ve bireysel askerî kabiliyetin harp sahasındaki belirleyici rolü üzerinde durulmuştur. Son kıssa ise Selçuklu Sultanı Sencer ile Gaznelî Bahrâmşah arasındaki siyasî ve askerî münasebetleri incelemektedir. Bu bölümde, Selçukluların Gaznelî iç mücadelelerine tesiri ile Bahrâmşah'ın okçuluk maharetinin Selçuklu sultanı üzerindeki psikolojik ve stratejik etkilerini değerlendirmektedir. Netice itibarıyla bu çalışma hem Karâhânîlulara hem de Selçuklulara dair diğer kaynaklarda sınırlı biçimde yer alan kıssaları disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımla ele alarak Orta Çağ Türk-İslâm tarih yazıcılığına anlamlı ve özgün bir katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orta Çağ Tarihi, Fahr-i Müdebber, Âdâbu'l-Harb veş-Şecâ'a, Karâhânîlular, Selçuklular.

INTRODUCTION

Fakhr-i Mudabbir, about whom only limited information is available, is believed to have been born in Multân, a region under Ghûrid rule, in 551/1157, and to have died in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. The author's full name is Muhammad b. Mansûr b. Sa'îd b. Abû'l-Faraj b. Khalîl b. Ahmad Abû Nasr b. Khalaf b. Ahmad b. Shu'ayb b. Talha b. 'Abdullâh b. 'Abd al-Rahmân b. Abû Bakr al-Siddîq al-Taymî Qurayshî, and his *laqab* (honorific epithet) is *Fakhr al-Dîn Mubâarak Shâh* (فخر الدين مبارك شاه). Fakhr-i Mudabbir provides more information about his family than about himself in his works and describes himself as "a frail old man." It is claimed that Mudabbir's father traced his lineage to Abû Bakr, while his mother descended from Bilge Tegin (d. 364/974–975), the father-in-law of Sultan Mahmûd of Ghazna.¹ It is known that Fakhr-i Mudabbir's family lived under the patronage of the Ghaznavid court during the reign of Sultan Mahmûd (998–1030), and that his father was a distinguished scholar in Ghazna and Lahore. The author served at the courts of the Ghaznavid

¹ Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Âdâb al-Harb wa'l-Shajâ'a*, ed. Ahmad Suhayli-yi Khânsârî (Tehran: 1346/1967), 4; Khaliq Ahmad Nizamî, "Fahreddin Mubâarak Shâh," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1995), 12/87; Edward Denison Ross, "The Genealogies of Fakhr-ud-dîn, Mubâarak Shâh," *A Volume of Oriental Studies*, ed. T. W. Arnold and Reynold A. Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 409; Raziye Çalimli, *Âdâbu'l-Harb veş-Şecâ'a Adlı Eserin Tercüme ve Tanıtımı* (Van: Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2022), 7-8.

and Ghūrid sultans established in southern Asia.² Achieving prominence as a historian during the reigns of Kutb al-Dīn Aybeg (1206–1210) and İltutmish (1210–1236), two of the founders of the Delhi Sultanate ruled by Turkic dynasties, Fakhr-i Mudabbir dedicated his work *Ādāb al-Harb wa'l-Shajā'a* (آداب الحرب و الشجاعة), a treatise of great importance for medieval Turkic armies, to İltutmish. In addition to this work, the author is also known for *Shajara-yi Ansāb-i Mubārak Shāh*.³

In the Middle Ages, numerous works on the art of war were composed in various languages, particularly by societies possessing well-developed military forces. While these works generally provide information on the armies of specific peoples or regions, they also contain significant details concerning the military practices of different nations. Among these may be listed the *Strategikon*⁴ of Maurice, written in the sixth century, and *The Taktika of Leo VI*,⁵ composed in the tenth century, both of which primarily address Roman military strategy while also including various references to the martial customs of certain Turkic peoples.

In the Islamic world, the earliest known work devoted to the art of war among the Turks is *Fadā'il al-Atrāk*⁶ by Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Bahr b. Mahbūb al-Jāhiz al-Kinānī (d. 255–256/869). Of particular importance is *Tabsirat arbāb al-albāb fī kayfiyyat al-najāh fī'l-hurūb*⁷ by 'Alī Mardī al-Tarsūsī (d. 588–590/1193), which provides substantial information on weaponry, tactics, and military organization and was composed during the Ayyūbid period (1171–1260) in the twelfth century.

The work entitled *al-Anīq fī'l-manājiniq*⁸ by Ibn Erenboğa al-Zaradkāsh (d. ?) of the Mamlūk period (1250–1517) offers valuable information on

² H. Blain Auer, "Fakhr-i Mudabbir," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, online ed., first published 2015), (accessed 4 October 2025).

³ Nizamī, "Fahreddin Mubārak Shāh," 12/87; Enver Konukçu, "Kutbüddin Aybeg," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1991), 4/231–232; A. S. Bazmee Ansari, "İltutmüş," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2000), 12/158–159; Naimur Rahman Farooqi, "Delhi Sultanlığı," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1994), 9/130–132. *Shajara-yi Ansāb-i Mubārak Shāh* contains, following an introduction that discusses the earliest successors of the Ghūrids in India, 137 genealogies relating to the Prophet Muhammad, the ashraf al-mubashshara, the Muhājirūn, the Ansār, the prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān, the Ghassānids, the people of Tubba', the pre-Islamic rulers of Iran, the Umayyads, the 'Abbāsids, Arab tribes, the emirs of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd periods, the Tāhirids, the Saffārids, the Sāmānids, the Ghaznavids, and the Ghūrids. See Nizamī, "Fahreddin Mubārak Shāh," 12/87.

⁴ *Maurice's Strategikon*, trans. George Dennis, Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania, 1984.

⁵ *The Taktika of Leo VI*, trans. George Dennis, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010.

⁶ al-Jāhiz, *Rasā'il: Fadā'il al-Atrāk*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām M. Hārūn (Cairo, 1374/1964); trans. Ramazan Şeşen, *Hilafet Ordusunun Menkıbeleri ve Türkler'in Faziletleri* (Ankara: Turkish Cultural Research Institute Publications, 1967).

⁷ 'Alī Mardī al-Tarsūsī, *Tabsirat Arbāb al-Albāb fī Kayfiyyat al-Najāh fī al-Hurūb*, ed. Muhammad Hekimoğlu (Ankara, Divan Kitap Publications, 2009).

⁸ Ibn Erenboğa al-Zaradkāsh, *al-Anīq fī al-Manājiniq*, ed. Ihsān Hindī (Aleppo, 1405/1985).

siege engines and incendiary weapons. Likewise, *Tafrīj al-Kurūb fi Tadbīr al-Hurūb*⁹ by ‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Awsī al-Ansārī (d. 810–811/1408?), written during the reign of the Mamlūk Sultan al-Nāsir Faraj (1399–1412), consists of twenty chapters and contains detailed discussions primarily concerning the organization and structure of Islamic armies.

Ādāb al-Harb wa’l-Shajā’a by Fakhr-i Mudabbīr is of great importance due to the information it provides on the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsids, Arab tribes, Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd emirs, the Tāhirids, the Saffārīds, the Sāmānids, the Karākhānids, the Ghaznavids, the Saljūqs, the Ghūrīds, the Persians, the Romans, and the Indians. The work contains valuable information on the military structures of the aforementioned states, and several manuscript copies are preserved in the Central Library of Tehran University (no. 8968/Tehran), the Dīvān Library (no. 647/Delhi), the Malek National Library and Museum (no. 5347/Tehran), and the Ayatollah Mar‘ashī Najafī Library (no. 10318/Tehran).¹⁰

Eighteen narratives concerning the Ghaznavids in the work were translated into English by Ikbal M. Shafī.¹¹ The work was first published in 1346/1967 by Ahmad Suhaylī Khānsārī in thirty-four chapters (bāb).¹² In preparing this edition, Khānsārī made use of various manuscripts, including the oldest known copy dating to the fifteenth century, preserved in the British Museum (no. add. 16853). In addition to this manuscript, Khānsārī also consulted other available copies. The manuscript held in the Dīvān Library (Delhi/India), however, consists of forty chapters. Since Khānsārī did not publish this copy, the additional six chapters were not included in his edition.

In 1354/1975, Muhammad Sarwar Mawlā’ī published a continuation of the work under the title *Ā’in-i Kishvardārī (Shish Bāb Bāz Yāfta az Ādāb al-Harb wa’l-Shajā’a)*.¹³ Although the title implies the publication of six chapters, the content in fact comprises eight chapters. It is assumed that this title was chosen because two of these eight chapters were already included in Khānsārī’s edition. Khānsārī’s thirty-four-chapter edition was translated into Turkish and introduced in a master’s thesis prepared by Raziye Çalımlı in 2022.¹⁴ As the work has already been translated, the present study does not include translations of the sections examined.

⁹ ‘Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Awsī al-Ansārī, *Tafrīj al-Kurūb fi Tadbīr al-Hurūb (A Muslim Manual of War)*, trans. George T. Scanlon (Cairo, 1961).

¹⁰ Mahmud Abadi-Leyla Shoghī, “Ādāb al-Harb wa’l-Shajā’a and Tashīh-i Ān”, *Adab-i Fārsī*, 10/1 (2021), 59.

¹¹ İkbāl M. Shafī, “Fresh Light on the Ghaznavids”, *Islamic Culture*, XII (1938), 89-234.

¹² Fakhr-i Mudabbīr, *Ādāb al-Harb wa’l-Shajā’a*, ed. Ahmad Suhaylī-yi Khānsārī (Tehran: 1346/1967).

¹³ Fakhr al-Mudabbīr, *Ā’in-i Kishvardārī (Shish Bāb Bāz Yāfta az Ādāb al-Harb wa’l-Shajā’a)*, ed. Muhammad Sarwar Mawlā’ī (Tehran, 1354/1975).

¹⁴ Raziye Çalımlı, *Ādābu’l-Harb ve Şecā’a Adlı Eserin Tercüme ve Tanıtımı* (Van: Van Yüzüncü Yıl

In the primary sources, all forms of information concerning the Karākhānids, the Ghaznavids, and the Saljūqs are of critical importance for studies of medieval Turkic history. While narrating the art of war, Fakhr-i Mudabbīr strengthens his account by incorporating various narratives related to political and military events that took place within Islamic states. Within these narratives, the author provides valuable information on the Karākhānids, the Ghaznavids, and the Saljūqs, although he devotes considerably more attention to the Ghaznavids. This emphasis may be explained by the long-standing relationship between the author's family and the Ghaznavids.

In the work, the narratives concerning the Ghaznavids were translated from Persian into English by Ikbāl M. Shafī, and these accounts were further examined by Arslan Durdu under the title *An Evaluation of the Records Concerning the Ghaznavid State in Ādāb al-Harb wa'l-Shajā'a*.

The work contains a total of six narratives relating to the Karākhānids and the Saljūqs, some of which address events that occurred within the Ghazna-Karākhānid-Saljūq axis. In the present study, the narratives concerning the Karākhānids and the Saljūqs found in the work are examined in detail. In addition, the historical events described in the text are, where appropriate, compared and discussed in relation to other sources. Since an academic study has previously been conducted on the narratives concerning the Ghaznavids, the accounts narrated along the Karākhānids-Ghaznavid or Saljūq-Ghaznavid axis are evaluated primarily with a focus on the Karākhānids and the Saljūqs.

1. EVALUATION OF THE NARRATIVES CONCERNING THE KARĀKHĀNIDS

1.1. The Fifth Chapter: On the Appointment of a Competent, Learned, Advising, Pious, Knowledgeable, and God-Fearing Vizier (pp. 128–140)

In the fifth chapter of his work, Fakhr-i Mudabbīr explains that a vizier should be a person of sound religious integrity, scholarly learning, moral guidance, professional competence, and fear of God. The author emphasizes that the individual entrusted with the office of vizier should possess not only administrative capability but also ethical and religious virtues. In this context, the vizier is regarded as a significant actor who, as the ruler's

deputy, plays a critical role in the establishment of justice and the protection of public welfare.

While discussing the qualities of the ideal vizier, Mudabbir in this chapter primarily recounts an incident involving Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazna and his vizier Ahmad Hasan Maymandī (d. 424/1032). At the same time, he provides various details concerning the battle fought between the Ghaznavids and the Karākhānids near Balkh¹⁵ in 399/1008. There is no consensus among the sources regarding the exact location of the battle. Gardizī identifies the battlefield as Dasht-i Kattar (Kattar Desert), whereas Ibn al-Athīr refers more generally to the vicinity of Balkh. Shabānkāra'ī, on the other hand, points to a place known as Dasht-i Kanz (Kanz Desert). Among the medieval chroniclers, 'Utbī states that the battle took place near the *Charkhiyān Bridge* (پل چرخیان), located four *farsakhs* (parasangs) (approximately twenty-four kilometers) from Balkh.¹⁶

In his work, Fakhr-i Mudabbir focuses predominantly on the Ghaznavids and provides only limited information concerning the Karākhānids. When *Nasr b. 'Alī Khān* (Ilig¹⁷ Nasr), the khān of the Karākhānid state, refused to abandon the struggle for control over Khurāsān, he sought assistance from Yūsuf Kadir Khān, the Karākhānid ruler of Khotan. These two forces formed a combined army numbering approximately fifty thousand men.¹⁸ Gardizī states that this battle between the Karākhānids and the Ghaznavids took place on the twenty-second day of the month of Rabī' al-Ākhir in the year 398, which fell on a Monday (5 January 1008).¹⁹

In his *Tārīkh al-Yamīnī*, in which he discusses the battle in broad terms, 'Utbī describes the battle formations of both armies as follows: "Ilig Khān positioned himself at *the center* (qalb); he placed Kadir Khān with his troops on the *right wing* (maymana), and entrusted the *left wing* (maysara) to Ja'far Tegin. Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazna, in turn, entrusted the center of his army to Amīr Nasr, Abū Nasr Farīghūnī, the governor of Jūzjān, and Abū 'Abdallāh

¹⁵ Balkh is a city located in northern Afghanistan, situated south of the Amū Daryā on the Dehās River, at the foothills of Mount Kūhibābā. See Tahsin Yazıcı, "Belh", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1992), 5/410-411.

¹⁶ Abdullah Duman, "Kantarāt-ü Çarhiyān: Karahanlılar ve Gazneliler Arasında Horasan Bölgesinin Kaderini Belirleyen Savaş," *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 12/1 (2013), 100-101; Gardizī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, ed. 'Abd al-Hayy Habībī (Tehran, 1347/1968), 178-179; Muhammed Nāzım, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* (Cambridge 1931), 50; 'Utbī, *Tārīkh al-Yamīnī*, trans. Jurfādaqānī, ed. Ja'far Shi'ār (Tehran, 1334/1955), 184.

¹⁷ Ilig is a title meaning 'sovereign' or 'ruler' among the Ancient Turks. For detailed information, See Ahmed Taşağıl, "İlig", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2000), 22/108.

¹⁸ Reşat Genç, *Karākhānlı Devlet Teşkilâtı* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1981), 45; Erdoğan Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1989), 32-33.

¹⁹ Gardizī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, 179.

Tā'ī. The right wing was assigned to the great amīr hājib Altūntāsh, together with Indian warriors, while the left wing was placed under the command of Arslān Jādhīb.”²⁰

The intense assaults launched by Sultan Mahmūd against the center of the Karākhānid army, together with the deployment of five hundred war elephants serving in the Ghaznavid forces, significantly altered the course of the battle and played a decisive role in securing the Ghaznavid victory. The physical destruction and psychological impact caused by the war elephants led to panic and disorder within the Karākhānid ranks, thereby facilitating the Ghaznavid army's attainment of superiority.²¹

A noteworthy aspect of the text is Mudabbīr's use of the term *Khāniyān* (خانیان) when referring to the Karākhānids. In the poetry of Amīr Mu'izzī, the land of Tūrān is likewise designated as *Khāniyān*, *Karahāniyān*, *Ilek Khāniyān*, or *Tekīnān*, terms that denote the territories inhabited by the Karākhānids beyond the *Jayhūn River* (Amu Darya/ Oxus).²²

In describing the two opposing armies, the Ghaznavid forces are said to have consisted largely of Hindus, individuals of *Persian* (Tāzīk) origin, and prosperous or fortunate persons, whereas the Karākhānid army is described as being numerically superior and composed entirely of Turks. 'Utbī corroborates Mudabbīr's account of the composition of the Ghaznavid army, noting that Sultan Mahmūd advanced with troops consisting of Turks, Khalaj, Hindus, Afghans, and Oghuz in order to cut off the Karākhānids' routes for fodder and provisions.²³ It is evident that this maneuver, mentioned by 'Utbī, aimed at weakening the logistical channels of the Karākhānid army and thereby securing an advantage. The fact that the Karākhānid army is described as being composed entirely of Turks constitutes one of the most striking aspects of the narrative.

The military structure established in Turkestān was, from the earliest Turkic states onward, built upon the nomadic steppe tradition. Classical Turkestān states such as the Göktürks, the Uyghurs, and the Karākhānids were organized on the basis of tribal confederations. This structure possessed distinctive political and military characteristics and, as a result, the army was composed almost predominantly of Turkic elements.

Sultan Mahmūd's anxiety in the face of the numerically superior Karākhānid army, together with his distrust toward his vizier Ahmad Hasan, underscores

²⁰ 'Utbī, *Tārīkh al-Yamīnī*, 184.

²¹ Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, 32-33.

²² Naser Sedghi-Sinan Tarifci, “Emīr Muizzī-yi Nişābūrī'nin Dīvān'ında Büyük Selçuklular Devri Devlet ve Toplum Hayatına İlişkin Bazı Tespitler”, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 38/2 (2023), 702.

²³ 'Utbī, *Tārīkh al-Yamīnī*, 184.

the importance of leadership and loyalty. Moreover, the sultan's threatening attitude toward his vizier reveals the extent of his critical and domineering approach toward the state elite. By contrast, Maymandī's calm and strategic demeanor is noteworthy in that it reflects the qualities expected of individuals holding the office of vizier.

The jackal–goat story related by Amīr Abū'l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Malik²⁴, along with the account conveyed by Amīr Khalaf Ahmad²⁵ concerning the keeper named Ahmad of a white elephant brought from Sīstān²⁶, who assured Sultan Mahmūd of the Ghaznavid army's potential success against the Karākhānids, demonstrates that warfare was not confined solely to strategy and organization but also involved a psychological and moral struggle. These narratives indicate that victory could be achieved depended upon the combination of these diverse elements.

1.2. The Eleventh Chapter: On the Merits and Characteristics of Every Weapon, the Advantages of Their Use, the Functions of Each Weapon, and Their Specific Features (pp. 240–273)

In the eleventh chapter, in which the author focuses on the virtues of weapons, their characteristics, and their proper use, he addresses the siege of Samarkand²⁷ carried out by 'Alī Tegin during the course of his political and military struggle with Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazna and the Karākhānid rulers. Mudabbīr composes the narrative in a manner typical of political and military literature, in which combat experience, individual heroism, belief in fate, and collective motivation are closely intertwined.

'Alī Tegin, the brother of the Karākhānid ruler Yūsuf Kadir Khān (1020–1032), became the ruler of Bukhārā in 405/1014 and of Samarkand in 407/1016. After distancing himself from the regional policies of Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazna, he attained the position of an independent ruler of

²⁴ *Abū al-Qāsim* was most likely an *Amīr* belonging to the Simjūrīds (Simjūrīyān), a Muslim Turkic family that held governorships and military commands in Khurāsān after the Sāmānids. See Erdoğan Merçil, "Simcūriler", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2000), 37/210-211.

²⁵ *Khalaf b. Ahmad* was a member of the Saffārid dynasty. Ruling in Sīstān, Khalaf fell under Ghaznavid control on 13 Safar 393 / 21 December 1002. He died in 400/1009 at the fortress of Girdiz. See Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, 28-29.

²⁶ *Sīstān* is the name of a historical region that today lies partly within the borders of Iran and partly within Afghanistan. See Osman Gazi Özgüdenli, "Sistan", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2009), 37/274.

²⁷ The city was originally founded on a commanding elevated site overlooking the valley on the southern bank of the Zarafshān (Sogdian) River, and the ruins that have survived to the present day are known as *Afrāsiyāb*. After Chinggis Khān's destruction of Samarkand in 617/1220, the modern city of Samarqand was constructed further to the south, in the region located in the central part of present-day Uzbekistan. See Osman Aydınli, "Semerkant", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2009), 36/484.

Transoxiana in 417/1026. The historical episode described in the text points to a military conflict that occurred during a period in which 'Alī Tegin was engaged in struggles with both the Karākhānids and the Ghaznavids. Within the context of the siege of Samarkand, Karākhānid internal politics, rivalry among members of the ruling dynasty, and struggles for regional control come to the fore.

The presence of *ghulāms*²⁸ in 'Alī Tegin's army indicates that the Karākhānid military organization possessed a centralized structure supported by the *ghulām* system. The *ghulām* system was an economic and military institution also employed by other contemporary states, such as the Ghaznavids and the Saljūqs.

The fact that Ahmad Hayyād, renowned for his skill in archery, occupies a central position in the narrative constitutes an example consistent with the themes of bravery and proficiency that recur throughout the account. The striking of Kerkyūg, who was fully protected by armor and helmet, through the eye opening of his helmet illustrates both technical mastery and divine decree. The significance of this skillfully released arrow lies in its demonstration of how individual achievement could lead to a major victory. Moreover, the depiction of Ahmad within a master–apprentice hierarchy indicates that such military skills were perceived not merely as combat abilities but also as forms of art transmitted through a process of training. The existence of such training may present one of the factors behind Turkic martial proficiency and supports the notion that warfare was conducted according to established norms and practices.

The defensive and offensive equipment mentioned in the text, such as *armor* (*zireh*/زره), *jawshan armor* (جوشن), *nāchah* (ناچخ), and *the sword* (*qarāchūrī*/قراچوری), provides insight into the military technology of the period. The term *zireh* was generally used to denote various types of armor. *Jawshan armor*, produced through the combination of different types of armor, existed in several forms. Notably, unlike other sources, the text states that *jawshan armor* was worn beneath the *zireh*. Although some studies claim that *jawshan armor* was generally manufactured in Iran, the text indicates that the Karākhānids of Transoxiana were familiar with this type of armor. *Nāchah* was a type of

²⁸ *Gulām* is an Arabic term referring to a youth, a manumitted slave, or a loyal guard, and should be distinguished from other service categories such as *rāqīq* or ordinary slaves. While *mamlūk* was commonly used in many Islamic regions and 'abīd in North Africa, the Ottomans adopted *gilmān* as a technical term. *Gulāms* were recruited from various ethnic groups, including Persians, Turks, Slavs, Zanjīs, and Berbers; however, the Turks occupied a distinctive position. Although they initially entered military service as captives or purchased slave-soldiers, their later ranks and influence indicate a transition to the status of salaried soldiers (*murtaziqa*). See Mustafa Zeki Terzi, "Gulam", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1996), 14/178.

battle axe with a multifunctional head. According to the author, it was used both by rulers and by the ghulāms who protected them, and it could serve as an alternative to the mace or the sword. The qarāchūrī, described by the author as a Turkic weapon, appears to have been a type of cavalry sword.²⁹

The statement at the end of the text that success comes from God indicates that victory was attributed more to divine decree than to technical skill alone. At the same time, expressions such as the death of an enemy by a single arrow and the salvation of thousands underscore the idea that individual achievements could yield far-reaching consequences.

1.3. The Fifteenth Chapter: Dispatching a Night Raid, Commanding Its Proper Execution, and Knowing the Right Time to Attack the Enemy in Order to Reach the Target and Bring About the Enemy's Defeat (pp. 298–302)

In the fifteenth chapter of his work, Fakhr-i Mudabbīr explains how a night raid should be organized and at what moment an army ought to be dispatched in order to attack the enemy. In doing so, he recounts both the military campaigns of Mahmūd of Ghazna in Khurāsān against the Karākhānids and his expeditions to India. This period corresponds to the eleventh century, during which rivalry between the Karākhānids and the Ghaznavids intensified. The Karākhānid' desire to establish control over regions such as Tokhāristān³⁰ and Balkh appears to have been a consequence of their westward expansion. It may also be argued that the Karākhānids regarded these territories as military bases or buffer zones. In response to this advance, Mahmūd of Ghazna seems to have focused on ensuring frontier security.

The text states that the Karākhānids, owing to the strength and numerical size of their army, fell into complacency and felt secure. This portrayal allows for the interpretation that they exhibited weaknesses in terms of military discipline and intelligence. By contrast, the text speaks in praise of the army of Mahmūd of Ghazna. On the basis of this information, it may be inferred that the Ghaznavid state possessed one of the most powerful and well-organized armies in the region.

²⁹ İbrahim Duman, *Büyük Selçuklu Ordusunda Kullanılan Savaş Âletleri* (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2020) 105, 127, 142–145.

³⁰ Tokhāristān is a region located in the upper basin of the Jayhūn River (Amū Daryā). See Hüseyin Salman, "Tohāristān", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2012), 41/214–215.

2. EVALUATION OF THE NARRATIVES CONCERNING THE SALJŪQS

2.1. The Sixth Chapter: The Proper Procedure and Order of Sending Envoys and Gifts (pp. 142–161)

In the sixth chapter of his work, Fakhr-i Mudabbīr provides a detailed account of the individuals who were to be selected as envoys and discusses the types of gifts that were to be sent along with them. As in other chapters, the author reinforces the information he presents through illustrative narratives. In this chapter, by addressing Saljūq-Ghaznavid relations, he emphasizes the importance of an envoy being intelligent, experienced, knowledgeable, and quick-witted, and explains in detail how wars that could have resulted in the deaths of thousands of soldiers were averted through diplomacy.

The Saljūqs' settlement first in Jand³¹, and subsequently in the region between Samarkand and Bukhara during the last quarter of the tenth century marked the beginning of Saljūq-Ghaznavid relations. During the reigns of Mahmūd of Ghazna and his son Mas'ūd, these relations gradually turned into open military conflict. In the battles of Nasa (426/1035) and Sarakhs (429/1038), the Ghaznavids suffered defeat. Ultimately, the Battle of Dandanaqan in 431/1040 became a decisive turning point at which the Ghaznavids were heavily defeated and regional supremacy passed to the Saljūqs.³² Although Saljūq-Ghaznavid relations occasionally deteriorated, the Saljūq sultans continued to keep Ghazna under their influence through military and political interventions.

Following the establishment of the Great Saljūq State, relations between Ghazna and the Saljūqs evolved into a more cautious, diplomatic, and relatively peaceful framework compared to earlier periods. However, after the death of Sultan Alp Arslan (10 Rabi' al-Awwal 465 / 24 November 1072), the Ghaznavids sought to exploit the resulting power vacuum and attacked *Chighilkent* (Sakalkent), located in Tokhāristān and under the control of the Sultan's uncle Osman. When the Saljūqs dispatched an army in response, the Ghaznavids plundered the area and withdrew. Meanwhile, after suppressing the rebellion of his uncle Kavurd, Malik Shāh brought the Karākhānids under submission and began preparations to punish the Ghaznavids.³³ Fearing the

³¹ *Jand* was a historical city, no longer extant today, situated on the banks of the *Seyhūn River* (Sir Daryā) within the borders of present-day Kazakhstan. See Abdülkerim Özeydin, "Cend", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1993), 7/359.

³² Hasan Yenidoğan, *Büyük Selçuklu Ordusunda Sefer Organizasyonu* (Ankara: Nobel Yayınları, 2024) 27-29.

³³ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Dakkāk (Beirut, 1407/1987), 8/395–396; trans. Abdülkerim Özeydin, (Istanbul: Bahar Yayınları, 1987), 10/81–82; Salim Koca, *Selçuklu Devri Türk Tarihinin Temel Meseleleri* (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2011), 86-87; Merçil, *Gazneliler*

Saljūqs, the Ghaznavid ruler Ibrāhīm sent Mihter Rashīd as an envoy to the court of Sultan Malik Shāh.³⁴

The text examines in detail the events that took place between Sultan Malik Shāh and Rāshīd, the marriage of the Sultan's daughter Jawhar Khātūn to Mas'ūd b. Ibrāhīm, and the reasons behind the Saljūqs' decision to abandon their campaign against Ghazna. While Fakhr-i Mudabbīr does not specify the year in which these events occurred, Ibn al-Athīr states that the year in which the Sultan set out on the Ghazna campaign was 481/1088–1089.³⁵

During the reign of Sultan Malik Shāh (1072–1092), relations with the Ghaznavid ruler Ibrāhīm b. Mas'ūd were generally peaceful. In this period, the Ghaznavids acknowledged Saljūq supremacy and declared their loyalty through envoys. Furthermore, ties between the two dynasties were strengthened through marriage. According to the text, thanks to the quick wit of Mihter Rashīd, not only was war prevented, but a Saljūq princess was also given in marriage to Prince 'Alā' al-Dawla Mas'ūd, the son of Ibrāhīm b. Mas'ūd. The author claims that the woman married to Mas'ūd was the daughter of Chaghri Beg, and identifies her as the mother of Malik Arslan. However, an examination of the sources shows that the mother of Malik Arslan was in fact a daughter of Malik Shāh. al-Husaynī states that it was not a daughter of Chaghri Beg, but rather Jawhar Khātūn, the daughter of Malik Shāh known by the epithet Mahd al-'Irāq, who was married to Sultan Mas'ūd b. Ibrāhīm, adding that this title was bestowed upon her because she was sent by the Sultan from Rayy to Ghazna.³⁶ Ibn al-Athīr confirms this information, reporting that Mas'ūd married the daughter of Sultan Malik Shāh.³⁷ Indeed, modern scholarship likewise states that the mother of Malik Arslan (d. 1176) was Mahd al-'Irāq, the daughter of the Saljūq Sultan Malik Shāh.³⁸ This discrepancy suggests that Fakhr-i Mudabbīr may have transmitted the information inaccurately.

The text does not specify the date on which this marriage took place. The historian Bosworth tentatively suggests that it occurred in 475/1082–1083, while Ibn al-Jawzī claims that the marriage in question was between the Sultan's daughter Mahmalak Khātūn and the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadī.³⁹

Devleti Tarihi, 84.

³⁴ al-Husaynī, *Akhbār al-Dawla al-Saljūqiyya*, trans. Necati Lügal (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 40.

³⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, 8/455–456; trans. Abdülkerim Özeydin, 10/150.

³⁶ al-Husaynī, *Akhbār al-Dawla*, trans. Necati Lügal, 40.

³⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, 8/456–457; trans. Abdülkerim Özeydin, 10/151.

³⁸ Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2015) 83; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, 86.

³⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *el-Muntazam fī Tarihi'l-Ümemide Selçuklular*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 132; Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, 83.

Mīrkhwānd dates the marriage to 480/1087–1088, whereas Ibn al-Athīr places it in 481/1088–1089.⁴⁰

When the Saljūqs decided to launch a campaign, military organization and army preparations were handled by the *Dīwān al-ʿArz* (ديوان عرض), an institution comparable to a modern ministry of defense. Decrees issued by the sultans were sent through envoys to soldiers residing in various regions of the realm, ensuring that they assembled at designated centers determined by the court. The regions of Khurāsān and Khwārazm were among the primary areas from which troops were recruited.⁴¹ At the beginning of the text, Fakhr-i Mudabbīr notes that Sultan Malik Shāh gathered troops from Khwārazm, Khurāsān, and ʿIrāq for his expedition against Ghazna, indicating both the strategic importance of the campaign and the potential military challenges involved.

The individual referred to in the text as Rādī Ibrāhīm is Ibrāhīm b. Masʿūd, the Ghaznavid ruler who was born in Herāt in 424/1033.⁴² When Sultan Malik Shāh set out with his army and encamped in the region of *Isfirār* (or Isfizār), located south of Herāt⁴³, Ibrāhīm took a diplomatic step by dispatching Mihter Rashīd as an envoy to the Sultan's court. The text emphasizes that Mihter Rashīd was one of the respected religious figures of his time and was known for his charitable activities.⁴⁴

In the medieval period, the quick thinking required of commanders on the battlefield and that expected of envoys engaged in diplomatic negotiations appear to have served the same purpose.⁴⁵ The text employs a highly embellished style in portraying Mihter Rashīd's intelligence, mastery of diplomatic language, generosity, and swift responsiveness, all of which contributed to his diplomatic success. The lavish gifts he brought with him and the gratuities he distributed to court officials were intended to demonstrate the unparalleled wealth and generosity of Ghazna, reflecting a broader medieval concern with displaying power and prestige.

The dialogue said to have taken place between the Sultan and Mihter Rashīd, which is not attested in other sources, is presented in an exagge-

⁴⁰ Mīrkhwānd, *Ravzat al-Safāʾ: Gazneliler (Mulūk-i Gazneviyye)*, trans. Erkan Göksu (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017), 123; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, 8/456-457; trans. Abdülkerim Özyaydın, 10/151.

⁴¹ Yenidoğan, *Büyük Selçuklu*, 62, 66, 68, 73.

⁴² Erdoğan Merçil, "İbrāhīm b. Mesʿūd-i Gaznevī", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2002), 21/321.

⁴³ *Herāt* is an ancient city founded in early periods on the banks of the Harīrūd River in western Afghanistan. See Recep Uslu, "Herat", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1998), 17/215-218.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, 8/455-456; trans. Abdülkerim Özyaydın, 10/150.

⁴⁵ Yenidoğan, *Büyük Selçuklu*, 76.

rated tone. For instance, when the Sultan asked, “Which encampment is larger and more populous, yours or ours?”, Rāshīd replied that the camp established by those who came from Lamghān (a city between Ghur and Ghazna) to Ghazna for bloodletting along the riverbank was larger than the Saljūq encampment. This response appears intended to belittle the Saljūq army, which until that time had suffered almost no defeats at the hands of the Ghaznavids. It is noteworthy that the text suggests the powerful leader Malik Shāh regretted having asked the question and sought an opportunity to embarrass the envoy.

During a banquet hosted by the Sultan, Mihter Rashīd spoke of enormous pears in Ghazna, talking birds, fire-eating ostriches, and monkeys of various colors. The text further claims that Malik Shāh was unaware of these marvels and had never even seen an elephant, assertions that are unlikely to reflect historical reality. What is most striking, however, is that Mihter Rashīd proved the existence of these extraordinary animals and products, thereby persuading the Sultan to abandon a potential war. After accusing the envoy of falsehood, the Sultan declared that he would abide by whatever judgment he rendered if Rāshīd could substantiate his claims. Upon doing so, Mihter Rashīd made two requests: first, that the Saljūq army halt its advance toward Ghazna; and second, that a Saljūq princess be given in marriage to Mas‘ūd b. Ibrāhīm, the son of the Ghaznavid ruler. Sultan Malik Shāh accepted both requests.

Despite promising not to campaign against Ghazna, the text states that Mihter Rashīd, acting on the orders of Ibrāhīm, had letters prepared indicating that leading Saljūq officials and commanders had defected to the Ghaznavid side. From these letters, the Sultan concluded that Ibrāhīm had bribed twenty Saljūq notables. Concerned that his soldiers had fallen under Ibrāhīm’s influence, Malik Shāh redirected his army toward ‘Irāq the following day.

The text explains the Saljūq withdrawal to ‘Irāq on two grounds: Mihter Rashīd’s diplomatic activities and the erosion of Sultan Malik Shāh’s trust in his soldiers due to the falsified letters. While Saljūq-period sources do not directly corroborate the alleged dialogues between Rāshīd and the Sultan, they do indicate that Malik Shāh redirected his army after suspecting that his leading commanders had allied with Ibrāhīm b. Mas‘ūd. Ibn al-Athīr narrates this episode as follows:

“Sultan Malik Shāh set out with the army he had prepared to seize Ghazna and encamped at Isfirār. When Ibrāhīm b. Mas‘ūd learned of this, he wrote letters addressed to the leading figures of the Saljūq army, thanking them for their support, speaking of plans to capture the Sultan, praising their efforts,

and promising them gifts and rewards. He also instructed the bearer of the letter to assassinate the Sultan during a hunt. The man was captured during the attempt and brought before the Sultan, where he was interrogated, beaten, and eventually handed over the letter. After reading it, the Sultan doubted the loyalty of his own soldiers and decided to withdraw his army. Fearing that the commanders would grow estranged from him, Malik Shāh did not disclose this development to them.”⁴⁶

One of the prominent historians of the period, Ahmad b. Mahmūd, describes Ibrāhīm's tactic in his work *Saljūqnāma* as follows:

“Sultan Ibrāhīm was an intelligent and prudent man. One of his sound strategies was to devise a ruse when he heard that Malik Shāh intended to conquer Ghazna, with the aim of drawing him away from his lands and neutralizing the threat. He wrote letters to each of Malik Shāh's amirs, sending greetings and stating: ‘Your sound judgment and measures in delivering Malik Shāh into our hands have been well received. God willing, great benefit and profit will come from this endeavor. Each of you will be honored beyond your due.’ He ensured that many such letters reached Malik Shāh.”⁴⁷

Mīrkhwānd records the Ghaznavid Sultan Ibrāhīm's letter as follows: “Your efforts to compel Malik Shāh to come in this direction were well judged. Strive to hasten his arrival in this province so that we may be rid of him entirely. Should you succeed, I shall double your wages and bestow abundant gifts upon you all.”⁴⁸

Although there are similarities between the accounts of Ibn al-Athīr and Fakhr-i Mudabbīr, significant differences remain. Ibn al-Athīr makes no mention of Mihter Rashīd's role, while Fakhr-i Mudabbīr provides no information regarding the spy tasked with assassinating the Sultan. Other contemporary historians, such as al-Husaynī and Mīrkhwānd, treat the event without extensive detail and present narratives broadly similar to that of Ibn al-Athīr.

al-Husaynī refers to the Saljūq encampment as *Isfizār* (اسفزار), though the correct form appears to be *Isfirār* (اسفرار). He also states that Sultan Malik Shāh released the captured spy and returned to Isfahān.⁴⁹ Taken together, these accounts indicate that all three sources relate the same historical event, albeit with differing emphases.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, 8/455-457; trans. Abdülkerim Özeydin, 10/151.

⁴⁷ Ahmad b. Mahmūd, *Saljūqnāma*, ed. Erdoğan Merçil (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2011), 48-49.

⁴⁸ Mīrkhwānd, *Ravzat al-Safā*, 159-160.

⁴⁹ al-Husaynī, *Akhbār al-Dawla*, 16; trans. Necati Lügal, 11-12.

2.2. The Eleventh Chapter: On the Merits and Characteristics of Every Weapon, Their Advantages in Use, the Function of Each Weapon, and the Specific Qualities of Each (pp. 240–273)

In the eleventh chapter, in which he provides detailed information on the qualities of weapons and their modes of use, Fakhr-i Mudabbir relates an anecdote from the early period of the Great Saljūqs. In this passage, the author emphasizes that military skill, individual courage, and strategic intelligence played a decisive role in determining the ultimate outcome of warfare during the Saljūq period.

In this chapter, the author explains the reasons for the Saljūqs' arrival in Khurāsān by relying on the accounts attributed to Tughril Beg and Chaghri Beg. According to this narrative, the Saljūq army turned toward Khurāsān following a defeat suffered near Bukhārā, caused by an effective arrow shot during the battle. This report suggests that the Saljūqs settled in Khurāsān as a result of failure, pressure, or hostility encountered at the hands of the region's warrior groups. However, an examination of the historical events shows that the Saljūqs' migration to Khurāsān was not the result of defeat, but rather a consequence of their military successes. In 423/1032, the Saljūqs, together with fifteen thousand tents, settled in Shurāhān and Darhān on the frontier of Khwārazm. As Sevim and Merçil note, these lands were assigned to the Saljūqs not directly by the Ghaznavid sultan but by the governor of Khwārazm, Altūntāsh, making a straightforward characterization of this settlement as 'Ghaznavid-sanctioned' difficult to sustain. After the death of Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazna, the Saljūqs once again achieved political and military success and took Ribāt-i Māsha and Shurāhān in Khwārazm as their territory. Having grown into a significant power there, the Saljūqs, together with the Turkmens attached to them, migrated to Khurāsān in 426/1035 without the permission of the Ghaznavids and settled in Marw, Sarakhs, and Farāva.⁵⁰

The text recounts that in Bukhārā, which Tughril Beg and Chaghri Beg, the founders of the Saljūq state, had come to seize, a conflict erupted between the Oghuz and the people of *Herāmetin* (خرامتين), one of the region's settlements, renowned for their mastery of archery. While the Oghuz were on the verge of gaining the upper hand, an arrow shot by a master archer named 'Abd al-Samad Kamangir altered the course of the battle, forcing Tughril Beg and

⁵⁰ Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi ve Türk İslam Medeniyeti* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2009), 68-93; Ali Sevim-Erdoğan Merçil, *Selçuklu Devletleri Tarihi: Siyâset, Teşkilat Kültür* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1995), 16, 21-22; Osman Gazi Özgüdenli, *Selçuklular, I: Büyük Selçuklu Devleti Tarihi (1040-1157)* (İstanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2020), 45-54; Cihan Piyadeoğlu, *Selçukluların Kuruluş Hikâyesi: Çağrı Bey* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2017), 29-35; Yenidoğan, *Büyük Selçuklu*, 28.

Chaghri Beg to withdraw their forces. This decision to retreat should not be regarded as a sign of weakness; on the contrary, it should be interpreted as an indication of the importance they attached to the survival of the state. The fact that the event is narrated directly by Tughril Beg and Chaghri Beg themselves enhances the credibility of the account and reinforces the legitimacy of such strategic decisions. Kamangir's wounding of a Turkmen warrior who was holding a door pierced with a hole, through which he sent an arrow, demonstrates that the art of archery relied not only on physical strength, but also on knowledge of geometry and the careful consideration of environmental factors. Moreover, Chaghri Beg's proclamation that a reward would be given to whoever captured Kamangir alive or dead reveals the high value attributed to such military expertise in the warfare strategies of the period.

During the Middle Ages, there existed cities that functioned as centers of weapon production, such as Herāmetin, which was famed for its skilled archers. Indeed, each Turkic tribe displayed particular expertise in the manufacture of bows and arrows. In the region of Turkestān, the city of Shāsh (Tashkent) stood out especially for its mastery in bow-making. During the Saljūq period, cities located in the Iranian lands, such as Tabaristān, Kazvīn, Kirmān, and Rayy, developed into major centers of arms production; among these, Tabaristān gained renown for arrow manufacture, while Kazvīn became famous for the production of bows.⁵¹

2.3. The Eleventh Chapter: On the Merits and Characteristics of Every Weapon, Their Advantages in Use, the Function of Each Weapon, and the Specific Qualities of Each (pp. 240–273)

In the eleventh chapter, in which he examines the characteristics of weapons and the advantages derived from their use, Fakhr-i Mudabbir includes an anecdote centered on the political and military relations between the Saljūqs and the Ghaznavids. The narrative is addressed primarily within the framework of the relations between the Great Saljūq Sultan Sanjar (r. 1118–1157), the Ghaznavid ruler *Malik Arslān* (Arslānshāh) (r. 1115–1117), and Bahrāmshāh (r. 1117–1157).

Malik Arslān and Bahrāmshāh, members of the ruling dynasty in Ghazna, were related to Sultan Sanjar through their maternal lineage. The mother of Malik Arslān was Mahd al-ʿIrāq (also known as Jawhar Khātūn), the daughter of the Saljūq Sultan Malik Shāh. This familial connection demonstrates that

⁵¹ Duman, *Büyük Selçuklu Ordusunda*, 174, 208–210, 277.

relations between the Ghaznavid and Saljūq dynasties were grounded not only in political considerations but also in dynastic and familial ties.⁵²

One of the most striking aspects of the account is Sultan Sanjar's firm support for Arslānshāh's claim to authority in Ghazna. This political stance marked a significant turning point in the succession struggles and regional power contests surrounding the Ghaznavid throne. After the death of Mas'ūd b. Ibrāhīm in 508/1115, Arslānshāh ascended the throne and sought to consolidate his power by imprisoning his brother Bahrāmshāh as part of a political purge.

Bahrāmshāh's escape from imprisonment and his subsequent refuge with Sultan Sanjar, who placed him under his protection and offered support, clearly illustrates the relationship between Ghaznavid internal politics and Great Saljūq authority. Sultan Sanjar's trust in Bahrāmshāh and the establishment of a friendly alliance with him further demonstrate the decisive role of Saljūq influence in shaping regional power balances.

Through an envoy sent to Ghazna, Sultan Sanjar demanded that Arslānshāh safeguard his brother's rights; however, this demand was ignored. Consequently, the Sultan began preparations to place Bahrāmshāh on the throne. Arslānshāh, in response, requested Sultan Muhammad to mediate in order to prevent Sanjar from launching an attack, yet Sultan Sanjar remained resolute in his decision to undertake the campaign. The Saljūq army, under the command of Amīr Unar, advanced as far as Bust⁵³, and was joined by Abū al-Fadl Nadr b. Khalaf, the ruler of Sijistān. Upon learning of these developments, Arslānshāh mobilized his own forces. Sultan Sanjar and Abū al-Fadl Nasr defeated Arslānshāh and plundered his possessions. Following this defeat, Arslānshāh submitted to Sanjar and promised to pay substantial sums in exchange for permission to withdraw; however, Amīr Unar rejected this offer. In the aftermath of these events, Sultan Sanjar decided to advance personally toward Ghazna at the head of his army. Arslānshāh, in turn, sent the wife of his uncle Nasr to Sultan Sanjar, requesting the surrender of Bahrāmshāh. It is noteworthy that Nasr's wife was the daughter of Sultan Barkiyārūq and the sister of Sultan Sanjar. Harboring resentment toward Arslānshāh, she incited Sultan Sanjar to proceed with the campaign. Sanjar and Arslānshāh confronted one another on the plain of Shahrābād, very close to Ghazna. The ensuing battle ended in Sanjar's victory, and on 20 Shawwāl

⁵² Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, 86.

⁵³ Bust was an ancient city whose ruins are located in the Sīstān region of Afghanistan. It lies on the left bank below the confluence of the Hilmand River with its Arghandāb tributary, in a navigable section of the river, and on the route connecting Herāt to Kandahār via Girishk. See Tahsin Yazıcı, "Büst", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1992), 6/495.

510 / 25 February 1117, Sanjar entered Ghazna. According to the agreement concluded between Sanjar and Bahrāmshāh, the latter was to ascend alone to the throne of his ancestor Mahmūd b. Sabuktegin, and in Ghazna the khutba was to be proclaimed in the name of the Caliph, followed respectively by Sultan Muhammad, Sanjar, and finally Bahrāmshāh.⁵⁴

In this chapter, while providing information on the use of weapons, Fakhr-i Mudabbīr praises Bahrāmshāh's exceptional skill in archery. His ability to strike two birds with a single arrow attracted the attention of Sultan Sanjar, prompting the Sultan to prepare an army and set out together with Bahrāmshāh shortly thereafter. Bahrāmshāh's superior mastery of archery may have acquired a symbolic meaning in the contemporary worldview, suggesting that he was endowed with a form of divine favor or *qut*. Nevertheless, modern scholarship generally explains Sultan Sanjar's decision to support Bahrāmshāh against Arslānshāh primarily in terms of political interests and regional power dynamics, while the text itself places no explicit emphasis on the role of the Malik's archery skills in this decision. This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that translations and academic studies focusing on the work at the center of the present study have only begun to appear in recent years.

It may also be argued that Bahrāmshāh's support by Sultan Sanjar was influenced significantly by the affection and esteem he enjoyed among state officials, notables, and military commanders. At the same time, the Malik's mastery of archery appears to have encouraged Sultan Sanjar to adopt a more cautious and calculated political approach. In this context, the Sultan's reported remark, "If one day this arrow were turned against me, who could stop it?", may be regarded as a striking illustration of his political foresight and his capacity for prudent crisis management.

CONCLUSION

The narratives concerning the Karākhānids and the Saljūqs in Fakhr-i Mudabbīr's *Ādāb al-Harb wa'l-Shajā'a* provide valuable evidence for understanding the political and military world of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Although these narratives were included primarily to illustrate principles of warfare, leadership, diplomacy, and military organization, they also preserve historical information that contributes to our knowledge of Karākhānid, Saljūq, and Ghaznavid relations.

The Karākhānid narratives reveal important aspects of military organization and warfare. They indicate that the Karākhānid army was perceived as

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, 8/154-157; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, 86-87.

a predominantly Turkic and relatively homogeneous force when compared with the Ghaznavid army. The participation of ghulāms in the campaigns of ‘Alī Tegin further demonstrates the existence of the ghulām system among the Karākhānids. In addition, the references to armor, jawshan armor, nāchah, swords, and other military equipment provide valuable information on Karākhānid military culture. The narratives also suggest that the Karākhānids pursued a policy of westward expansion toward regions such as Tokhāristān and Balkh. At the same time, Fakhr-i Mudabbir emphasizes that numerical superiority alone could not guarantee success, as discipline, vigilance, and effective leadership remained decisive factors in warfare.

The Saljūq narratives likewise offer insights into both political and military history. They underline the importance of diplomacy and intelligence in interstate relations and demonstrate how political outcomes could be shaped through negotiation as effectively as through military force. At the same time, comparison with other sources shows that some details preserved by Fakhr-i Mudabbir contain exaggerations or historical inaccuracies, highlighting the need for a critical reading of the text. The narratives also emphasize the military significance of individual skill, particularly in archery, and point to the existence of regional centers associated with the production of bows and arrows. Finally, the account of Bahrāmshāh illustrates the close connection between Ghaznavid internal politics and Great Saljūq authority, while also demonstrating how personal military ability could contribute to political advancement.

Taken together, these narratives reveal important dimensions of the military practices, political relations, and diplomatic culture of the period, while also demonstrating the historical value of *Ādāb al-Harb wa’l-Shajā’a* as a source for the study of the Karākhānids and the Saljūqs.

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