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The Army and Its Organization under the Ghaznavid State_351–582 AH / 962–1186 AD

El ejército y su organización en el Estado gaznávida (351–582 H. / 962–1186 d. C.)

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Abstract:
This article examines the military organization of the Ghaznavid state, exploring the composition of its army, its numerical strength, the ranks of its commanders, and their respective duties. It highlights the importance the Ghaznavids placed on their military establishment—a priority driven by the expansion of their conquests, particularly in India—and notes their use of elephants in battle, a distinctive feature of their military experience.
Keywords: Ghaznavid state, army, military establishment.
Resumen
Este artículo examina la organización militar del Estado gaznávida. Analiza la composición del ejército, el número de efectivos, la jerarquía de sus mandos y las funciones correspondientes a cada grado. El estudio destaca la importancia que los gaznávidas concedieron a su estructura militar a medida que ampliaban sus conquistas, especialmente en la India. Asimismo, señala el empleo de elefantes en combate como un rasgo distintivo de su práctica militar.
Palabras clave — Estado gaznávida, ejército, organización militar.

Introduction:

The Ghaznavid Empire was an independent state within the Islamic East, separate from the Abbasid Caliphate. Unlike other breakaway states, however, it maintained a strong, allied relationship with the Caliphate. Founded in 351 AH by the Turkic leader Alp-Tegin—who established his seat of power in the city of Ghazni—the empire endured until its fall in 582 AH. This article examines the Ghaznavid military and its organizational structure. Given the extensive conquests undertaken by the Ghaznavids—particularly in India—they placed great emphasis on organizing their military establishment. I explore the various ranks, the hierarchy of commanders, the roles of individual officers, and the composition of the army, including its overall strength. Notably, the Ghaznavids were the first among Muslim powers to employ elephants in their battles.

I conclude the study by analyzing the factors that led to the decline of the Ghaznavid military, the weakening of the empire, and its eventual collapse in 582 AH.

1- The *Diwan al-ʿArd* (Military Department):

The *Diwan al-ʿArd* was one of the most significant administrative bodies in the Ghaznavid state, holding a status comparable to that of the *Wizarat* (the office of the Vizier). The official in charge, known as the *ʿArid*, was appointed directly by the Sultan. The position required an individual with greater expertise in leadership and administration than in purely tactical military matters. In the Ghaznavid court, this department was typically overseen by the Vizier, under the direct supervision of the Sultan—who served as the supreme commander and spiritual figurehead of the army.

The responsibilities of the Ghaznavid *ʿArid* included managing the affairs of the military and overseeing the disbursement of soldiers' salaries. - During travel, the *ʿāriḍ* (military administrator/inspector) ensures that the battalions accompanying the Sultan are provided with provisions and the necessities for their comfort. In times of war, he facilitates

the army's movement by overseeing the routes at every stop, while also supplying them with essential provisions and means of transport.

- The *Dīwān al-ʿArḍ* (Military Administration Bureau) maintained a register containing the names of all soldiers and officers serving in the army. These records detailed the status of each individual—whether they were currently serving, had retired, or were reported missing—along with their respective years of service.
- Al-Bayhaqī provides numerous accounts illustrating the influence of the *ʿāriḍ* within the Ghaznavid state; he was among the Sultan's inner circle, alongside the *wazīr* (vizier) and the head of the *Dīwān al-Rasā'il* (Bureau of Correspondence).
- Individuals who held the position of *ʿāriḍ* under the Ghaznavids include Abū al-Qāsim Kathīr, Abū Sahl al-Zawzanī, and Abū Fatḥ al-Rāzī. Al-Bayhaqī mentions them several times in his work, reflecting the high status of their office—noting that some conducted themselves honorably, while others acted poorly and abused the authority entrusted to them.
- Following the defeat of the Ghaznavid army by the Seljuks in Khurasan in 426 AH/1035 AD, Sultan Masʿūd established a new position: the *nā'ib al-ʿāriḍ* (deputy *ʿāriḍ*). He appointed Abū Sahl Aḥmad ʿAlī to this role, bestowed a robe of honor upon him, and dispatched him to assist Abū Fatḥ al-Rāzī—the aforementioned head of the *Dīwān al-ʿArḍ*.
- The *ʿāriḍ* was entitled to an elaborate robe of honor, which included a belt (*ḥizām*) weighing seven hundred *mithqāl*s. Everyone was expected to show him respect and obedience, with the exception of the Sultan and the *wazīr*, to whom he was subordinate. The *ʿāriḍ* was assisted in his duties by a group of army commanders, including:

A- *Sepahsalar*: This is a Turkic term meaning "commander" (or leader) of the army; it may also appear as *aspeh-salar*. Several early commanders of the Ghaznavid state held this rank—Alptigin, for instance, served as a commander of the Samanid armies, as did Sebuktigin, and even Sultan Mahmud himself, back when he was granted control of Khorasan by the Samanid emir.

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud, this position was bestowed upon Nasr ibn Sebuktigin. Given the vast extent of the empire, Mahmud appointed various *hajibs* (chamberlains)—specifically the most courageous among them—to serve as army commanders in the major provinces. One such figure, the chamberlain Tash-Farash, rendered distinguished service to the state until he was killed in Rayy in 429 AH/1038 AD. When Emir Muhammad ascended the throne, he appointed his uncle, Emir Yusuf, as *sepahsalar*; however, after Mas'ud took the throne, he eliminated his uncle—partly due to false accusations by informers, who claimed that Yusuf had been secretly corresponding with the Khans of Turkistan—in the year 423 AH/1032 AD. Others who held this rank included Ashtaftigin al-Ghazi and Aryaruq, who served as *sepahsalar* for India, as well as the chamberlain Batkghandi and the chief chamberlain (*kabir al-hujjab*) Subashi, both of whom provided significant service to the state.

To prevent a *sepahsalar* from rebelling against the Sultan, he was required to leave his son behind in Ghazna as a hostage.

B- *Katkhuda*: A Turkic term denoting an agent, captain, or overseer. This individual is entrusted with the private affairs of the person to whom he is attached; he possesses the authority to issue commands and prohibitions, and is responsible for executing military operations. The *katkhuda* held several responsibilities: he managed the affairs of the army, oversaw the execution of military operations in the field, and supervised military finances. At times, he would accompany provincial governors (*wulat*), acting as the Sultan's observer—or monitor—over them.

The earliest recorded instance of this position is found in the case of Abu Sa'id Sahl, who served as *katkhuda* while simultaneously holding the post of head of the military bureau (*diwan al-ʿard*) under the commander Nasr. Sultan Mahmud later appointed him to oversee all the royal estates in Ghazni, and subsequently, Mas'ud promoted him to the head of the *diwan* (bureau) while allowing him to retain his previous role.

Another individual who held this position was Mas'ud Tahir al-Katib, who served as *katkhuda* for the army stationed in a city. Similarly, Abu Sahl al-Hamduni served as *katkhuda* to the prince Sa'id ibn Mas'ud in the region of Rayy; in the year 423 AH, he was even invested with the ceremonial robes of a vizier.

In 424 AH (1033 AD), Mas'ud appointed Ahmad Nushtakin as governor (*wali*) and commander-in-chief (*sipahsalar*) of the province of Kerman. At the same time, he appointed Abu al-Faraj al-Farsi as *katkhuda*—tasked with overseeing the army, administrative operations, and finances—bestowing upon him ceremonial robes, a quantity of gold, and a special sword. Many others are also mentioned by al-Bayhaqi in his work.

It is evident from this account that the position was of great significance under the Ghaznavids. No *sipahsalar* (commander-in-chief) or *wali* (governor) served without a *katkhuda* by his side. The *katkhuda* was responsible for the practical, field-level implementation of military and financial affairs, while also serving as the Sultan's eyes and ears—a monitor tasked with keeping watch over the commander. c- *Al-Shihna* (الشحنة):

This term refers to a governor, an official in charge of the police force in a city, a chief, a superintendent, or an agent. Ibn Jubayr states: "In the East, the *Shihna* holds a position equivalent to that of the *Sahib al-Shurta* (chief of police) in al-Andalus." The first instance I encountered of this title was during the reign of Sultan Mas'ud; while on his way back to Ghazni—having just learned of his father's death—he summoned one of the prominent emirs from the mountains of Herat. Addressing him kindly, the Sultan said, "We intend to depart tomorrow, and we have decided to appoint you as *Shihna* over this region, with the expectation that you will govern it well." He then ordered that the man be taken to the royal wardrobe, where he was invested with the precious robe of office for the *Shihna* of Rayy.

Sultan Mas'ud also appointed Nushtakin to the *Shihna* position in the province of Merv. As the influence of the Seljuks expanded, the Sultan dispatched him there in 428 AH to protect the region from their incursions.

Furthermore, Sultan Mas'ud appointed Nushtakin Nubti—one of his chamberlains—as *Shihna* of Bust, entrusting him with a powerful army and granting him authority over that territory.

d- *Al-Kotwal* (الكوتوال): This refers to the commander or guardian of a fortress. The term *kot* in Hindi means "fortress," and the word itself is of Turkic origin, signifying the guardian or commander of a fortress. The primary duty of the *Kotwal* is to guard the fortress—which often served as a place of confinement—and to oversee the affairs of the prisoners, including emirs and other influential figures. Individuals chosen for this role are typically experienced military commanders, selected for their competence, integrity, and trustworthiness. At times, the *Kotwal*'s responsibilities may extend beyond the fortress itself, encompassing the maintenance of security in the surrounding area during times of war or civil unrest.

The most prominent *kotwal* (fortress commander) mentioned by al-Bayhaqi is Abu Ali, the *kotwal* of the citadel of Ghazni. He held this position from the era of Sebuktigin through the reign of Sultan Mas'ud, who entrusted him with the oversight of Prince Mawdud and the administration of affairs in Ghazni.

Regarding the citadel of Termez, we find its *kotwal* to be Baktigin al-Hajib, who rendered significant service to the Sultan during the Seljuk rebellions. Sultan Mas'ud expressed his gratitude by bestowing robes of honor upon him and his deputies; prior to this, Baktigin had served as the *kotwal* of the citadel of Kuhtiz.

Another figure is Qutlugh, a *ghulam* (slave-soldier) of Sebuktigin, who served as the *kotwal* of the citadel of Termez as early as the time of Sebuktigin. Sultan Mas'ud bestowed lavish robes of honor upon him and his fellow *ghulams*, and presented them with gifts in recognition of their services.

Abu Nasr al-Hajib, who was responsible for the royal elephants during the reigns of Sultan Mahmud and Sultan Mas'ud, later rose to the position of *kotwal* of the citadel of Ghazni under Sultan Farrukhzad, who also tasked him with commanding the Ghaznavid armies.

The duties of a *kotwal* extended beyond the command of a fortress; he was also responsible for the transfer of prisoners between citadels and, upon the Sultan's order, could carry out executions—in addition to other military-related responsibilities.

The status of the *kotwal* was held in high regard by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni; he was granted a seat in the Sultan's council, whereas others were required to remain standing in the Sultan's presence. E. *Muqaddam*: A military rank that follows that of *sipahsalar* (commander-in-chief), it is a significant position within the army. A *muqaddam* commands a contingent of cavalry numbering between fifty and two hundred. The Ghaznavid army relied heavily on *muqaddams*; their presence was essential. Al-Bayhaqi notes that Sultan Mas'ud dispatched his uncle, Yusuf, to Qusdar, accompanied by seven royal *muqaddams*. Furthermore, when the arrest of Prince Yusuf was ordered, the Sultan tasked three *muqaddams*—commanding a total of five hundred cavalrymen—with overseeing the operation. The status of a *muqaddam* among the Ghaznavids was high; by the Sultan's decree, they were permitted to wear belts adorned with gold and silver.

In addition to these ranks, the army comprised various other positions, with each individual performing specific duties and operating under the command of a *muqaddam*, *sipahsalar*, or the *'arid* (military administrator). Examples include the *naqib*, the *sarhang* (a senior officer), and the *sawarsalar* (cavalry commander), among others.

Each province had an *'arid*, whose responsibilities were more limited than those of the head of the *diwan al-'ard* (central military bureau). He was supported by a deputy, known as the *na'ib al-'arid*, and a *katkhuda* (administrator)

who assisted in managing the army. The *‘arid* and his deputy were responsible for withdrawing funds from the local treasury to pay the soldiers' salaries. The army also included an official in charge of the postal/courier service (*sahib al-barid*), who was tasked with informing the Sultan of any significant new developments.

The hierarchy within the Ghaznavid army began with the lowest-ranking officer, the *khayl-tash*, who commanded ten cavalrymen. Above him was a commander in charge of one hundred cavalrymen, followed by the *sarhang*, who commanded five hundred. Higher still was the *hajib*, who held authority over the army and the province—a role otherwise held by the *sipahsalar*. Promotions were granted based on merit and competence. 2- Elements of the Ghaznavid Army: The Ghaznavid army was composed of various ethnic groups. This was due to the vast geographical extent of the state and its control over regions inhabited by diverse peoples. According to the *Siyasatnama* (Book of Government) by Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi, the Ghaznavids followed this policy deliberately; relying on a single ethnic group for the army could invite dangers, subversion, and corruption. Therefore, the army ought to be constituted from various ethnic groups and peoples.

He adds: "Sultan Mahmud followed the practice of composing his army from various ethnic groups—Turks, Khurasanis, Arabs, Indians, Ghurids, and Daylamites. During his travels, he would station three men from each group to guard his quarters, as a precaution against the other factions... Each group would fight with great valor in battles and wars, both to uphold their own reputation and to avoid the shame of failure."

A- The Turks: Since the Ghaznavids were themselves of Turkic origin, their army was built upon this ethnic element, which played a pivotal role in its establishment and strength. Initially, these Turks served as soldiers under the Samanids, who relied heavily on the Turkic element. When Alptigin broke away from the Samanids, a large number of his Turkic *ghilman* (military slaves/retainers) followed him—a natural consequence of his position as *sipahsalar* (commander-in-chief) and overseer of the Samanid armies; they remained loyal to their master and joined his cause. His successors continued this policy of relying on the Turkic element. These individuals were acquired through various means: as gifts, through capture, or by purchase. Al-Bayhaqi notes in several instances that Sultan Mas'ud received Turkic *ghilman* as gifts from the Khans of Turkestan.

Most of the army commanders, high-ranking chamberlains (*hujjab*), and holders of major offices were Turks. Examples include Abu Sahl al-Zawzani (the *‘arid*—military paymaster/inspector), Abu al-Qasim (the chief *‘arid*), Abu al-Fath al-Razi (the *‘arid*), the chamberlain Iriaruq, Ahmad Yinaltigin (commander of the Indian contingent), Nushkin Ghazi, and Tash Farrash (the *sipahsalar* of Rayy), among many others mentioned throughout this study.

B- The Khaljis: These are a Turkic people who lived in the vicinity of Ghazni, inhabiting the region that bears their name. The Khalaj joined the Ghaznavid army as early as the reign of Sebuktigin. Regarding this, al-‘Utbi writes: "...He bolstered the ranks of his armies; the Afghans submitted to him, and the Khalaj entered his service..."

When Ilek Khan rebelled in 396 AH—taking advantage of Sultan Mahmud’s absence from Khorasan, as the Sultan was then on a campaign in India—the Khalaj Turks defended Balkh with great valor and drove Ilek Khan’s army out of the city.

C- The Afghans: Since the Ghaznavids established themselves in a region inhabited by Afghans, it was natural for the latter to become part of the Ghaznavid army. Kabul was under Ghaznavid authority, and Bamiyan—conquered as early as the time of Alp-Tigin—was also home to this ethnic group. The Afghans joined the Ghaznavid ranks in significant numbers during the reign of Sebuktigin, following his victory in a battle in India, which yielded substantial spoils.

Yamin al-Dawla (Sultan Mahmud) also enlisted them for his 404 AH/1013 AD campaign against Nardin in India. Al-‘Utbi describes their combat prowess, likening them to "obedient demons" and "men who, like inevitable fate, snatch away souls."

D- The Arabs: The Ghaznavids also relied on the Arab element, who served either within the state’s regular army or as volunteers assisting when the need arose. This is evidenced in the writings of al-‘Utbi, who notes that Sultan Mahmud relied on Arabs for his military campaigns and other interests. For instance, when al-Muntasir the Samanid fled, he was captured and killed by an Arab named Ibn Bahij—even though the Sultan had explicitly ordered that he be captured alive. Enraged by this, the Sultan launched a raid against Ibn Bahij and his nomadic Arab tribe. When Sijistan rose in revolt in 399 AH/1002 AD, Sultan Mahmud dispatched an army composed of elite troops, which included Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Ta’i, the leader of the Arabs.

During Ilak Khan’s crossing of the river in 396 AH/1005 AD—an attempt to seize Khorasan—Abu Abdallah al-Ta’i, commanding the Arab contingent, was directed to engage Sabashi Tegin in the city of Merv, where he succeeded in

defeating him. This Arab force also took part in the battle that occurred a year later between Ilak Khan and Sultan Mahmud.

In Sultan Mahmud's campaign into India—specifically during the conquest of Nardin in 404 AH/1003 AD—the Arabs served in the vanguard of the Ghaznavid army. Al-'Utbi described them as "ferocious warriors" and "sons of sharp blades." During this engagement, Abu Abdallah Muhammad al-Ta'i sustained serious wounds.

He also participated in the conquest of Khwarazm in 408 AH, where his troops formed the vanguard of the Ghaznavid army and fought with great valor. However, his men subsequently became preoccupied with prayer and ritual ablution, leaving them vulnerable to a sortie by the Khwarazmian army, which resulted in the deaths of several of Muhammad al-Ta'i's kinsmen.

Sultan Mas'ud, too, relied on Arab troops within his own army; they participated in all his campaigns, whether against the Qarakhanids, the Seljuks, or other adversaries.

Arabs were present within the Ghaznavid army during the Battle of Kerman in 425 AH, which took place when the city's inhabitants rebelled against the Sultan. They also participated in the Battle of Amul against the Seljuks in 426 AH (1035 AD). In recognition of their courage and loyalty, Sultan Mas'ud treated them generously and bestowed honors upon their commanders; they numbered approximately four thousand men.

Furthermore, the Arabs fought alongside the Sultan in the Battle of Dandanaqan—the engagement in which the Ghaznavids lost Khorasan to the Seljuks. Their leader, Abu al-Hasan Abd al-Jalil, demonstrated his steadfast loyalty by placing his men, along with all their camels, horses, and combat strength, at the Sultan's disposal, remaining by his side until the battle concluded.

E. Indians: Indians began joining the Ghaznavid army as early as the reign of Sebuktigin, and their numbers increased significantly under Sultan Mahmud, owing to his extensive conquests in India. When Mahmud established an administration there, a regular Ghaznavid army was formed in India, which he could summon whenever the need arose. The role of these Indian troops became particularly prominent during the reign of Sultan Mas'ud, who brought them into his forces in Khorasan, Ghazni, and elsewhere.

Mas'ud employed them during the conquest of Kerman in 422 AH, where they numbered two thousand. However, when Kerman rebelled and the Indian troops encountered the strength of the enemy forces, they lost heart and fled. Enraged by their conduct, Mas'ud dismissed them from his army.

Indians also participated extensively in Sultan Mas'ud's battles against the Seljuks, with a notable presence at Sarakhs, Amul, and Dandanaqan. Mas'ud placed the best among them at the vanguard of his armies. f. The Persians: The Persians inhabited the regions that came under Ghaznavid control from the very inception of the state. Initially, the Ghaznavids did not rely on them to any significant extent, as they favored the Turkic element. However, following the conquest of Khorasan, Sistan, Gorgan, and Tabaristan, some Persians were incorporated into the Ghaznavid military. There are indications that Sultan Mas'ud relied on this group, though it appears they served more as volunteers than as part of the regular standing army. In addition to these, the Ghaznavids also employed Kurds and Daylamites in their forces; the Kurds, in particular, fought alongside the Arabs—indeed, it was rare to find an Arab contingent that did not include Kurdish fighters.

3. Numerical Strength of the Army:

Most historical accounts of the Ghaznavids mention the size of their army, which consisted of a vast number of both regular troops and volunteers. Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi writes of Alptigin: "News spread throughout Khorasan, Nimruz, and Transoxiana that Alptigin had breached the gates of India and secured great spoils... consequently, people flocked to join him, until his following reached six thousand cavalrymen."

Following the arrival of these large numbers, Alptigin began purchasing Turkic *ghilman* (slave-soldiers). He raised them according to the Samanid system, in which a *ghulam* would gradually advance in rank based on his service, competence, and aptitude—a system that remained in effect throughout the reigns of the subsequent Ghaznavid sultans.

During his campaign into India, Alptigin sent word to the regions surrounding Ghazni and Transoxiana, announcing his intention to invade India. He remained in Balkh until these forces had gathered, after which he advanced toward India to launch his conquest; this took place in the year 351 AH / 962 AD.

It was prior to his seizure of Ghazni that the Ghaznavid army began to rely on volunteers. When Alptigin broke away from the Samanid emir, he was accompanied by 30,000 cavalrymen, though he had the capacity to field as many as 100,000.

When Sultan Mahmud conquered Khorasan in 389 AH/999 AD, his army numbered over 32,000 cavalry. By 406 AH/1015 AD, this figure had risen to 100,000 soldiers. Conversely, in 414 AH/1033 AD—when the army was reviewed on the plain of Shahbahar—it consisted of 54,000 cavalrymen alone. During times of war, the size of the army would swell further due to the influx of volunteers arriving from all the provinces to join the Sultan.

During the reign of Mas'ud, the size of the army increased, as documented in the history by al-Bayhaqi, who provides specific figures for the forces—distinguishing between cavalry and infantry—and even records the number of war elephants. According to historical sources—most notably al-Bayhaqi—the Ghaznavid army was organized in a professional manner. The state was built upon military power, which served as one of its most vital institutions. This foundation enabled the Ghaznavids to achieve significant victories, particularly through expansion into neighboring regions and India. However, despite commanding a massive military force—even larger than that of his father—Mas'ud failed to preserve the territories his father had worked so hard to conquer. The loss of Khorasan to the Seljuks, coupled with the destruction of a large portion of his forces in battles against them, led to a significant reduction in the size of the Ghaznavid army; Khorasan alone had accounted for half of their total military strength. Subsequent sultans attempted to hold onto their domains but were unable to rebuild the size of their armies, as many soldiers from the Ghaznavid ranks defected to the Seljuks. Within a few years, the Seljuks seized the territories previously under Ghaznavid control. The Ghaznavid realm continued to shrink until the Ghurids captured Ghazni, ultimately bringing the dynasty to an end in 582 AH.

4- Elephants in the Ghaznavid Army:

Sabuktigin was the first Muslim commander to employ elephants as a tool of warfare. He acquired fifty elephants as part of a peace agreement with an Indian leader. Sabuktigin had come to appreciate the value of elephants in combat while accompanying Alptigin during his campaigns against the Indians; consequently, the Ghaznavids made it a priority to secure this significant military asset. From that point forward, elephants became a staple of the Ghaznavid army, appearing in nearly all the major battles they fought throughout their history—especially those that proved decisive. Sultan Mahmud sought to acquire the finest breeds of elephants. In 405 AH/1014 AD, he launched an expedition to the city of Tinishar in India specifically to obtain *saylaman* elephants—a breed renowned for its exceptional courage—and he succeeded in doing so.

Elephants were not used solely for combat; they also served as mounts. Sultans frequently rode them into battle; for instance, when Mas'ud set out to fight the Seljuks in 430 AH/1039 AD, he rode one of his finest elephants. They were also utilized for hunting and for travel between the various provinces of the realm.

By 414 AH/1023 AD, the number of elephants in Sultan Mahmud's possession had exceeded 1,300.

The number of elephants continued to grow under Sultan Mas'ud, who took great pride in them and would showcase them with considerable ostentation. According to al-Bayhaqi, in 422 AH/1031 AD, Mas'ud held a grand display of his elephants in Kabul, numbering 1,670—a figure that did not even include the royal elephants stationed in Ghazni.

As the power of the Seljuks rose during the reign of Sultan Mas'ud—eventually surpassing his own—they came to recognize the vital role elephants played within the Ghaznavid army. Consequently, they seized many of the elephants reserved for the Sultan and his entourage. Furthermore, they captured a large number of them during various engagements, aiming to cripple the Ghaznavid military, for whom the elephant served as their primary offensive weapon.

Al-Bayhaqi, along with al-'Utbi and Gardizi—in their accounts of Sultan Mahmud's campaigns and the army's combat tactics—provide a remarkable, detailed look at the Ghaznavid military. They emphasize that the Ghaznavid army was a vital institution, prioritized in the administration of the state. It served as a model for Islamic armies of that era, characterized by a diverse composition, a wide array of weaponry, and sophisticated military strategies. Their approach to confronting the enemy was relentless, often continuing for days without interruption; different units would take turns engaging the foe, wearing them down before the entire force launched a full-scale assault.

The Ghaznavid army was also distinguished by its strength and its capacity to traverse rugged, difficult terrain—a fact evident in the descriptions provided by al-'Utbi and Gardizi regarding the routes and paths leading into India.

Despite this formidable strength and experience, circumstances later shifted. Sultan Mahmud was far more astute than his son, Sultan Mas'ud; he would carry only what was essential for warfare—provisions and weaponry—which allowed his forces to remain highly mobile. In contrast, Sultan Mas'ud's army was burdened by an excess of supplies and baggage,

rendering it slow and cumbersome. This led to numerous errors for which he paid a heavy price. Over time, the army's standards declined, and it gradually lost its prestige—a stark departure from its illustrious history, which had spanned the era from the time of Amir Sebuktigin through the reign of Sultan Mas'ud.

In conclusion, we can observe the following:
- The Ghaznavids were keen on organizing their military sector by selecting the most capable and loyal men.
- They followed the policy of the Samanid state regarding the training of *mamluks* (military slaves), who rose through the ranks to occupy high state positions—most notably within the *Diwan al-'Ard* (the military department/ministry of war).
- The sultans sought to diversify the ethnic composition of their army, ensuring that no single ethnic group held too much power, for fear of a coup that could threaten the state.
- Despite this diligence and attention, their state did not endure; it suffered several defeats—most significantly the Seljuks' seizure of Khorasan—eventually leading to its final collapse in 582 AH.
- One of the reasons for this collapse was the autocratic behavior of Sultan Mas'ud, who disregarded his ministers' advice regarding the organization of the army—specifically their counsel to avoid overburdening the troops with excessive supplies, clothing, and other logistical demands.
- The excessive ethnic diversity within the ranks proved detrimental; following Sultan Mas'ud's defeat by the Seljuks, various elements of the army chose to defect to the side that held the upper hand.

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