

The 14th Century Portrayal Of Intelligence Gathering And Kingship In Fatawa-I Jahandari By Barani.

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the intricate dynamics of intelligence gathering within the context of kingship in 14th century India, as portrayed in Ziauddin Barani's seminal work, the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*. Barani, a notable historian and political thinker of the Delhi Sultanate, provides a comprehensive account of the political and social ethos of his time. Through a meticulous examination of the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, the article explores how kingship ties influenced intelligence operations and political strategies during the Delhi Sultanate, particularly under the rule of Sultan Alauddin Khalji and his successors. The study employs a historical-analytical method, juxtaposing Barani's observations with contemporary accounts and modern historical analyses. The findings highlight the pivotal role of kingship in shaping political alliances, espionage activities, and the overall governance structure. The article not only contributes to the understanding of medieval Indian polity but also offers insights into the complex interplay between family ties and statecraft in historical contexts.

Keywords: Intelligence Gathering, Kingship, 14th Century India, Ziauddin Barani, *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, Delhi Sultanate, Alauddin Khalji, Medieval Indian Polity, Espionage, Historical Analysis.

The fourteenth century was a significant period in the history of medieval India. During this era, the sultans of Delhi¹ expanded their territorial jurisdiction from northern India to southern India. They also strengthened the administration and endeavoured to construct a system of governance based on legal principles throughout their whole state². During the early 14th century, two sultans of Delhi, Alauddin Khalji³ and Muhammad bin Tughlaq⁴, expanded their state's territory with the assistance of a well-structured military force⁵. Several primary sources from the fourteenth century contribute to a coherent narrative of that period, such as *Taikh-i-Ferozshahi*, *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* by Ziauddin Barani⁶, Sultan Firoz Tughlaq's⁷ autobiography, writings of Amir Khusaro⁸, and the report of the foreign traveler Ibn Batuta⁹.

Ziauddin Barani's monograph, *Fatawa-i-jahandari*, delves at the nature of kingship and intelligence gathering during the fourteenth century owing to the fact that this served as a significant political theory reference during the fourteenth century.

Ziauddin Barani authored it in the Persian language. Barani hailed from a noble lineage that had faithfully served three prominent dynasties during the Sultanate period: Albarite, Khalji, and Tughlaq. Husam-u-Din, the maternal grandfather of the person mentioned, held a significant position in the administration of Sultan Balban. His father, Muwayyid-ud-Mulk, held the position of naib (deputy) under Sultan Arkali Khan. His uncle, Ala ul Mulk, had a position of trust and nobility as a confidant of Sultan Alauddin Khalji. Barani became a member of the court during the rule of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq and gained his trust. Upon Firuz Shah Tughlaq's accession to the throne, Barani's prominence in the court diminished.¹⁰

Fatawa-i-Jahandari is a sequel to *Tarikh-i-Ferozshahi*, which is a political chronicle of the Delhi Sultanate. Barani authored *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* with three primary aims: to appease Sultan Feroz, to achieve paradise, and to provide guidance to future generations of noble readers¹¹. The initial editing was conducted by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, followed by further editing by Prof. S.A. Rashid¹². Dr. Afsar Begam translated and revised it in 1950, including an introduction¹³.

The *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* refers to the fundamental principles of governance. It comprised a compilation of counsel directed for monarchs. The counsel pertains to several aspects such as the personal protection of the king, the impact of the monarch's good faith, the evaluation of officers, the military, price regulation, the administration of justice, mercy and punishments, and state laws. The author of the advise proclaimed himself

a benevolent supporter of the sultan's court¹⁴. The primary concept underlying his counsel to the king was the preservation of the state and the preservation of social hierarchy. In other words, he elucidated the philosophy of kingship that was prevalent during his time. He provides counsel to the king on numerous ideas. However, one of the crucial pieces of advice he provided to the monarch pertained to the acquisition of intelligence¹⁵.

The major characteristic of the medieval period was the notion of the divine authority of the state. The king in the state served as the earthly embodiment of divinity. The desires of God are manifested in reality solely via the agency of Kingship. Barani expressed his appreciation and admiration for the creator, who has bestowed religion as a means of safeguarding the integrity of sultans and powerful rulers through the virtue of justice. The creator has also ensured that people around the world obediently follow their commands and remain loyal to their governance. Additionally, the creator's benevolence has allowed for the inhabitation of the earth and the establishment of order¹⁶.

According to the findings of historians A.L. Srivastav¹⁷ and K.S. Lal¹⁸, the political system in medieval India can be classified as a theocracy. However, historians I.H. Qurashi¹⁹ and M. Habib²⁰ hold a contrasting perspective and refute the notion that the state in medieval India was founded on religious grounds.

The Fatawa-i-Jahandari provides insight into the true essence of the Delhi Sultanate. The argument put out was that the laws in the state were not just derived from shariat, but also from zabita. The term "zabita" refers to the legal regulations that were established by the state or monarch throughout the 14th century²¹. Barani stated that zabita laws are necessary for the state as they serve as a method of administration.

Afsar Begam and Mohammad Habib asserted that the establishment of the state in the fourteenth century was, however, secular in nature. The basis of it did not derive from any religious books or their interpretation by the Islamic orthodox ulema²².

Barani proclaimed that monarchy was contrary to Islamic beliefs and that its principles and traditions violated the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet. However, he strongly emphasizes that it was a need of the era. He emphasized the significance of a religious monarchy in his counsel to the king²³. He contended that the king possesses divine authority. According to him, when God elevates a man to the position of kingship and entrusts him with the responsibility of governing the people, it is the king's obligation to interact with the people in a manner that promotes the well-being of the state and the welfare of its citizens²⁴. Barani also affirmed that the position of monarch holds immense prestige on the earth²⁶. When God appoints a man as the sovereign of a nation, He bestows upon him prestige and authority surpassing that of all others, and establishes the people of the territory as reliant upon him²⁵.

In his twentieth counsel, Barani elucidates the significance of the term "state". According to him, kingship refers to the dominion that a person acquires over a region via the exertion of authority and coercion. The term "Barani" refers to the focus placed on the king as the central aspect of the state²⁷. He asserted that the establishment of kingship is essential for the preservation of social order, particularly in regards to the administration of justice²⁸. The king has the authority to select, promote, and remove the officers of state in order to uphold social order and justice.

According to M. Habib, Barani aimed to establish the monarchy as an institution by granting the king's council the power to create laws and administrative regulations. However, it is worth noting that the council members were carefully chosen by the king himself. The King sought counsel from his council when faced with difficulties²⁹. The king served as the surrogate and ambassador of God in the terrestrial realm. He was a mere reflection of God and his counsel was profoundly influenced by heavenly inspiration³⁰. Barani asserted that the king was divinely sent for the betterment of the populace and the preservation of religious beliefs. He designated individuals to serve as officers, governors, judges, courtiers, revenue collectors, army commanders, and accountants in order to uphold his reign.

Barani harbored his own notions for upholding the monarchy³¹. He stated that intelligence collection is vital for the king. He advised the monarch to closely monitor the actions of his officers, commanders, and accountants. In his guidance on the selection of intelligence officers, Barani said that while Islam forbids spying on others, this prohibition does not extend to the king³². He stated that if a monarch lacks vigilance over the actions of their subordinates, it can lead to complications inside the kingdom. He was unable to fulfill the task assigned to him by God, and on the day of judgment, he encountered difficulties. The king was well knowledgeable, and this knowledge played a crucial role in his success³³.

Barani elucidated the significance of intelligence collecting. According to him, the sons, relatives, close relatives, and favorites of the king have a tendency to become inebriated and lose their judgment. However, if they are convinced of the king's unwavering authority and are aware that all their actions, both good and evil, are reported to the king, they will be awakened from their state of intoxication. Not only will it benefit them, but the king will also avoid punishing members of his own family for their wrongdoings and prevent turning his supporters into adversaries³⁴.

Barani emphasized the crucial need of information collection for kingship in order to mitigate both internal and external threats. He stated that "in the event of any uprising occurring in the capital or the provinces, or if rebels were to infiltrate from external sources, the monarch would be promptly informed about the rebels' quantity, power, and cohesion. Additionally, the nefarious intentions and strategies of the rebels would be uncovered prior to their execution. Barani explicitly stated that in order to prevent any uprising, the king must focus on the acquisition of knowledge". Barani stated that the monarch received comprehensive information

about the insurrection promptly, enabling him to quell the uprising without causing harm to his devout followers. Barani stated that a proficient intelligence gathering system in place would deter conspirators from rebelling against the king. The governors, administrative officials, and revenue collectors abstained from soliciting bribes and refrained from accepting gifts from citizens. He stated that once it becomes evident to warriors, rulers, officials, and tax collectors that their positive and negative deeds will be exposed, they will refrain from oppressing and ruling with tyranny over the populace, seeking bribes, accepting gifts, or yielding to recommendations. They will steadfastly adhere to morality and abstain from engaging in wicked and wrongful behavior, always harboring a sense of fear and trepidation for their own destiny. They exhibited good behavior. They will neither revolt nor attempt to dominate one another³⁵.

Barani asserted that a king's information collecting system, if efficient, would prevent corruption and ensure the correct functioning of revenue collectors and accountants.

The family of high-ranking officials will refrain from oppressing the vulnerable and perform their duties efficiently³⁶. The intelligence gathering system relied on the officers and spies who gathered information on behalf of the king³⁷. Barani praised the exceptional qualities of an intelligence officer who served as the primary pillar of the system. He expressed the need of honesty in both speech and writing, as well as the need to be trustworthy, of noble birth, self-assured, and mindful of one's dignity. These skills make an intelligence officer invaluable for kingship. He is quite efficient. He stated that if an intelligence officer lacks rectitude, being morally corrupt, greedy, covetous, and irresponsible, the king's endeavors for the well-being of the people will be misguided. The deceitful and astute policemen continuously instill terror in the people of God, both during the day and at night. He insisted on receiving bribes, slave females, and wealth from the aristocrats. He withheld the truth from the king. He incited the king to become the adversary of his own subjects, and turned the people into adversaries of the king. Appointing an unsuitable individual as an intelligence officer could result in the kingdom losing trust, posing a significant threat to the monarchy³⁸.

Barani stated that selecting a suitable candidate for the position of intelligence officers is exceedingly challenging. In contemporary times, those with genuine religious virtue will decline government positions³⁹. It is imperative for the king to use caution while selecting individuals for the position of intelligence officers. He provided an illustration of a maneuver executed by Sultan Mahmud on one occasion. The sultan requested the minister to choose two hundred individuals to be appointed as intelligence officers. Additionally, the monarch included a strict provision for consequences in the event of misconduct. After a span of two hundred days, one hundred thirty individuals successfully completed the task while seventy individuals faced the consequences as stipulated by the clause. Subsequently, the sultan designated seventy individuals who had previously been unsuccessful as intelligence officials, while the appointment letters of those who had passed were deliberately destroyed. Barani emphasizes that in order to fulfill their duties as an intelligence officer, a person may need to behave inappropriately towards others. However, their honesty and integrity are of greater importance than their behavior, as these qualities are vital for the stability and well-being of the kingdom⁴¹.

The Barid⁴², a prominent official throughout the fourteenth century, held the primary role in the information gathering apparatus. He had the responsibility of collecting intelligence and transmitting it. He obtained classified information with the assistance of a spy known as Jasus or Khufia⁴². The informant, known as the Jasus or Khufia, provided the information to Barid, who is also referred to as the monarch. If Jasus provided the knowledge to Barid, he promptly conveyed it to the king without any delay⁴³.

The Fatawa-i-Jahandary by Ziauddin Barani is a significant resource for comprehending the connection between monarchy and the acquisition of intelligence. In the medieval period, the kingdom was believed to have a divine origin. However, in order to sustain their power, the head of state relied on intelligence collected by their covert agents and officials. It is ironic that a theologian like Barani recognized the significance of information and encouraged the king of his day to build a system that would facilitate being well-informed. Therefore, it demonstrates that information was the primary component during the fourteenth century as well.

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3. Lal, K.S.*History of Khaljis*,Allahabad,1950 pp.79-221.
4. Husain, M.*Muhammad Bin Tughlaq*,Delhi,1938, pp.83-93.
5. Jakson, P.,*The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.238-55.
6. Well Known political thinker of his age Barani (1285 – 1358 CE) wrote many other books like Fatwa-i-Dindari, Sana-i-Muhammadi, Hasrat Nama, etc.
7. Firoz Tughlaq reigned 1351-1388 CE and wrote his own autobiography titled Futuh-i-Firozshahi.
8. Amir Khusarou well known poet, musician and scholar of his age (125301325 AD). His famous wrtings are Miftah-ul-Futuh, Khaza-in-ul-Futuh, Nuhsiphir, kirans-us-sadain.

9. Great traveller of his age Ibn Batutah was native of Tangier. In his life, he explored all the contemporary state of Africa and Asia. His travel account *Rehla* is called the mine of contemporary information.
10. Barani, Z., Fatawa-i-Jahandari, eng. translation by Afsar Begam in *Medieval India Quarterly*, Aligarh, 1950, P.127.
11. Ibid P.IX.
12. Fatawa-i-Jahandari was first translated by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan a prominent scholar and social reformer of nineteenth century; and after by S.A. Rashid, ibid, P.ii.
13. Afsar Begam translated it in English and published in *Medieval India Quarterly*, in 1950 by AM.U Aligarh. Its introduction written by Mohammad Habib.
14. Barani, Z. op.cit, P.1.
15. Siddiqui, I.H., *Authority and Kingship under the sultans of Delhi*, 2006, P.223.
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17. Srivastava, A.L., *The Sultanate of Delhi* 1966 PP 127-140, 282-308.
18. Lal, K.S., *Theory and Practice of Muslim State in India*, Delhi 1999.
19. Qureshi, I.H., op.cit, P.204-215.
20. Habibullah, A.B.M. *The foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Allahabad, 1961, P.P 231-271.
21. Barani, Z. op.cit, p.vi.
22. Ulema are scholars of Islamic doctrine and law. For detail see Qureshi, I.H., *Ulema in Politics*, Delhi 1985
23. Ibid, P.VI.
24. Ibid, P.30.
25. Ibid, P.31.
26. Ibid, P.21.
27. Ibid, P.96.
28. Ibid, P.169.
29. Ibid, P.170.
30. Ibid, P.168.
31. Qureshi, I.H., op.cit P 25.
32. Barani, Z. op.cit P 30.
33. Siddiqui, I.H., op.cit P 11.
34. Barani, Z. op.cit P.31.
35. Ibid P.31.
36. Ibid P.32.
37. Siddiqui, I.H., op.cit. P.222.
38. Barani, Z. op.cit, P.32
39. Ibid, P.32-33.
40. Ibid, P.32.
41. Barid was head of intelligence and communication system under the sultan of Delhi, Siddique, I.H., op.cit P.224.
42. A secret agent appointed by state to gather secret information.
43. Siddique, I.H. op.cit. PP.224-225.