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Title:

Epigraphic and Numismatic Perspectives on Muhammad-bin-Sam

Author:

Ms. Divya Chowdhary

M.A. (Palaeography, Epigraphy and Numismatics)

Indian Institute of Heritage

Noida (Uttar Pradesh)

Contact:

Email: itsdivya77@gmail.com

LinkedIn profile: https://www.linkedin.com/in/historywithdivya?utm_source=share&utm_campaign=share_via&utm_content=profile&utm_medium=android_app

Abstract:

This paper presents a new understanding of Muhammad-bin-Sam's (Muhammad Ghori) reign in India by foregrounding the primary inscriptional and numismatic evidence from the late twelfth till fourteenth centuries. Moving beyond established Persian and vernacular literary narratives, the research investigates how Ghori's conquest and legacy were documented and perceived through material records, notably inscriptions on the Qutub Minar, Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, along with the local Sanskrit-Nagari sources like the Palam Baoli and Sarban Sanskrit inscriptions. This is complemented by a detailed study of coinage including the Nagari and Arabic inscribed issues, which implies economic adaptation and assertion of sovereignty across regions including Delhi, Bayana, and Bengal. This interdisciplinary inquiry demonstrates that inscriptional and numismatic sources offer invaluable, and often ignored perspectives on early Indo-Islamic rule.

Keywords: Muhammad Ghori, inscriptions, numismatics, Delhi Sultanate, Indo-Islamic integration

Introduction

Muhammad-bin-Sam, more commonly known as Muhammad Ghori, was a pivotal figure in the late 12th century, ruling in a dyarchy with his elder brother Ghiyath al-din Muhammad (till 1203 CE). His military campaigns and administrative strategies laid the foundation for the Delhi Sultanate and the long-term establishment of Turco-Islamic rule in the Indian subcontinent. While his conquests have been extensively analysed through Persian literary sources, such as those by Minhaj-i-Siraj Juzjani, Hasan Nizami, and later chroniclers like Barani and Firishta, a comprehensive study utilising primary material sources—namely **epigraphy** and **numismatics**—remains largely unexplored.

Hence, **this study aims to conduct a detailed examination of the epigraphical records and numismatic evidence associated with Muhammad Ghori.** It includes inscriptions and coins issued directly by him, his subordinates, and his successors. Additionally, the research considers posthumous epigraphic and numismatic references to Ghori to analyse how he was perceived by his successors and especially the local population, thereby tracing his legacy.

By integrating these material sources, this study seeks to reconstruct Ghori's reign in India and examine the broader process of Turco-Islamic integration. In doing so, it addresses gaps in historiography, which has largely relied on Persian and vernacular literary sources, advocating for a more comprehensive understanding of this transformative period in Indian history.

Methodology

The research draws upon direct fieldwork at key sites like the Qutub Complex and museum collections (Purana Qila ASI Museum, Red Fort Museum, National Museum Coin Gallery). Methods include transcription, paleographic analysis, photographic documentation, and comparative historiographical study aligned with literary sources. The approach blends palaeography, linguistics, and economic history to interpret inscriptions and coins in historical context.

Literature Review

Epigraphy and numismatics serve as vital auxiliary historical sciences, providing contemporaneous records on stone and metal that clarify sovereign identities, territorial extent, and economic frameworks. **Perso-Arabic epigraphical records** serve as one of the primary sources for understanding the medieval history of India. Approximately 2,000 Perso-Arabic inscriptions have been published in ***Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*** and ***Epigraphia Indica – Arabic & Persian Supplement*** from 1907–08 to 1977 and 2011. **ASI's Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy** also report Perso-Arabic finds.

While the Ghurid and early Sultanate state employed Arabic (and subsequently Persian) as the official language of power, local traditions continued to preserve rulers' names and titles in Nagari–Sanskrit inscriptions. Thus, rulers like Shihab-ud-din Muhammad (Muhammad bin Sam)

were referred to in inscriptions as "Sahavadina," an Indianized rendering that adapted his identity into the phonetic and cultural norms of the region. The epigraphical and numismatic evidence from this period has been worked upon previously- published in major scholarly compilations like *Epigraphia Indica*, *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*, the *Catalogue of Delhi Museum of Archaeology*, *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*, and antiquarian works such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's *Athar-us-Sanadid* (1854).

The Nagari inscriptions referring to Muhammad Ghori have been systematically recovered, deciphered, and published in leading archaeological and epigraphical sources. For instance, the *Catalogue of Delhi Museum of Archaeology*- which came out in 1926- describes in detail the three Nagari-Sanskrit inscriptions from Delhi (Palam Baoli, Sarban Sanskrit Inscription, and Naraina Stone Inscription). They next appeared straight in a research work in 1990, by Pushpa Prasad (Aligarh Muslim University) in *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate*. Since then, discussion on these crucial epigraphic evidences has practically vanished from our historical awareness. A similar situation pertains to the coins from this period.

Epigraphic Evidence

Inscriptions from Qutub Complex and Hansi

*Plate 1: The inscription on the **outer lintel** of the eastern gateway to the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. Measures 581 x 194 inches, in one line, Persian. Exact date uncertain (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 2017-18 pp.15)*

Source: Deptt. of P.E.N. (I.I.H)

Translation: "This mosque was built by Qutbuddin Aybak. May God have mercy on that slave everyone who prays for the faith of that good builder(?)"

Source: Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica Vol. 1911-1912 pg.14

Plate 2: The inscription on the ***inner lintel*** *of the eastern gateway to the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. Measures 91 x 13 inches, in two lines, Arabic & Persian. Notice a Hindu* mandapa *remains. Source: Deptt. of P.E.N. (I.I.H)*

Translation: "This fort was ***conquered*** *and this* ***Jami Masjid*** *was built in the (months) of the year 597 (A.H.) by the Amir, the great and glorious commander of the army, (named) Qutbu-d-daulatwa-d-din Amir-i-umara* ***Aibak Sultani.*** *May God strengthen his helpers. The* ***materials of 27 temples on each of which 2,00,000 deliwals had been spent,*** *were used (in the construction) of this mosque. May God the great and glorious have mercy on him who should pray for the faith of the good builder."*

Source: *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica Vol. 1911-1912*

Fig. 2 The inscription on the outer lintel of the northern gateway to the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. Source: Divya Chowdhary

Translation (second panel): "In (the month) of the year (5)92 (A.H.), this building was erected by the high order of the exalted Sultan Muizzu-d-dunyawa-d-din Muhammad-ibn-Sam, the helper of the Prince of the Faithful." (English translation by J.Horovitz)

Source: Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica Vol. 1911-1912 (ed. E. Dennison Ross)

Plate 5: Six Naskh calligraphic bands on the basement storey of the Qutub Minar.

Source: Divya Chowdhary

Basement storey, second band

Plate 6: Inscriptional panel from the second band, basement storey, Qutub Minar. Upon inspection, it was understood that the letters have been misplaced during restoration. Naskh calligraphic style, Arabic.

Source: Divya Chowdhary

Translation: "[The great Sultan], the most exalted (?) [Shahanshah(?) Lord] of the necks of the people, ***Master of kings of the Arabs and Persians,*** *the most just of the Sultans in the world, Mu'izz-ud-dunya wad-din, the helper [of Islam and of Muslims], the splendor (?) of the kings and sultans,* ***the spreader of justice and kindness*** *[amongst created beings],* ***the shadow of God in East and West, the shepherd of the servants of God,*** *the* ***defender of the countries of God****…who carries out [the ordinances of God], helped from the sky, aided against enemies, [the grandeur of?] the victorious [government?], the majesty of the magnificent nation, the sky of merits…[the spreader of ?] the banners (?) [of victory], the Sultan of Land and Sea, the guard of the kingdoms of the world and the proclaimer of the word of God which is the highest,* ***the second Alexander, Abul Muzaffar Muhammad Ibn Sam,*** *may God perpetuate his rule and kingship. And Allah is high, beside whom there is no God, he knows what is hidden and what is visible, he is compassionate and merciful."*

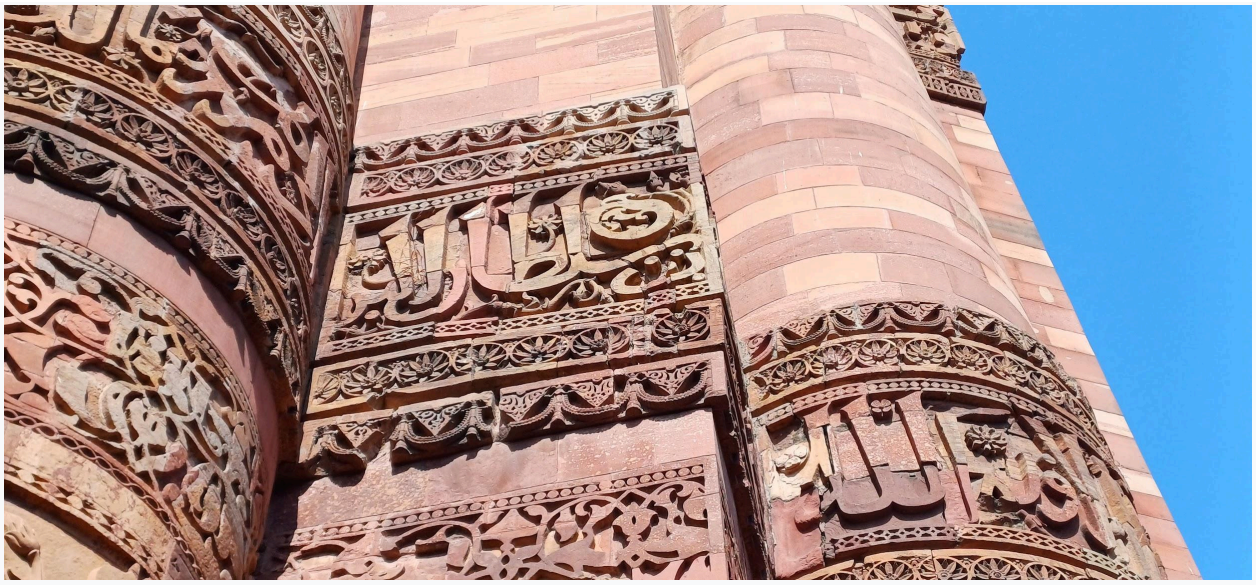

Plate 7: An inscriptional panel from the second band, basement storey, Qutub Minar. It reads "Sultan" in Arabic-Naskh. Note how grandiose the band is to see from below. Those who could read it would develop a magnanimous imagination of Muhammad-bin-Sām while looking at it.

Source: Divya Chowdhary

Shah Ni'matullah Shahid Masjid, Hansi

At Hansi, a mosque associated with the shrine of Shah Ni'matullah contains an inscription dated to 588 AH (1191 CE), directly invoking Muhammad-bin-Sam with several of his titles, including Abu'l Muzaffar and Nasir Amir al-Mu'minin. The inscription commemorates the conquest of Hansi, implying military and religious authority, and references key roles such as protector of the faithful and righteous sovereign.

Plate 8: Inscriptional piece of red sandstone built into the outer wall of the enclosure of Shah Ni'matullah Shahid, Hansi (Haryana). Arabic- Monumental Naskh. Source: https://hisar.gov.in/culture-heritage/

Translation: "...of Abul Muzaffar Muhammad Ibn Sam, the helper of the Prince of the Faithful, may [God] pardon…[5]88."

Source: Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica Vol. 1911-1912 (ed. E. Dennison Ross)

Plate 9: Within a fortified enclosure, Qibla wall (?), west face with reused and inscribed temple remains in Rauda of Shah Nimatullah (Ruined Fort) complex .

Photo Source: American Institute of Indian Studies/ Centre for South Asian Art & Archaeology.

The monumental inscriptions on the Qutub Minar, Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, and related sites such as the shrine at Hansi attribute grand architectural projects to Muhammad-bin-Sam and his close officials, richly incorporating a series of exalted royal titles and epithets that served to affirm his sovereignty, imperial legitimacy, and divine favor. On the Qutub Minar itself, the inscriptions refer to him by his full royal honorifics, including Abu'l Muzaffar Muhammad ibn Sam—his original genealogical name—underscoring his formal identity. His imperial titles include:

- **Sultan al-Azam** (the Most Great Sultan), emphasizing his paramount status among rulers.
- **Sikand al-Thani** (the Second Alexander), a lofty designation likening him to Alexander the Great, reflecting ambition and claims to universal dominion.

- **Nasir Amir al-Mu'minin** (Helper of the Commander of the Faithful), indicating his position as a protector and champion of the Islamic caliphate's spiritual and temporal authority.
- **Al-Muzaffar** (the Victorious) and Al-Ghazi (the Warrior for Islam), celebrating his military successes and jihadi credentials.
- **Shadow of God on Earth** (Zillullah fi al-ard), implying divine sanction and the embodiment of political power as God's representative.

Together, these inscriptions highlight a pattern where Muhammad-bin-Sam's original name is preserved alongside a suite of imperial and religious titles designed to articulate his legitimacy as a ruler who is both divinely sanctioned and militarily triumphant. The inscriptions function not only as records of construction but as instruments of state's ideology, positioning Muhammad-bin-Sam as a supreme sovereign, a seasoned conqueror, and a devout Muslim king who established Islamic rule in the heart of northern India.

Sanskrit-Nagari Inscriptions

Etawah Fort Inscriptions

Etawah Fort inscriptions were reported in ARIE (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy) 1962-63, List No. B-956 and 959. The text and translation of the inscription B-959 were presented for the first time by Pushpa Prasad. This record is identified as a Vijaya-lekha (victory inscription), commemorating the triumph of Vijayasena, son of Śri Mahīpāla Vīrasena, in battle. Though the text is incomplete at this point, the defeated adversaries appear to be 'Gori' and 'Turka'. **A significant aspect of the inscription is its early reference to *'Gori'*-** most likely used for Muhammad-bin-Sam. ARIE does not comment on the identification of this term. Pushpa Prasad, however, states that the presumption is correct, then this inscription from Etawah would have the earliest recorded use of this term- 'Ghori'- in India. This term notably does not appear in the Nagari legends on the coins of Muhammad-bin-Sam.

The inscription's mention of the defeat of Ghurid forces may correspond to the First Battle of Tarain in 1191 CE, in which Prithviraja Chauhan repelled Muhammad Ghori. However, there is

no direct historical evidence of a conflict between the Gahadavalas and Muhammad Ghori. While Persian sources only record two battles between Ghori and Prithviraja III at Tarain (1191-92) and one battle with Jayachandra at Chandawar (1193), Hindu sources claim that both Jayachandra and Prithviraja repeatedly defeated Muhammad Ghori. There is no consensus yet about this topic.

Additionally, **the mention of the term '*Turka*' is also of importance to us.** Thus, while the inscription B-959 from Etawah provides valuable insight into local resistance against the presumed Ghurid expansion and how the Muhammad-bin-Sam would have been perceived by the locals, its historical interpretation remains open to further analysis.

Further, according to ARIE, Inscription B-956 recovered from the same site mentions a certain 'Maharaja Ajayasimha', who claimed to belong to the line of his paternal uncle Jayachandra of Kannauj. It appears to record that at the instance of the king, his priest made preparations for a *chandimahayaga*, but had to give up and take away the image of Durga installed in the fort and hid it in a pit- fearing that the ***Mlecchas*** (ie. Turco-Islamic invaders) might destroy it. It is written in "13th century characters".

Palam Baoli Inscription

This inscription was discovered in a *baoli* (stepwell) in Palam, a village located 12 miles southwest of Delhi (now known for its airport). Bhandarkar listed it in *List of Inscriptions of Northern India* (*Epigraphia Indica*, XIX-XXII, 1938, No. 598). J. Ph. Vogel cataloged it in *Catalogue of Delhi Museum of Archaeology* (1908, Ins. No. B3, pp. 18-20). It is also recorded in the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* (1966-67, No. C 2356). Sayyid Ahmad discussed it in *Athar-us Sanadid* (1965, pp. 237-240), while Rajendra Lal Mitra analyzed it in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1874, XLIII, Pt. I, pp. 104-110).

In 1990 it was reported to be preserved at the Red Fort Museum in Delhi by Pushpa Prasad. However, the visit conducted to Red Fort for this study revealed strict inaccessibility to even inspecting whether the was kept there or not, as the security guards employed at the Red Fort informed that all the pre-colonial artefacts have been moved into the *tehkhana* of the Rang Mahal there.

The inscription is written in Sanskrit using the Nagari script, which is engraved on a black sandstone slab. It consists of 31 lines, but parts of it are damaged, making some letters and words difficult to read. The upper right-hand corner is broken, causing the loss of the word "*svasti*" and the sacred syllable "*om*". The inscription refers to the **foundation of Delhi** by the **Tomaras (Tomar Rajputs)**, followed by the rule of the **Cahamanas (Chauhans)**. It mentions the **defeat of the Chauhans** by **Sahavadina** or **Shihabuddin Muhammad 'Ghori'**. At the time the inscription was created, **Delhi was under the rule of Sri Hammira Gayasadina (Ghiyas-ud-din Balban)**. The inscription contains linguistic features, one of them being no distinction between *ba* and *va*.

The inscription is dated to 13th day of the waning moon in Sravana Vikram Samvat 1333, which corresponds to 13th August **1276 CE**. It begins with a salutation to Lord Ganapati (Ganesha) and Shiva. It refers to Delhi as being in "Hariyana," which is an early use of this name for the region beside Minhaj-us-Siraj Juzjani's chronicle *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri.* Interestingly, in Verses 4 & 5, the inscription gives a full list of Delhi's rulers starting from Tomaras & Chahamanas, followed by :-

- **'Sāhavadīna', Shihabuddin (Mu'izzuddīn) (Muhammad Ghori)**
- **'Khuduvadina', with the title of 'Bhupāla', Qutbu'ddin Aibak**
- 'Samasadina', Shamsuddin Iltutmish
- 'Pheruj Śāhī', Ruknuddin Firüz
- 'Jalāladīnā', Jalaluddin (Razia)
- 'Maujadina', Mu'izzuddin Bahrām
- 'Alāvadina', 'Alā'uddin Mas'ūd
- 'Gayāsādinā', Ghiyas-ud-din Balban

The text mentions the excavation of a stepped well (*baoli*). It was located east of *Palamba* and west of *Kusumbhapura*. The work was done by a person named Thakkura Uddhara, a householder from *Dhilli* (Delhi). The place *Yoginipura* (mentioned in Jain texts) is associated with this inscription, likely corresponding to an area within Mehrauli in Delhi. The inscription describes that Thakura Uddhara built a *dharmaśālā* (a free inn). Uddhara was likely a rich merchant and moneylender, as indicated by his wealth. He was given the title *thakkura*, which was likely a term of respect similar to *shah* or *mahajan* (wealthy merchant). According to

Barani, rich Hindus in Delhi were often addressed as *rājas, rānas, thakkurs, shāhs, mehtas*, and *pandits* by their subordinates.

The Indianized name of Shihab-ud-din (Muhammad Ghori) is of high importance to us- "Sahavadina". That is how the locals of Delhi knew him.

Sarban Sanskrit Inscription

The Sarban Sanskrit Inscription was first recorded by J.G. Delmerick in a report submitted to the Asiatic Society of Bengal. It was later cataloged in Bhandarkar's List (No. 683) and referenced in PRASI (NC) 1907-08, p. 10, No. 10. The inscription was subsequently edited by Rajendra Lal Mitra in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (May 1873, pp. 102-105) and has been discussed in *Epigraphia Indica, Vol. I* (January 1892, pp. 93-95) by J. Eggeling, Mahdi Husain's research (pp. 246-247), and the *Catalogue of Delhi Museum of Archaeology* (1908, pp. 34-37). When Pushpa Prasad wrote about this inscription in his/her doctoral thesis, it was reported to be housed in the Delhi Fort Museum. (Prasad, 1990. pp. 27-31). Currently, however, this inscription (along with Naraina Inscription) are kept in pedestal displays at the Purana Qila Archaeological Museum.

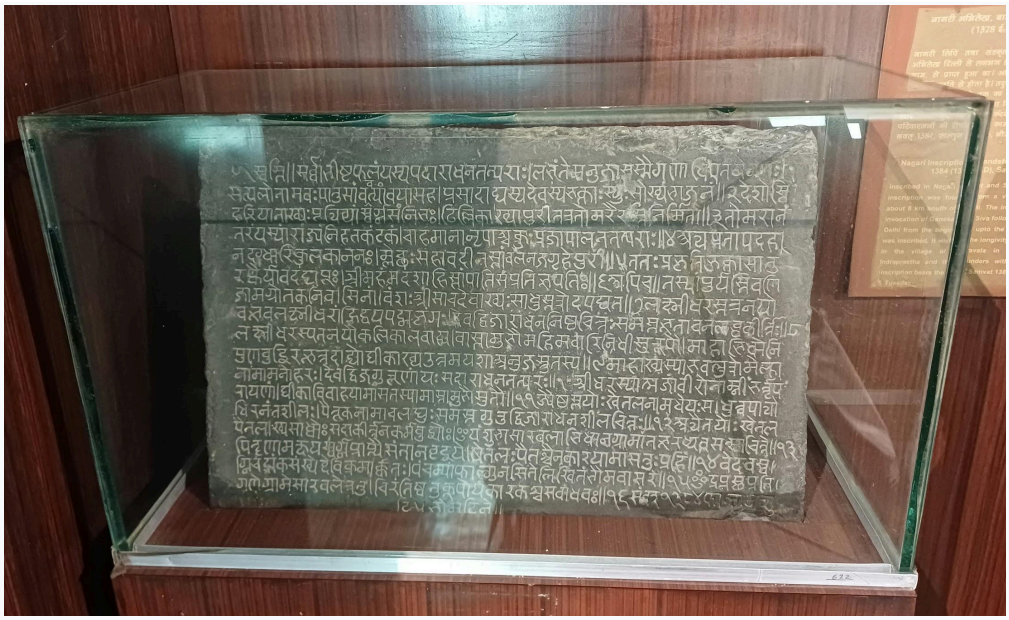

Plate 10: Sarban Sanskrit Inscription at Purana Qila Archaeological Museum .

Source: Divya Chowdhary

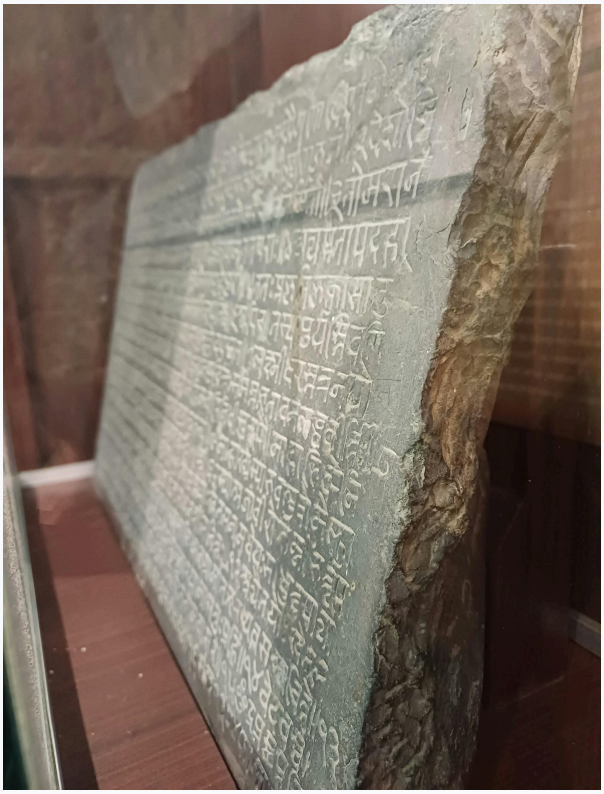

Plate 11: Side profile of the stone slab. It was initially inserted onto the walls of a stepwell.

Source: Divya Chowdhary

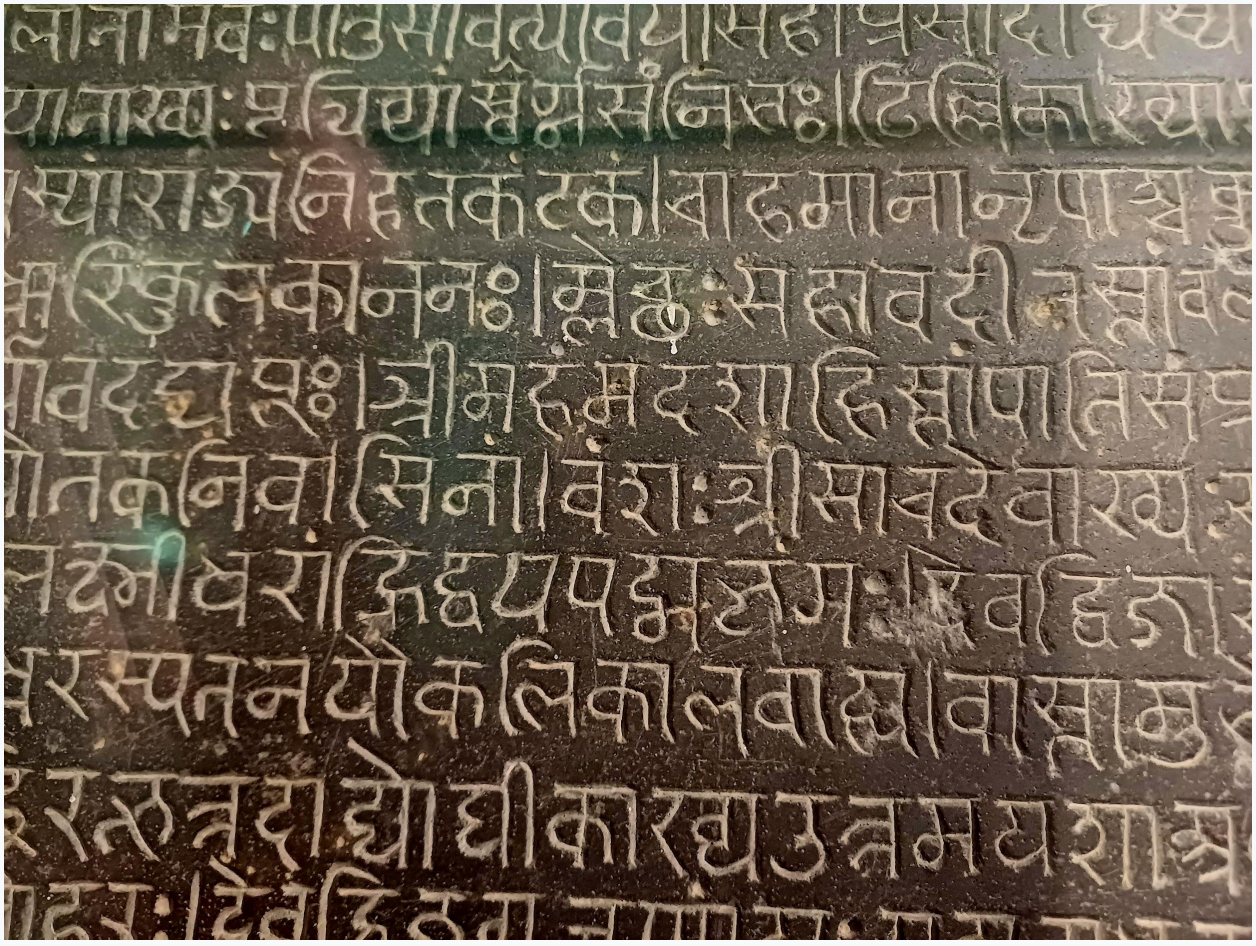

*Plate 12: Zoomed in view of the inscription. Notice the term "**Mlecchaḥa Sahāvadīna**" in 14th century Nāgarī letters.*

Source: Divya Chowdhary

This inscription was discovered in the village of Sarban, which was originally located five miles south of Delhi but now lies within New Delhi, near Raisina Road. It is engraved on a rectangular slab of black stone measuring 17" x 11", containing eighteen lines of Sanskrit verses in Nagari script, composed in classical metres such as Aunushtup, Vasantatilika, Indravajra & Upajati. The inscription is precisely dated in both words (chronogram: *vedavasvagnimchandramkasankhyevade)* and numerals to Samvat 1384, Phalguna month, fifth day of the bright fortnight, corresponding to Tuesday, 16 February **1328 CE**- dating to the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq of the Delhi Sultanate.

The content of the inscription serves as a eulogy for the ancestors of two merchants, Khetala and Paitala, who constructed a well in the village of Sarvala (in *pratigana* of ***Indraprastha***)—believed to be the older name of Sarban. The first two stanzas invoke the blessings of Ganesha and Shiva (Satyala). Importantly, in Verses 4, 5 & 6, the inscription states that *Dhillika* was originally established by the **Tomaras (Tomar Rajputs)**, who were later succeeded by the **Cahamānas (Chauhans)**. The Chauhans, in turn, were defeated by **'Sahāvadīna' (Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghori)**. At the time the inscription was composed, Delhi was under the rule of the **Turushka (Turk) ruler Mahammada Śāhī (Muhammad-bin-Tughluq)**. The final stanza expresses a wish for the long endurance of the well and the continued prosperity of its founders.

The Sarban Sanskrit Inscription holds immense significance as it provides crucial insight into how Muhammad Ghori was remembered during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. This inscription reveals that, even over a century after his death, Ghori was perceived as part of the Shaka lineage, following the Tomaras and Rajputs in the historical succession of rulers of *Dhillika*. The locals identified him as a Mleccha (a foreigner or outsider) and a Turushka (a Turk), who 'took the city by force'- indicating that while his geographical origins were acknowledged, he was still seen as an external ruler rather than fully assimilated.

Interestingly, while the inscription recognizes his victory and rule, it does not imply acceptance or integration into the local socio-political fabric. This suggests that the memory of Ghori among the people remained that of a conqueror rather than a legitimate Indian ruler, reinforcing the nuanced and often reluctant process of Turco-Islamic integration in medieval India. **Sahavadina, 'who took the city of Dhillika by force', is a very 'just' ruler in the inscriptional bands of Qutub Minar.**

Arabic Inscriptions (c.1191-92 C.E.)	Nagari (c.1191-92 C.E.)	Nagari (c.1200-1300 C.E.)
• Qutub Complex (Delhi) & Ni'matuallah Mosque, Hansi (Haryana) • State-sponsored (himself or his officials) • Sikandar al-Thani, Abu'l Muzaffar, Sultan,Nasir Amir al-Muminin	• Etawah Fort Inscriptions (Uttar Pradesh) • Issued by Hindu ruling elite • Gori, Turka, Mlecca	• Palam Baoli & Sarban Sanskrit Inscriptions (Delhi) • Issued by Hindu merchants • Included in regional history as Shaka, Mlecca, Turuskha Sahavadina

Numismatic Evidence

Muhammad-bin-Sam's coinage across regions reveals strategic local adaptations: his Ghazni/Ghor issues follow Abbasid models exclusively in Arabic, while Indian mints continued indigenous motifs such as the Bull-and-Horseman and Seated Lakshmi designs.

Ghurid coins in Ghazni and Ghor:

Plate 13: Coin of Muhammad-bin-Sam in Ghazni and Ghor

Source: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http://www.cngcoins.com

Plate 14: Coin of Muhammad-bin-Sam in Ghazni and Ghor. Legend out of the flan on reverse.

Source: Michael Broome

Plate 15: Another coin of Muhammad-bin-Sam from Ghazni and Ghor. Legend out of the flan on reverse.

Source: Michael Broome

Coins in Indian territories: Delhi

Plate 16: Bull-and-Horseman type issue by Muhammad-bin-Sam. Known as 'dehliwal'. From Delhi.

Source: https://coinindia.com/galleries-slave.html

Plate 17: Bull-and-Horseman type issue by Muhammad-bin-Sam. From Budaun in Uttar Pradesh.

Source: https://coinindia.com/galleries-slave.html

Plate 19: Coins of Muhammad-bin-Sam at the National Museum, New Delhi.
Source: Divya Chowdhary

When Muhammad-bin-Sam captured Lal Kot (Delhi) in 1192, he continued the billon bull-and-horseman "Dehliwala" currency- the unit being mentioned in the Quwwat-ul-Islam's eastern gateway inscription as well- retaining its basic structure while modifying key elements to assert his own authority. The previous Rajput inscriptions were replaced with Nagari script legends. The name of the previous Hindu king was substituted with **"Sri Mahamada Sama", "Sri Mahamada-vini- Sama"**, or variations like "Sri Mahamad Same"—all transliterations of his name in Nagari.

Varanasi and Bayana:

Plate 20: Lakshmi-type coin of Muhammad-bin-Sam. Gold dinara from Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh, 12thc century CE. Seated Lakshmi on obverse, Sanskrit-Nagari legend on reverse reads ""Sri maha/ mada vini/ sama"

Source: https://coinindia.com/galleries-slave.html

Plate 21: Lakshmi-type coin of Muhammad-bin-Sam, gold dinara from Bayana in Rajasthan. Reverse Nagari legend reads: '(Sri) ma (da)/ (hammi)ra ma ha (ma)/ da sam'.

Source: https://coinindia.com/galleries-slave.html

Before the Ghurid conquest, the **Gahadavalas of Kannauj** and other Rajput rulers in the vicinity issued gold and billon coins featuring an image of the **seated goddess Lakshmi** on the obverse, a motif deeply associated with Hindu religious and political symbolism and numismatically with the Imperial Guptas. The Gahadavala kings such as Govindachandra (c. 1114-1154 CE) and Jayachandra (c. 1170-1194 CE) extensively used this design, with their names inscribed in Nagari script.

When Muhammad Ghori defeated Jayachandra at the Battle of Chandawar (1194) and took control of more northern Indian territories, he continued this coinage tradition, but replaced the Hindu rulers' names with his own in Nagari script. Instead of completely discarding the established currency, he modified it by:

- retaining the image of Goddess Lakshmi on the obverse, preserving a familiar and widely accepted iconography;
- replacing the name of the previous Hindu ruler with his own name in Nagari script, such as *Sri Mahmada-vini-Sama* or *Srimada Hammira Mahamada Sama.*

Coins minted under vassals like Bakhtiyar Khalji similarly blend Sanskrit and Arabic, highlighting early Sultanate adaptive strategies. Such monetary continuity suggests attempts to ensure the immediate acceptance of the new ruler's coinage among the local populace, preventing economic disruptions and allowing for a smoother transition of power.

From the studies of existing numismatic works on Ghori's coins and even by conducting this study, a near unanimous opinion emerges- the local Indian coinage traditions, even though having pictorial representations and deity images along with Sanskrit and Nagari, was continued by Muhammad-bin-Sam as a wise move adhering to the political climate of his times. A.K. Bhattacharya in '*Indian Numismatics and Its Cultural Aspects'* discusses that these were careful attempts made by him to popularize his regime among the newly conquered subjects through the coins- which were the most potent symbol of royalty according to Islamic conceptions. He did not hesitate to attach his name with "Sri" and with the Sanskritized renderings of his name ("Mahamada-vini-Sama") and title ("Hammira").

Conclusion

Muhammad-bin Sam came to Delhi, then the Chahamana capital of Lal Kot, after defeating Prithviraja III in 1192 CE. This victory did not just mark the beginning of Ghurid dominance but also set in motion a political and cultural transformation in North India.

The inscriptional findings offer two contrasting yet interconnected narratives. The Arabic inscriptions, mostly issued by Muhammad-bin-Sam himself or his slaves and officials, project him through his titles as *"Abu'l Muzaffar"* (Father of Victory), *"Sikandar al-Thani"* (Second Alexander), *"al-Sultan al-Muazzam"* (The Most Exalted Sultan), *"Mu'izz al-Dunya wa al-Din"* (Champion of the World and of the Faith), and *"Nasir Amir al-Mominin"* (Helper of the Prince of the Faithful). Quranic verses inscribed on monuments clearly position him as the establisher of Islam as a political ideology and a state-sponsored religion in this land of the *"*unfaithful*."*

In contrast, the Nagari inscriptions—written in Sanskrit mixed with local dialects—paint a different picture during his lifetime. If the interpretation of the Etawah Fort inscription is correct, then Muhammad-bin-Sam is identified geographically as *"Turka"* (a Turk) and *"Gori"* (from Ghor). The acknowledgement of his battles- and eventually his victory- is evident among the Indians. It is to be noted that the geographically-derived identity attributed to the foreign invader by the Indians here is significant. Yet simultaneously, coins in India issued by him and his officials carry the legends in Nagari as *'Sri Mahamada Sama'* underscoring the localization of his name.

Even after his lifetime, Hindu merchants issuing inscriptions refer to him as *Sahavadina*, localizing his Turkish identity (Shihab-ud-din) further. Indians connected him and his successors with earlier memories of the *Shakas* (Iranian-Scythian nomads from Central Asia who entered India from the northwest), identifying him as *"Turushka"* (Turk) and labeling him a *"Mleccha"* (barbarian or foreigner, one who speaks an incomprehensible language), someone who took *Dhillika* by force. One may note a parallel here-- Muhammad-bin-Sam is being given a geographical identity by the Indians while his coins circulated in the Indian markets show a degree of integration (by way of localized legends). This point stands despite the argument of monetary continuity.

The epigraphical evidence presented in this study gives us vital insights about the socio-political history of India on the eve of the Turco-Islamic invasions. We get a near-definite date of this invasion (1192 C.E.), we see the palaeographical development of Nagari in these inscriptions and legends, and we see a landmark entry of Islamic calligraphy in Indian architecture. Most importantly, the three different kinds of inscriptions (issued himself, by his subordinates and the general public) considered give us different perceptions of the same ruler.

For himself and his immediate subordinates, Muhammad-bin-Sam was a great conqueror and fit to rule India. However, for the Indian ruling elite (Etawah Fort Inscriptions) and the general Indian public (Palam Baoli, Sarban Sanskrit Inscriptions), Muhammad-bin-Sam remained an outsider, not from India, implying that even landmark political wins may happen quickly but the acceptance comes very slowly. His subordinates did not acknowledge his geographical origins but the Indians did. The titles mentioned in the inscriptions from the Qutub Complex do not present us with any surprising discovery of a ruler's mindset; but by corroborating them with other inscriptions we come to know that Muhammad-bin-Sam or Ghori was not the 'Father of Victory' for the Indians but a *mleccha*.

From the three types of inscriptions studied, we see that a contrasting image of Muhammad Ghori is emerging- the Arabic inscriptions portray him as a very great conqueror, as the spreader of justice and kindness, as the Shadow of God in the East and the West. On the other hand, the inscriptions from Etawah Fort by a branch of the Indian ruling elite fighting against him and his army tell us that he was a foreign barbarian, a Turk, and indicates that his army was viewed as destructive. After his death, he is being included in the regional history (*deshostuti*) of *Dhillika* but is not remembered as a 'just and kind' ruler- instead, he is remembered by the people a *mleccha*, a Turk, who came to power after the Tomaras and Chahamanas after taking the city by force; and since his reign, the Shaka kings remained in power.

The numismatic findings (based on the four types of coins considered) reveal the strategy of monetary continuity. In Islamic tradition, placing the Sultan's name on coins was a powerful symbol of authority. Muhammad-bin-Sam, as the *Champion of Islam*, could have completely overhauled the existing coinage—removing Indian images and replacing them with Arabic legends and the *kalima*. However, he did not proceed with such an action and allowed the Indian

coinage tradition to continue. The Bull-and-Horseman device of the Chahamana variety, the Lakshmi-type of the Gahadavala variety- these local designs remained intact, with the coins circulating in his name as *"Sri Mahamada Sama"* and *"Srimada Hammira Mahamada Sama*". This was political and financial pragmatism exemplified. A major reason for the localization of his identity on the Indian coins could be that trade could not stop, and money could not stop circulating, especially not in a land where commerce was so vibrant and vital. The name *Sri Mahamada Sama* would be far more easily accepted by the locals than *Abu'l Muzaffar Muhammad ibn Sam*.

We see an important currency corroboration through the mention of the *deliwal*, emphasizing the need to consider inscriptional and numismatic evidence together for a fuller understanding. While scholars have analyzed these sources individually, combined information from the inscriptional and numismatic records reveal a fascinating parallel: while Ghori was alive, the state-sponsored monuments and inscriptions were in the language of the conquerors—Arabic, Persian—but anything directly involving the local population retained indigenous traditions. State-sponsored coins used the local language and scripts. Only later, under his successors, did the coins adopt purely Arabic legends and eliminate pictorial devices. In a way, while Nagari appeared on coins, Arabic dominated monuments.

It is interesting to note that while the Etawah Fort Inscription indicates iconoclasm of the Turks and his slave-governor Qutubuddin Aibak reused temple materials to construct the Qutub Complex, yet Muhammad-bin-Sam did not interfere with the currency. He adapted to it, at least during his lifetime. This implies a ruler who was both conqueror and pragmatist, one who understood that while political victory could be shown through grandiose architecture, economic and social acceptance required a degree of continuity.

Further, the legacy of Muhammad-bin-Sam is evident in both inscriptions and coinage issued by his immediate successors. While Iltutmish retained the prestigious *kunyat Abu'l Muzaffar*—a title once held by Muhammad-bin-Sam—he marked a shift toward sovereign authority, signaling the emergence of an independent Delhi Sultanate. Interestingly, early Turkish rulers under the Sultanate continued the use of Nagari legends on their *Bull-and-Horseman* coins, maintaining a tradition that had been established under Muhammad-bin-Sam's pragmatic rule. Yet, even as

Muhammad-bin-Sam's political successors gradually distanced themselves from his shadow, his memory endured among the local Hindu populace, as they traced the lineage of the Mleccha-Shaka-Turushka rule in Dhillika from Sahavadina ie. Shihab-ud-din Muhammad Ghori in their historical consciousness. One can observe the state-sponsored rapid assertion of power by Muhammad-bin-Sam and the slower, contrasting evolution of legitimacy in popular memory, making a case for the indispensable role of epigraphical and numismatic evidence in refining our understanding of India's medieval past.

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