

The Delhi Sultanat—I (Circa 1200–1400)

I. THE MAMELUK¹ SULTANS (THIRTEENTH CENTURY)

Some of the factors which enabled the Turks to extend their conquest from the Punjab and Multan into the Ganga valley and even to overrun Bihar and parts of Bengal have been mentioned in the previous chapter. For almost one hundred years after that, the Delhi sultanat, as the state ruled over by these invaders was called, was hard pressed to maintain itself in the face of foreign invasions, internal conflicts among the Turkish leaders and the attempts of the dispossessed and subordinate Rajput rulers and chiefs to regain their independence and, if possible, to oust the Turks. The Turkish rulers were successful in overcoming these difficulties, and by the end of the century, were in a position to extend their rule over Malwa and Gujarat, and to penetrate into the Deccan and south India. The effects of the establishment of the Turkish rule in northern India, thus began to be felt within a hundred years all over India, and resulted in far-reaching changes in society, administration and cultural life.

STRUGGLE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRONG MONARCHY

Muizzuddin (Muhammad of Ghur) was succeeded by Qutbuddin Aibak, a Turkish slave in 1206; he had played an important part in the expansion of the Turkish Sultanat in India after the battle of Tarain. Another slave of Muizzuddin, Yalduz, succeeded at Ghazni. As the ruler of Ghazni, Yalduz claimed to rule over Delhi as well.

1 An Arabic word meaning 'owned'. It was used to distinguish the imported Turkish slaves meant chiefly for military service, from the humble slaves used for domestic or economic purposes.

This, however, was not accepted by Aibak who ruled from Lahore. But from this time, the Sultanat severed its links with Ghazni. This was fortunate, since it helped to prevent India being drawn into Central Asian politics. It also enabled the Delhi Sultanat to develop on its own without depending on countries outside India.

ILTUTMISH (1210–36)

In 1210, Aibak died of injuries received in a fall from his horse while playing *chaugan* (polo). He was succeeded by Iltutmish who was the son-in-law of Aibak. But before he could do so, he had to fight and defeat the son of Aibak. Thus, the principle of heredity, of son succeeding his father, was checked at the outset.

Iltutmish must be regarded as the real consolidator of the Turkish conquests in north India. At the time of his accession, Ali Mardan Khan had declared himself the king of Bengal and Bihar, while Qubacha, a fellow slave of Aibak, had declared himself an independent ruler of Multan and seized Lahore and parts of the Punjab. At first, even some of the fellow officers of Iltutmish near Delhi were reluctant to accept his authority. The Rajputs found an opportunity to assert their independence. Thus, Kalinjar, Gwalियar and the entire eastern Rajasthan, including Ajmer and Bayana, threw off the Turkish yoke.

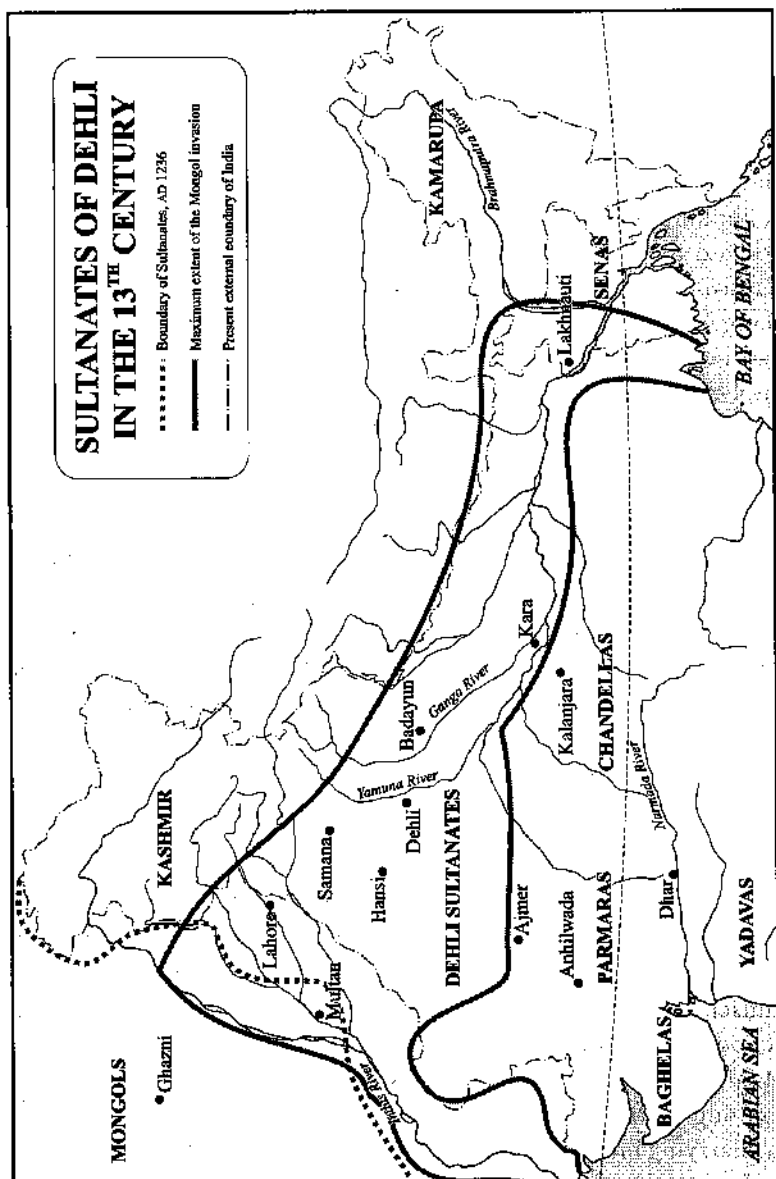
During the early years of his reign, Iltutmish's attention was concentrated on the northwest. A new danger to his position arose with the conquest of Ghazni by Khwarizm Shah. The Khwarizmi empire was the most powerful state in Central Asia at this time, and its eastern frontier now extended up to the Indus. In order to avert this danger, Iltutmish marched to Lahore and occupied it. In 1218, the Khwarizmi empire was destroyed by the Mongols who founded one of the strongest empires in history, which at its height extended from China to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and from the Caspian Sea to the river Jaxartes. The danger it posed to India and its effects on the Delhi Sultanat will be discussed in a subsequent section. While the Mongols were busy elsewhere, Iltutmish also ousted Qubacha from Multan and Uchch. The frontiers of the Delhi Sultanat, thus, reached up to the Indus once again.

Secure in the west, Iltutmish was able to turn his attention elsewhere. In Bengal and Bihar, a person called Iwaz who had taken the title of Sultan Ghiyasuddin had assumed independence. He was a generous and able ruler, and built many public works. While he made raids on the territories of his neighbours, the Sena rulers of East Bengal, and the Hindu rulers of Orissa and Kamrup (Assam) continued their sway. In 1226–27, Iwaz was defeated and killed in a battle with Iltutmish's son near Lakhnauti. Bengal and Bihar passed under the suzerainty of Delhi once again. But they were a difficult charge, and repeatedly challenged the authority of Delhi.

At about the same time, Iltutmish took steps to recover Gwalior and Bayana. Ajmer and Nagor remained under his control. He sent expeditions against Ranthambhor and Jalor to reassert his suzerainty. He also attacked Nagda, the capital of Mewar (about 22 km from Udaipur), but had to beat a retreat at the arrival of the Gujarat armies, which had come to aid the Rana. As a revenge, Iltutmish despatched an expedition against the Chalukyas of Gujarat, but it was repulsed with losses.

RAZIYA (1236–39)

During his last year, Iltutmish was worried over the problem of succession. He considered none of his surviving sons to be worthy of the throne. After anxious consideration, he finally decided to nominate his daughter, Raziya, to the throne, and induced the nobles and the theologians (*ulama*) to agree to the nomination. Although women had ruled as queens, both in ancient Iran and Egypt, and had acted as regents during the minority rule of princes, the nomination of a woman in preference to sons was a novel step. In order to assert her claim, Raziya had to contend against her brothers as well as against powerful Turkish nobles, and could rule only for three years. Though brief, her rule had a number of interesting features. It marked the beginning of a struggle for power between the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs, sometimes called 'the forty' or the *chahalgani*. Iltutmish had shown great deference to these Turkish chiefs. After his death, these chiefs, drunk with power and arrogance, wanted to install on the throne a puppet whom they could control. They soon discovered that though a woman, Raziya was not prepared



to play their game. She discarded the female apparel and started holding court with her face unveiled. She even hunted, and led the army in war. Iltutmish's *wazir*, Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi, who had opposed her elevation to the throne, and backed and supported a rebellion of nobles against her, was defeated and was forced to flee. She sent an expedition against Ranthambhor to control the Rajputs, and successfully established law and order in the length and breadth of her kingdom. But her attempt to create a party of nobles loyal to her and to raise a non-Turk to high office led to opposition. The Turkish nobles accused her of violating feminine modesty, and of being too friendly to an Abyssinian noble, Yaqut Khan. Yaqut Khan had been appointed Superintendent of the Royal Stable which implied closeness to the sovereign. But contemporary writers have not accused Raziya of any personal intimacy with him: the charge that he used to lift her from the arms-pit to her horse is wrong because Raziya always appeared in public on an elephant, not on horse-back. Rebellions broke out at Lahore and Sirhind. Razia personally led an expedition against Lahore, and compelled the governor to submit. On the way to Sirhind, an internal rebellion broke out in which Yaqut Khan was killed, and Raziya imprisoned at Tabarhinda. However, Raziya won over her captor, Altunia, and after marrying him made a renewed attempt on Delhi. Raziya fought valiantly, but was defeated and killed in a forest by bandits while she was in flight.

ERA OF BALBAN (1246-87)

The struggle between the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs continued, till one of the Turkish chiefs, Ulugh Khan, known in history by his later title of Balban, gradually arrogated all power to himself, and finally ascended the throne in 1265. During the earlier period, Balban held the position of *naib* or deputy to Nasiruddin Mahmud, a younger son of Iltutmish, whom Balban had helped in securing the throne in 1246. Balban further strengthened his position by marrying one of his daughters to the young sultan. The growing authority of Balban alienated many of the Turkish chiefs who had hoped to continue their former power and influence in the affairs of government, since Nasiruddin Mahmud was young and

inexperienced. They, therefore, hatched a conspiracy (1253) and ousted Balban from his position. Balban was replaced by Imaduddin Raihan who was an Indian Muslim. Although the Turkish chiefs wanted that all power and authority should remain in their hands, they consented to the appointment of Raihan because they could not agree among themselves which one of them should succeed to Balban's post. Balban agreed to step aside, but carefully continued to build his own group. Within one and a half years of his dismissal, he managed to win over some of his opponents. Balban now made preparations for a military show-down. It seems that he had also established some contacts with the Mongols who had overrun a large part of the Punjab. Sultan Mahmud bowed to the superior strength of Balban's group and dismissed Raihan. After some time, Raihan was defeated and killed. Balban got rid of many of his other rivals by means fair or foul. He even went so far as to assume the royal insignia, the *chhatr*. But he did not assume the throne himself, probably due to the sentiments of the Turkish chiefs. In 1265, Sultan Mahmud died. Some historians are of the opinion that Balban poisoned the young king, and also did away with his sons, in order to clear his way to the throne. Balban's methods were often harsh and undesirable. But there is no doubt that with his accession to the throne there began an era of strong, centralised government.

Balban constantly sought to increase the prestige and power of the monarchy, because he was convinced that this was the only way to face the internal and external dangers facing him. It was an age in which authority and power was supposed to be the privilege of those born in noble houses or those who could boast of an ancient pedigree. Hence, Balban tried to strengthen his claim to the throne by declaring that he was the descendant of the legendary Iranian king Afrasiyab. In order to prove his claim to noble blood, Balban stood forth as the champion of the Turkish nobility. He refused to entertain for important government posts anyone who did not belong to a noble family. This virtually meant the exclusion of Indian Muslims from all positions of power and authority. He sometimes went to ridiculous lengths. For instance, he refused to grant audience to an important trader because he was not high born. The historian, Barani, who was himself a great champion of the Turkish nobles, put the following

words in Balban's mouth: 'Whenever I see a base-born ignoble man, my eyes burn and I reach in anger for my sword (to kill him).' We do not know if Balban actually said these words, but they show his attitude towards the low born, whether Turk or non-Turk.

While claiming to act as a champion of the Turkish nobility, Balban was not prepared to share power with anyone, not even with members of his own family. His despotism was such that he was not prepared to hear any criticism even from his own supporters. Balban was determined to finally break the power of the *chahalgani*, i.e., the Turkish nobles, and to exalt the power and prestige of the monarchy. He did not hesitate even to poison his cousin, Sher Khan, to achieve this objective. At the same time, in order to win the confidence of the public, he administered justice with extreme impartiality. Not even the highest in the land were to be spared if they transgressed his authority. Thus, the father of the governor of Badaun as also the father of the governor of Awadh were given exemplary punishment for cruelty to their personal slaves. To keep himself well informed, Balban appointed spies in every department. He also organized a strong centralised army, both to deal with internal disturbances, and to repel the Mongols who had entrenched themselves in the Punjab and posed a serious danger to the Delhi Sultanat. For the purpose, he reorganized the military department (*diwan-i-arz*), and pensioned off those soldiers and troopers who were no longer fit for service. Since many of the troopers were Turks who had come to India in the time of Iltutmish, they raised a hue and cry against this decision, and Balban had to relent to some extent.

The law and order situation in the area around Delhi and in the doab had deteriorated. In the Ganga-Jamuna doab and Awadh, the roads were infested with robbers and dacoits, so much so that communication with the eastern areas had become difficult. Some of the Rajput zamindars had set up forts in the area, and defied the government. Near Delhi, the Mewatis had become so bold as to plunder people upto the outskirts of the city. To deal with these elements, Balban adopted a policy of 'blood and iron'. The Meos were ruthlessly hunted down and killed, the forests around Delhi cut down, and many military out-posts (*thanas*) established there. In the doab and in Katehar (modern Rohilkhand) Balban ordered forests

to be cleared, rebellious villagers destroyed and the men, women and children enslaved. Colonies of Afghan soldiers were settled there to safeguard the roads, and to deal with the Rajput zamindars whenever they raised a disturbance against the government.

By these harsh methods, Balban controlled the situation. In order to impress the people with the strength of his government and to awe them, Balban maintained a magnificent court. Whenever he went out, he was surrounded by a large force of bodyguards with drawn swords. He refused to laugh and joke in the court, and even gave up drinking wine so that no one may see him in a non-serious mood. To emphasize that the nobles were not his equals, he insisted on the ceremony of *sijada* and *paibos* (prostration and kissing the monarch's feet). These and many other ceremonies which he copied were Iranian in origin and were considered un-Islamic. However, little objection could be raised because at the time when most Muslim states of Central and West Asia had disappeared in the face of the Mongol onslaught, Balban and the Sultanat of Delhi stood out almost alone as the champions of 'Islam'. Although Balban had a strong army, he did not lead any distant expeditions except the one to Bengal, or to expand the empire for fear of Mongol attack on Delhi. But he exercised his army by arranging elaborate hunting expeditions.

Balban died in 1286. He was undoubtedly one of the main architects of the Sultanat of Delhi, particularly of its form of government and institutions. By asserting the power of the monarchy, Balban strengthened the Delhi Sultanat. But even he could not fully defend northern India against the inroads of the Mongols. Moreover, by largely excluding non-Turks from positions of power and authority and by trying to base the government on a very narrow group, he made many people dissatisfied. This led to fresh disturbances and troubles after his death.

THE MONGOLS AND THE PROBLEM OF THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER

On account of its natural boundaries, India has been safeguarded during most of its history from external invasions. It was only in the northwest that India was vulnerable. As we have seen, it was through the mountain passes of this area that the Turks, like the earlier

invaders such as the Huns, Scythians, etc., had been able to penetrate into India and establish an empire there. The configuration of these mountains was such that in order to prevent an invader from reaching the fertile valleys of the Punjab and Sind it was necessary to control the area extending from Kabul to Ghazni and Qandahar. The control of this area flanked by the Hindukush was important, for it was the main route for the arrival of reinforcements from Central Asia.

Due to the fluid situation in West Asia, the Delhi Sultanat was not able to attain these frontiers, posing a persistent danger to India.

With the rise of the Khwarizmi empire, the control of the Ghurids over Kabul, Qandahar and Ghazni had been lost, and the boundary of the Khwarizmi empire had reached the river Indus. It appeared that a struggle for the mastery of north India was about to begin between the Khwarizmi rulers and the successor of Qutbuddin Aibak. Just then an even bigger danger made its appearance. This was the arrival of Changez Khan, the Mongol leader, who prided in calling himself 'the scourge of God'. The Mongols attacked the Khwarizmi empire in 1218. They ruthlessly sacked flourishing cities from the Jaxartes to the Caspian Sea and from Ghazni to Iran, and ravaged the countryside. Many Turkish soldiers went over to the side of the Mongols. The Mongols deliberately used terror as an instrument of war. Whenever a city refused to surrender or was conquered after putting up resistance, all the soldiers and large number of their chiefs were slaughtered, their women and children sold into slavery. Nor were even the civilians spared. Craftsmen from among them were picked out for service with the Mongol army, while other able-bodied men were drafted into labour levies to be used against other towns. All this led to a serious setback to the economy and cultural life of the area. But in due course, the establishment of peace and law and order in the area by the Mongols, and the safeguarding of the trade routes from China to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea started a process of recovery. But several generations passed before Iran, Turan and Iraq were able to recover their previous prosperity. Meanwhile, the Mongol onslaught had serious repercussions on the Sultanat of Delhi. Many princes and large numbers of scholars, theologians, learned men and persons from leading families flocked to Delhi. As the only remaining Muslim state in the area, the Delhi Sultanat,

thus, became the centre of Islam. Thus, there was emphasis on Islam as the only bond of unity among different sections of the new rulers. It also implied that the Turkish invaders, who were cut off from their homelands and deprived of reinforcements, were compelled to adapt themselves to the Indian situation as quickly as possible.

The Mongol threat to India appeared in 1221. After the defeat of the Khwarizmi ruler, the crown prince, Jalaluddin, fled and was pursued by Changez Khan. Jalaluddin fought a brave battle on the bank of the Indus, and after being defeated, he flung his horse into the river and crossed over to India. Although Changez loitered near the river Indus for three months, he decided not to cross into India, preferring to give his attention to conquering the remaining portions of the Khwarizmi empire. It is difficult to say what would have happened if Changez had decided to invade India. The Turkish state in India was still too feeble and disorganized. Possibly, India would have had to undergo death, destruction and devastation on a scale far exceeding what it had to endure at the hands of the Turks. Iltutmish, who was ruling at Delhi at the time, tried to appease the Mongols by politely refusing a request from Jalaluddin for asylum. Jalaluddin remained, for some time, in the area between Lahore and the river Sutlej, that is the Cis-Sutlej area. This resulted in a series of Mongol attacks. The river Indus ceased to be India's western boundary.

Lahore and Multan were a bone of contention between Iltutmish and his rivals, Yalduz and Qubacha. Yalduz and Qubacha exhausted themselves in the fight for Lahore. Ultimately, Iltutmish was able to conquer both Lahore and Multan and, thus, formed a fairly strong line of defence against the Mongols.

After the death of Changez Khan in 1227, the mighty Mongol empire was divided among his sons. During this period, the Mongols under Batu Khan overran Russia. However, till 1240 the Mongols desisted from making any encroachments in India beyond the river Indus. The major reason for this was the Mongol pre-occupation with Iraq and Syria. This gave breathing time to the Sultans of Delhi to organize a centralized state and a strong army in India.

In 1241, Tair Bahadur, the commander of the Mongol forces in Herat, Ghur, Ghazni and Turkhistan, appeared at Lahore. Despite

urgent appeals to Delhi, no help was forthcoming, and the governor fled from the town. The Mongols sacked and almost depopulated the town. In 1245, the Mongols invested Multan, and only a speedy march by Balban saved the situation. When Balban was busy dealing with the threat to his position from his rivals led by Imaduddin Raihan, the Mongols found an opportunity to capture and hold Lahore. Even some Turkish nobles, including Sher Khan, the governor of Multan, threw in their lot with the Mongols. Although Balban fought against the Mongols stoutly, the frontiers of Delhi gradually receded from the river Jhelum to the Beas, which flowed between the rivers Ravi and the Sutlej. Multan was recovered by Balban, but it remained under heavy Mongol pressure.

It was this situation that Balban had to face as a ruler. Balban adopted a policy of both force and diplomacy. He repaired the forts of Tabarhinda, Sunam and Samana, and posted a strong force in order to prevent the Mongols from crossing the river Beas. He himself remained at Delhi, and never moved out to distant expeditions in order to maintain the utmost vigilance at the frontier. Simultaneously, he sent diplomatic feelers to Halaku, the Mongol Il-Khan of Iran and the neighbouring areas. Envoys from Halaku reached Delhi and were received with great honour by Balban. Balban tacitly agreed to leave the major portion of the Punjab under the Mongol control. The Mongols, on their part, did not make any attack on Delhi. The frontier, however, remained undefined and Balban had to conduct almost annual expeditions against the Mongols in order to keep them in check. He was successful in wresting Multan, and placed it as an independent charge under his eldest son, Prince Mahmud. It was in the effort at holding the Multan-Beas line that Prince Mahmud, the heir-apparent of Balban, was killed in an encounter.

Although Balban died in 1286, the strategic and diplomatic arrangements made by him continued to serve the Delhi Sultanat. In 1292, Abdullah, a grandson of Halaku, advanced on Delhi with 1,50,000 horses. He was defeated by Jalaluddin Khalji near Balban's frontier line of Tabarhinda, Sunam, etc. The demoralised Mongols asked for a truce, and 4000 Mongols, who had embraced Islam, came over to the side of the Indian rulers and settled down near Delhi.

The Mongol attempt to pass beyond the Punjab and to attack Delhi itself was due to a change in Central Asian politics. The Mongol Il-

Khan of Iran had, on the whole, maintained friendly relations with the sultans of Delhi. Their rivals in the East were the Chaghatai Mongols who ruled over Trans-Oxiana. The ruler of Trans-Oxiana, Dawa Khan, being unable to prevail against Il-Khan of Iran, made an attempt to conquer India. From 1297, he mounted a series of campaigns against the forts defending Delhi. In 1299, a Mongol force of 2,00,000 under his son, Qutlugh Khwaja, arrived to conquer Delhi. The Mongols cut off the communications of Delhi with the neighbouring areas, and even entered many streets in the city. This was the first time the Mongols had launched a serious campaign to establish their rule over Delhi. Alauddin Khalji, who was ruling over Delhi, decided to face the Mongols outside Delhi. In a number of actions, the Indian armies held their own, though in one isolated action the famous general, Zafar Khan, died. After some time, the Mongols withdrew without risking a full-scale battle. In 1303, the Mongols appeared again with a force of 1,20,000. Alauddin Khalji, who was campaigning in Rajputana against Chittor, rushed back and fortified himself at his new capital, Siri, near Delhi. The two armies camped facing each other for two months. During this period, the citizens of Delhi had to suffer many hardships. There were daily skirmishes. Finally, the Mongols retreated again, without having achieved anything.

These two invasions of Delhi showed that the sultans of Delhi could match themselves against the Mongols, something which the Central or West Asian rulers had not been able to do till then.¹ At the same time, it was a stern warning to the sultans of Delhi. Alauddin Khalji now took serious steps to raise a large, efficient army, and repaired the fortresses near the Beas. He was, thus, able to repel with great slaughter the Mongol invasions which took place in the following years. In 1306, Dawa Khan, the Mongol ruler of Trans-Oxiana, died and his death was followed by confusion and a civil war. The Mongols now ceased to be a threat to India, till a new conqueror, Timur, unified the Mongols. Taking advantage of the confusion among the Mongols, the rulers of Delhi were able to recover

¹ The first defeat suffered by the Mongols in their career of conquest was at the hands of the Egyptians in 1260 near Jerusalem.

Lahore and, in course of time, extended their control up to the river Indus.

It will, thus, be seen that during the entire thirteenth century, the Sultanat of Delhi had to face a serious danger from the northwest. Although the Mongols were gradually able to bring almost the entire Punjab as well as Kashmir under their control, and to threaten Delhi, due to the firmness and vigour of the Turkish rulers, and their diplomacy, this threat was averted, and later the Punjab was recovered. However, the serious threat posed to the Sultanat of Delhi by the Mongols had a powerful effect on all the internal problems of the Sultanat.

INTERNAL REBELLIONS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE TERRITORIAL CONSOLIDATION OF THE DELHI SULTANAT

During the rule of the Ilbari Turks (sometimes called the Mameluk or Slave rulers), the Sultans of Delhi had to face not only internal dissensions and foreign invasions, but internal rebellions as well. Some of these rebellions were led by ambitious Muslim chiefs who wanted to become independent; others were led by Rajput rajas and zamindars who were eager to expel the Turkish invaders from their territories or to exploit the difficulties of the Turkish rulers and to aggrandize themselves at the expense of their weaker neighbours. Thus, these rajas and zamindars not only fought against the Turks, but against each other as well. The nature and objectives of the various internal rebellions differed. Hence, it is not correct to lump them together as 'Hindu resistance'. India was a big country, and due to the geographical factors it was difficult to rule the country effectively from one centre. Provincial governors had to be given a large amount of autonomy, and this, combined with local sentiments which were always strong, encouraged them to repudiate the control of Delhi and declare themselves independent. Local rulers could count on regional sentiments which had become stronger between the seventh and twelfth centuries; to rally opposition to the rule of Delhi.

It is not necessary to list all the rebellions against the sultans of Delhi. The eastern region of India which included Bengal and Bihar strove continuously to throw off the yoke of Delhi. It has been noted in an earlier chapter how the Khalji chief, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar

Khalji, succeeded in expelling the Sena king, Lakshmana Sena, from Lakhnauti. After some confusion, a person called Iwaz who took the title of Ghiyasuddin Sultan began to function as an independent ruler there. Taking advantage of Iltutmish's preoccupations in the northwest, he extended his authority over Bihar and exacted tribute from the ruler of Jajnagar (Orissa), Tirhut (north Bengal), Bang (east Bengal) and Kamrup (Assam).

When Iltutmish was free from his preoccupations, in 1225 he marched against Iwaz. Iwaz submitted at first, then asserted his independence once Iltutmish had turned his back. A son of Iltutmish who was the governor of Awadh defeated and killed Iwaz in a battle. However, affairs continued to be confused till Iltutmish led a second expedition in 1230.

After the death of Iltutmish, the governors of Bengal sometimes asserted their independence and sometimes submitted to Delhi according to their convenience. During this period, Bihar generally remained under the control of Lakhnauti. The governors who acted as independent rulers tried, though without much success, to bring the areas between Awadh and Bihar under their control. They also attempted to extend their rule over Radha (south Bengal), Orissa and Kamrup, (Assam). In this conflict, the rulers of Orissa and Assam more than held their own. In 1244 the ruler of Orissa badly defeated the Muslim forces near Lakhnauti. Subsequent efforts of the Muslims against Jajnagar, the capital of Orissa, also failed. This showed that the independent Muslim rulers of Lakhnauti were not strong enough to bring the neighbouring Hindu areas under their control.

With the emergence of a strong ruler in the person of Balban, Delhi was eager to reassert its control over Bihar and Bengal. A formal allegiance to Delhi was not enough any longer. Tughril, who had submitted to Balban and then asserted his independence, was hunted down by Balban (1280). Savage punishment was given by Balban to Tughril's family members and followers. This campaign which lasted three years was the only distant campaign undertaken by Balban.

However, Delhi could not keep control over Bengal for long. After Balban's death, his son, Bughra Khan, who had been appointed the governor of Bengal, preferred to rule over that part rather than stake his life for the throne of Delhi. He, therefore, assumed independence and set up a dynasty which ruled over Bengal for the next forty years.

Thus, Bengal and Bihar remained outside the control of Delhi during the greater part of the thirteenth century. The bulk of the Punjab, too had passed under the control of the Mongols. The Turkish rule was not fully secure even in the Ganga doab. The Katehariya Rajputs who had their capital at Ahichchatra across the Ganga were a force to be reckoned with. They frequently raided the district of Badaun. Finally, after his accession, Balban led a large force which resorted to large-scale massacre and wholesale plunder. The district was almost depopulated, jungles were cleared and roads built. Barani records that from that date the iqtas of Baran, Amroha, Sambhal and Katehar (in modern west U.P.) were rendered safe and permanently freed from any trouble.

The southern and western frontier of the Delhi Sultanat was also not fully secure. The problem here was two-fold. Under Aibak, the Turks had captured the chain of forts—Tijara (Alwar), Bayana, Gwaligar, Kalinjar, etc. They had overrun parts of eastern Rajasthan extending up to Ranthambhor, Nagaur, Ajmer, and Nadol near Jalor. Most of these areas had at one time belonged to the Chauhan empire and were still being ruled by Chauhan families. Aibak's operations against them were, thus, a part of the campaign against the Chauhan empire. However, in the subsequent period, far from advancing into Malwa and Gujarat, the Turks were hard put to defend their gains in eastern Rajasthan and even to maintain their hold on the redoubts defending Delhi and the Gangetic region.

Taking advantage of Iltutmish's preoccupations with the northwest, the Rajput rajas had recovered Kalinjar, Gwaligar and Bayana. Many other principalities, including Ranthambhor and Jalor, repudiated Turkish suzerainty. From 1226, Iltutmish commenced operations to recover his control over these areas. He first invested Ranthambhor and compelled the ruler to accept Turkish suzerainty. He also captured Jalor which was on the route to Gujarat. The efforts of Iltutmish to extend his control over Gujarat and Malwa, however, failed. The Chalukyas of Gujarat repulsed an attack by Iltutmish. The Paramaras of Malwa were also too strong for the Turks. Iltutmish, however, made a raid into Malwa and plundered Ujjain and Raisina. One of his general also raided Bundi. In the east, Iltutmish recovered Bayana and Gwaligar, but was unable to make much headway against the Rajputs of Baghelkhand.

The Turkish control over eastern Rajputana was again shaken in the confusion following Iltutmish's death. Many Rajput rulers threw off Turkish suzerainty. The fort of Gwaliyar was also recovered by them. The Bhatti Rajputs, who were entrenched in the area of Mewat, isolated Bayana and extended their depredations up to the outskirts of Delhi.

Balban's attempt to conquer Ranthambhor and to recover Gwaliyar failed. However, he subdued Mewat ruthlessly so that Delhi remained secure from Mewati inroads for almost one hundred years. Ajmer and Nagaur continued to remain under the firm control of the Delhi Sultanat. Balban, thus, consolidated the Turkish rule in eastern Rajasthan, despite his other preoccupations. The continuous fighting among the Rajput rulers also aided the Turks, and made impossible any effective combination of the Rajputs against them.

The establishment of a strong monarchy, the repelling of the Mongol invaders, and the consolidation of the territory of the Delhi Sultanat in the Ganga doab and control over eastern Rajasthan paved the way for the next step in the history of the Delhi Sultanat, viz., its expansion into western India and the Deccan.