

## MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION

The nature of Mughal administration was a combination of Indian, Persian and Arabic systems. Military power was the foundation and the emperor was the centralised authority. Many emperors (like Babur and Humayun) appointed an advisor or prime minister called vakil to advise them in matters of significance. Bairam Khan was vakil to the throne when Akbar was a minor.



**MAP 2.4 Successor Provinces of the Mughal Empire during 1830s**

### Administrative Set-up

Before Akbar, the empire had a different outlook and divided into many Jagirs headed by the mansabdars. The system of mansabdars belongs to the Central Asian empires of that time. Many important officials and nomenclature can be divided as Mir Baksh (the main military administrator), Sadr-e-saaman (Chief Justice)

Muhataib (ecclesiastical officer who regulated the lives of the people), Diwan-e-tan (minister who looked after jagirs and mansabdars), Mirtuzuk (minister of ceremonies in the court), and Mir-e-mal (chief of treasures in the palace) Akbar, who was the real founder of the Mughal Empire improved the organisation of the government immensely. The autocracy, or absolute power of the Badshah, was maintained but power was related to the wazir (similar

to vakil) and between the heads of the departments. He created different departments with written regulations within which the officials functioned, independent of the central government. The emperor also chose to transfer or dismiss his officials without respect for rank, race or creed. Every considerable official exercised general administrative and judicial powers, especially in criminal cases. Civil disputes ordinarily were left to the qazis, to be settled under Quranic laws. Akbar divided his empire into 20 provinces called sttbahs 14 in North India, 1 in Afghanistan and 6 in South India. The number of subahs were later increased to 21, when the Bijapur and Golkonda kingdoms were added to the empire. The administration was framed on military lines. The subedar maintained a court modelled on that of his sovereign, and possessed full powers as long he maintained his office. Later, in 1596, Akbar bifurcated the governing authority and the office of provincial diwans was introduced in the system. The permanent regular army was very small. The greater part of the imperial forces consisted of contingents furnished by the rajas and mansabdars, each under its own chief. Faujdars (chief assistant fa subadar), kotwal (the police officer), bakshi (paymaster to the army, and government officials) and bayatal (the keeper of government property in each subah) were the other important officials in his set-up. Within his administrative system, the warrior aristocracy (naansabdars) held ranks i mansabs) expressed in the number of troops and indicating pay, armed contingents and obligations. The warrior aristocracy was generally, paid, front, the revenue of non-hereditary and transferrable jagirs (revenue villages).

**TABLE 2.3 Some Major Famines during the Mughal Rule**

Period	Location	Ruler
1555-1556	Punjab and Sind	Humayun
<b>1573-1574</b>	Gujarat	Akbar
<b>1575</b>	Bengal	Akbar
<b>1595-1598</b>	Kashmir	Akbar

1617-1624	Agra/Delhi (famine and plague)	Jahangir
1630-1632	Gujarat and Deccan	Shahjahan
1641	Kashmir	Shahjahan
1646	Punjab	Shahjahan
1659	North India	Aurangzeb
1670-1672	North India.	Aurangzeb
1702-1704	North India	Aurangzeb

### **Expansion of the Mughal Empire under Aurangzeb**

Aurangzeb was a staunch Muslim. However, he gave many grants for the restoration of Hindu temples during his rule. He also appointed Hindus to high positions in his government. His major architectural accomplishment is the Badshahi Mosque at Lahore. It was the largest mosque in the world at the time it was constructed. During his reign of 50 years, Aurangzeb tried to realise his dream of bringing the whole of the subcontinent under one rule. In 1687, Bijapur and Golkonda, which were the last two Shia states surrendered to the Mughals. The Marathas tried to struggle against Aurangzeb for some time. The last 26 years of Aurangzeb were devoted to his relentless Deccan campaign. He had to shift his court for Deccan. Under Aurangzeb's reign, the borders of the Mughal Empire expanded out farther than ever before. But because of undeveloped means of communication and poor infrastructure, it was difficult to keep the empire united. When the court was in the north, there was rebellion in the south, vice versa. Though he ruled longer than any of his predecessor he could not stop the fall of the Empire. The decline speeded up after his death. None of his sons was capable enough to rule. Consequently, in 1858, India came directly under the control of the British government.

### **Fiscal System**

The most important source of revenue was Farm land. But significant revenue was also received from custom duties, inland transit duties, tributes and gifts from the feudal rajas. There was a strict vigil and duty system prevalent on ports under the Shah Bandars (the head of sea ports or bandargahs). Cash transactions were the mainstay of the financial system but payments were also made in kind. The coinage system was advanced. Gold and silver coins represented high denominations and copper coins for lower ones.

### **Socio-economic System**

Akbar followed two different but effective policies for ruling a large territory: and involving various ethnic groups into the service of his empire. In 1580, he gathered local revenue data for the previous ten years to understand the details of productivity and price variations in different crops. Assisted by Todar Mal, a Rajput king, Akbar prepared a revenue schedule that the farmers could accept while depositing maximum profit with the state. Revenue demands, settled as per the local traditions of cultivation and quality of soil, varied from one-third to one-half of the crop. The revenues were paid in cash.

### **Zamindari System**

Akbar depended heavily on the Zamindars. They used their exclusive local knowledge and power to collect revenue and to transfer it to the treasury. They used to keep a part in return for services they rendered. The Zamindars controlled the land in the villages during the Mughal period. They were not essentially the owners of land but were pivotal in controlling the land revenue system. They were a powerful class and they freely bought and sold zamindaris to increase their domain. They headed the peasants class and were obliged to pay land revenue to the state. In the social set-up there were three classes of peasants: khudkasta (peasants owning land and implements), pahiis (peasants who got land, and

sometimes implements too, on rent and then cultivated it), and muzaruyams (those who depended upon khudkahtas for spare land and implements, or worked for them). The government officer who controlled the information about the cultivators and past and projected revenue was called the patwari. His record book, bahi held accounts of many zamindars in a particular region. The different bahis were source books for the Amil or Amalguzarkar who maintained the Sarkar (an office at district level). His office included different clerks, known as karku and khazanadars, who maintained land registrations and revenue collection and assessment records. The officials surveyed the fields regularly and on harvest claimed a rightful portion of produce under the system called batai or galla-bakshi. Other systems that were used for land revenue administration were: Kankut (a general estimate of the whole region was made and accordingly revenue was fixed per unit of land area cultivated by the peasant); Nasaq (revenue fixed on the basis of past record of a peasant); Dastur Ulama or Jama figures (revenue fixed as per three classes of lands—good, bad and average lands). During the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Akbar's rule, the old Jamas were replaced by hew Jamas, based on the findings of Raja Todar Mal who used Qanungos figures that were based on the paragana (taluk) level. Later, Akbar brought in the most significant system for fixing land revenue, known as Karon system. In this, the land was marked into circles which were to provide a revenue of one karor to the state exchequer. This experiment gave favourable results and it developed into the Bandobast system (or Zabti). Under this, all the land was measured afid then classified into four classes: polaj (annually cultivated); parauti (fallow land that was cultivated every 1 or 2 years); chachar (fallow land cultivated everyhafter 3-4 years) and banjar (uncultivated land that was not cultivated in at least last 5 years). All these reforms (collectively known as Ain-e-Dahsala) were aimed at bringing a new Jama that could give the per bigha revenue rates for different regions. Todar Mai introduced a uniform unit of measurement of land, called lldhi gaz, in which now land was not measured with ropes but with 'tanabs' (which were bamboo

sticks joined with iron rings). It was in the 24th year of the Akbar's rule that a permanent Jama or Dastur Ulama was finally put into place.

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