



Review Article

Administrative and Economic Systems of the Mughal Empire: A Historical Analysis of Governance and Revenue Policies

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ABSTRACT



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The Mughal Dynasty commenced in 1526, led by the esteemed Babur, who is renowned as the pioneer and founder of Indian civilization through the process of unification. Due to its vast territorial reach from Kabul to Bengal, with natural boundaries such as the Arabian Sea and Himalayas, this dynasty was able to establish sophisticated formal institutions that surpassed those of other empires worldwide at that time. This study examines the complex governance system of The Mughal Empire, with a focus on the reigns of Babur, Humayun, Akbar, and Aurangzeb. Abul-Fazl Ibn Mubarak, a prominent historian during Akbar's reign, elucidated the Mughals' adoption of the dual strategies of 'JahanBani' (state maintenance) and 'Jahangiri' (imperial expansion). The article also examines Akbar's reforms in land revenue systems, which aimed to provide uniformity and economic stability in order to sustain the Empire's prosperity. The inclusion of women in the Mughal court is examined to highlight their cultural, political, and social achievements. This examination thoroughly explores the functioning of the Mughal administration and how it effectively maintained the empire's supremacy.

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Introduction

Babur founded the Mughal Dynasty in 1478, marking the initiation of the endeavor to unify the expansive Indian Subcontinent. The empire expanded its territory from Kabul to Bengal, under the guidance of Babur, Humayun, Akbar, and Aurangzeb, with the Arabian Sea and the Himalayas serving as its borders. Tajikistan is the original homeland of the Mughals, who were Islamic conquerors. (Alam & Sanjay, 1998). These were Central Asian conquerors who utilized their renowned combat abilities to assert their dominance as the prevailing power on the Indian Subcontinent. This essay will examine the Mughal dynasty and provide a concise overview of the Ottoman Turk system and the Safavid kingdom of Iran during the same period. We shall compare and contrast the Timar system of the Ottoman Empire, the Tuyl system of Safavid Iran, and the Jagir system of Mughal India. These systems were influenced by factors such as resources and geography, and were responsible for governing subject populations and appointing officials. The initial segment of the essay will scrutinize the government policies of each state. Babur established the Mughal Empire in India in 1526 after emerging victorious in the initial Battle of Panipat. It endured until 1857. Similarly, the duration of the Iranian Safavid Empire spanned from 1501 until 1720. Conversely, the duration of the Ottoman

Empire spanned from 1300 to 1923 A.D. The temporal overlap posed challenges for establishing the chronological sequence of trade and its impact on the economy. According to the esteemed historian and scholar Abul-Fazl Ibn Mubarak (1551–1602), the Mughal rulers employed two distinct methods when it came to integrating new elements. The initial policy, known as "JahanBani," focused on the maintenance and conservation of the state and its provinces. The second program, known as 'Jahangiri', aimed to expand the empire's territory. They endeavored to establish and initiate situations that fostered cultural development and economic expansion.

Akbar the Great reigned as the ruler of India from 1556 to 1605, with the objective of expanding the Muslim dominion across the subcontinent. Instead of utilizing his military and position of power to consolidate his control, this Mughal emperor prioritized maintaining his status as a sultan in accordance with Qur'anic law. He possessed sufficient knowledge to identify the kingdom responsible for establishing the facility on behalf of his employers. He expressed his desire for the enduring prosperity of his country and his own authority. He wielded his authority in accordance with the military and administrative protocols of the Mughal court. Furthermore, he endeavored to secure equal application of laws to all individuals, irrespective of their racial or religious background, which sets him apart from the Hindu majority in

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India. The Mughal court implemented a land revenue system and several administrative reforms during that period to garner support from the Muslim and Hindu people and legitimize their control. The changes were implemented to protect the Islamic rule and overcome the resistance of the Mughal Empire. Jizya was a levy levied on non-Muslims who were recognized as protected individuals in the Mughal empire.

Research Methodology

Examines the administrative and social structure of the Mughal Empire by analyzing archival and library data. Obtaining a more profound understanding of topics like economic policy, governance, and societal dynamics is often accomplished by referring to historical texts, official papers, and court records from the relevant time period during the research phase. This paper aims to examine the Mughal administration, specifically focusing on its taxation policy and the allocation of responsibilities among various officials. An analysis of the governance and socioeconomic tactics employed in this study, compared to other contemporary administrations like the Ottoman Empire, will clarify the similarities and differences between them. The objective of this research is to assess the governance of the Mughal empire and its influence on the Indian subcontinent throughout the Middle Ages through a thorough examination of primary and secondary sources.

Importance and objectives of study

An elaborate examination of the Mughal administrative system illuminates a significant phase in India's historical timeline. It was during this period that contemporary administrative principles were first developed. The Mughals played a key role in defining India's cultural milieu. An exploration of their structures of government and socio-political forces reveals the extent to which culture became fused under them. A study of the income systems and business strategies of the Mughal Empire provides useful insights into managing ancient economies and farming methods that were sophisticated then. Looking at the activities of women at the Mughal court defies these mostly male-centered stories we have been told about it all along while also pointing out what women contributed towards governance and culture. This study can help us in comparing different empires in our times. This would allow us to understand how the administrative and socio-political systems are with respect to each other. The focus of this research is the hierarchical structure, measures used for revenue collection and policy implementation which ensured continuity of the Mughal administration. The principal focus of the study is the hairbreadths of the Mansabdari system with a keen attention on the land revenue practices including the Zabt system that proved crucial in ensuring economic stability of the empire.

Review of literature

In professorial writings about the Mughals, the complexity of their administration system, political structure, economic regulation, artistic endorsement, and collection of courtly functions for women is demonstrated. Richards (1996) explains that Abul-Fazl Ibn Mubarak's "Ain-i-Akbari", which is the basic book for comprehending the Emperor Akbar's Mughal administrative apparatus, describes the Mansabdari system that combined military and administrative functions. Consequently, centralized authority could be comfortably exercised over large empire. There would still be room for accommodating different cultural and religious groups within the same political system.

In his research, Irfan Habib shows that Akbar was a ruler who came up with forward-looking measures which were supposed to contribute to harmony among various religions and their effective management. Habib gives an example of Akbar's; he promoted religion tolerance by introducing Din-i-Ilahi,

which is a religion originating from Islam and Hinduism to the central government. These measures were supposed to foster socio-political well-being in all parts of the country. According to economic historians like Amiya Bagchi, who wrote in 1972 about Mughal prosperity and how their wealth was due to a good agrarian economy centered around the Zabt system through which taxes were levied according to land productivity it can be observed; that in so doing there was some uniformity brought about by all these measures hence making it such that there were no disparities within one area or between different regions under this particular kind of fiscal policy (Bagchi, 1972). To be able maintain an empire requires finances which must be raised either from within or without the country borders hence there is need to acquire wealth through various means including agriculture, commerce among others hence taxable land under Zabt system became a source of income.

The vibrant artistic and literary patronage of the Mughal court is studied by cultural historians such as Muzaffar Alam in which Persian language and culture flourished under royal patronage (Alam, 1998). For example, the court of Jahangir witnessed significant contributions from influential women including Nur Jahan who was known for combining political acumen with support for culture (Lal, 2008).

Comparative studies with contemporaneous empires such as the Ottoman and Safavid offer more insights on Mughal governance, Karen Leonard has come up with a comparative analysis that brings out points of similarities and differences in the administration as well as cultural policies of these three empires hence highlighting the distinct combination of Central Asia, Persian and India traditions exhibited by the Mughal Empire (Leonard 2007).

In general, there is a wealth of information in print about the Mughal Empire that reveals much about their novel ways of running government, things that happened within their society, ways in which they ran their economy and most importantly how their women changed things in society. The existing argumentation demonstrates how uniquely successful the empire was at making history across South Asian countries for a long time as well as in other parts of the world where the issues of control or cultural transfer were paramount (Richards 1996).

Mughal Fiscal Policies

The administrative policies implemented by Muslims and Hindus in the kingdom were characterized by a centralized system of governance centered around the monarchy and kingship. The primary source examined the Mughal policy during their reign, while the literature review spanned a period of thirty years. It focused on the Mughal financial revenue system and the monetary system, which relied on the silver rupiah as the main currency, supported by the gold Muhr and the copper dam and paisa. The Mughal pretends, the ranking system known as Mansabdari, and the revenue assignment called Jagir all play a significant part. The Mughals are credited with the growth of seaborne trade in the Indian subcontinent throughout the mentioned period, which occurred through ports such as Surat, Thatta, Goa, Hughley, Balasore, and Masulipatnam (Alam, 1998). The Mughal state may be understood primarily in terms of its fiscal-economic aspects. It continuously drained resources from the agrarian economy through the collection of land taxes. These taxes were collected by the financial system and represented the income and output of the peasants inside the Mughal Empire. The rule of Jalal-ud Din Muhammad Akbar (1556-1605) was characterized by a comprehensive and equitable system of taxation, as documented by historians such as Habib, Richard, and Raychaudhuri. This system, sometimes referred to as the Mughal agrarian system, was also acknowledged by British administrators and historians.

Akbar implemented a significant fiscal policy in 1574-75 to determine revenue rates. The information regarding yields, prices, and harvests of cultivation for a period of ten years or one decade, specifically from 1570-1580, shows that the revenue rates were directly fixed based on cash revenue rates known as "dasturu'l'amal". These rates were sanctioned year after year by the revenue administration in all provinces of North India. The revenue income was divided at the circle of revenue income, and the modernization of the examined static generation was done through the Zabt system in the Mughal state. This system involved taking a third to half of the product as surplus (Alam, 1998). The Zabt system was a key administrative structure implemented in the Mughal Empire. It is important to note that even in regions where the Zabti system was prevalent, there was another way of assessment known as the land revenue system of measurement. This name, Zabti, referred to a sophisticated and intricate system that was extensively implemented throughout the Mughal era. This method was used during the reign of Sher Shah Sur, following the rule of Humayun, the second emperor of Mughal India. Sher Shah Sur developed a schedule of rates, known as Ray, to calculate the revenue demand after measuring the area seeded. Using the data from this survey, a register was compiled that documented the rights of the owners and included the measurement of every cultivable and other parcels of property. In order to examine the progression of Akbar's income administration, his region can be neatly separated into two distinct segments. Until the twenty-fourth year, the management of income can be characterized as a sequence of trials, but after that point, the authorities say that the system had achieved stability by making necessary refinements. Until the eighth year of his reign, the income system remained largely unchanged. Abulfazl reports that at the start of each reign, experts would annually determine the current prices and present them to the ruler. They would then utilize the information on agricultural yields and prices to establish the cash rates. This process often led to significant economic hardship. In the 8th regnal year (1563), the initial measure for enhancement was initiated by appointing Etemad Khan to arrange the territory of Khalsa. He initiated an investigation into the possessions of the Jagirdars, and not only divided the Khalsa but also attempted to expand it by separating all excess from the Jagir domains. In the 9th year of his reign in 1564, Muzaffar Khan Torbati was appointed as Diwan-i-Kul, and Todar Mall was also brought into the cabinet with the intention of enhancing the situation. In the 10th year of his reign (1565-66), Muzaffar Khan began the task of gathering the most accurate data from local Qanungos. Additional improvements were mandated during the 11th year of the ruler's reign (1566-67). Qanungos and other individuals who were familiar with the regions of the empire were requested to determine, based on their assessment, the actual output of their respective areas and set new rates for evaluation. Akbar introduced these reforms with the intention of gathering valuable information to create a fixed cash rate schedule. This schedule would be applicable to various regions, eliminating the need for the emperor's yearly approval of rates for converting goods into cash. The officers whose Jagir were confiscated were compensated in cash. Nevertheless, the expansion of the Khalsa was only successful within a restricted geographical region. The provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Gujarat were intentionally left untouched due to strategic planning and recognition. Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni, Kashmir, Thatta, and certain areas of Bajaur, Tira, Bangash, Sorath, and Orissa had not been successfully captured or controlled. (Tapan, 1984).

In the Mughal empire in northern India, the next revenue collection was carried out by the Bitikchi, who served as an assessment officer attached to the Karori for the same tax circles. He served as a subordinate official under the authority of Karori

and was accountable to him. He possessed advanced expertise in revenue accounting. In addition, he served as the superintendent of Karori. The alternative generic word and official Mansab, as well as the local chief for revenue tax, was referred to as "Chaudhary". This policy was indirectly linked to the gathering of money. He holds the position responsible for recording all sales proceeds, as well as consumer and commercial transactions in his area. Moreland has examined the characteristics of that position based on firsthand accounts from a Parwana, two Nishan, and two farmers from the Mughal era regarding the role of the Deshmukh in Deccan Subahs. This information pertains specifically to the Chaudhary of the entire pargana in the subcontinent (Moreland, 1938).

The system of Mansab

The Mughals, led by Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, established their rule in India. Over the course of their dynasty, seventeen individuals from this family ascended to the throne. Among them, Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb were the most influential emperors, reigning from 1526 AD onwards. They assumed control over the Indian subcontinent. During this era, the word Mansab Dar was used to describe numerous military elites who were involved in a wide range of political, scientific, and artistic activities. These individuals had a significant part in advancing and developing the Gorkan administration. During this time, a Mansabdar referred to an individual who held a position of rank and responsibility granted by the monarch. They were appointed to a government department and held a significant role in the official and administrative functions of the government system (Bahniafar, 2018, Moreland, 1938).

Occupying a position entails a civic responsibility and a moral duty that the government assigns to individuals in key government positions. These individuals play a crucial role in carrying out administrative and official tasks, as well as serving the public to ensure security, social well-being, and facilitate economic activities. If an individual held a role inside the governmental structure, they were referred to as a Mansabdar (Simmel, 2007). When a Mansabdar, who possessed a property or estate granted by the government, passed away, the property was reverted back to the king and funds were assigned for the support of his children. The establishment of this system occurred during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar. After the death of his father Humayun, Akbar ascended to the throne in Kalanur Lahore at the age of thirteen. At the beginning of his coronation, he encountered formidable adversaries such as Sikandar Shah Lodi and other Afghans who sought to regain control in northern India. Through a series of intense battles, Akbar successfully vanquished all his rivals and resolved various challenges (Habibi, 2010).

In the Mughal period, military positions held significant administrative importance. Military personnel were categorized into different positions, such as nine thousand, five thousand, four thousand, etc. These personnel received their allowances and other payments in cash directly from the government treasury. The military officers were granted properties by the government, known as *iqta* or *jagir*, which allowed them to utilize taxes and government resources to support their families. The mansabdar obtained the privilege as an allowance from his landlord. By accepting the rights and privileges of feudalism, the officials willingly devoted themselves to serving the emperor and ruler, dutifully executing all their commands and instructions. Establishing a genuine relationship with the population of the location was extremely uncommon in this regard. The elevation of an official was contingent upon their demonstrated courage, conquests in war, private service for the emperor, or noteworthy achievements, rather than simply the

amount of time spent (Mughal, 1980). Upon the death or demise of a government official, whether due to natural causes or as a result of conflict, the financial stipend allocated for their sustenance would be transferred to their offspring. If the official has any outstanding debts, it is imperative that those debts be resolved before considering any bequest for his children. In the absence of an heir, the agents would transfer all the official's riches and fortune to the government treasury (Badayouni, 2001).

The role of women in Mughal court

Women held a prominent position in the Mughal court and actively participated in cultural, political, and social endeavors across several domains. According to historians, the Persian language and literature had stages of growth and quality during this period. Eventually, during the Mughal Empire, it achieved its highest level of excellence. The Persian language flourished during the Mughal period in the Indian subcontinent, because to its exceptional elegance and moral principles. The kings, princes, and elders of this dynasty were exceptionally generous in their support and encouragement of scientists, intellectuals, and authors during this time. This section highlights some of the specific actions undertaken by these individuals. During this era, the kings, princes, and courtiers of the Mughal court in India shown a keen interest in science and knowledge. They actively promoted and provided support for the pursuit of scientific studies and knowledge. They imparted knowledge and instruction. By establishing schools in Delhi, Humayun laid the foundation for the growth of the sciences, particularly Persian culture and literature, in the region. His successor, Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, along with his courtiers, constructed and possessed significant schools in the cities within his domain. The Taliban engaged in scientific collaboration (Bayat, 2003).

During the reign of Humayun, his wife Hamida Banu played a significant role in safeguarding and strengthening the empire. Through her influence, Humayun was able to secure the backing of Safavid Shah Tahmasp and successfully incorporate Kandahar into his realm with the assistance of the Safavid dynasty of Iran (Pat, 2021). Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar assumed power after his father Humayun, who had been the ruler of the Mughal empire in India for a duration of 51 years and two months. India saw a period of great cultural and political achievements during this time, characterized by the influence of Islamic history, the widespread use of the Persian language, and effective government. A persistent radiance that endured till the conclusion of Aurangzeb's rule. Akbar's reign is widely regarded by historians as being on par with the rule of Queen Elizabeth of England, Henry IV of France, and Shah Abbas of Iran. In India, Akbar's era is considered a period of exceptional monarchs.

Jahangir, the successor of Akbar, implemented a decree that made education compulsory. Additionally, he introduced a rule that allowed the properties of childless nobility to be utilized for the establishment, restoration, and upkeep of schools. Following Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and his son Aurangzeb, they upheld the customs of their forefathers and promoted the advancement of science and knowledge on the Indian subcontinent through the establishment of schools within their domain. The promotion of Persian language and literature has been highly vibrant and impactful during this period. Many ladies in the Gorkan court, along with the kings and elders of the dynasty, were avid seekers of knowledge themselves and actively pushed others to do the same. Several trainers exerted a substantial influence on the education of Mughal princes. Education held great significance for court ladies throughout this era, and the kings of this dynasty were dedicated to the education and instruction of women. An artwork shown in the

Royal Asiatic Society depicts a gathering of women from the Indian Mughal court who were receiving instruction from their tutor in the subjects of reading and writing.

The education of the princes and women associated with the court was conducted in a separate location. Qualified instructors were carefully chosen and assigned to teach various subjects to these ladies. The necessary books were obtained from the royal libraries and made accessible to the students. However, the majority of the women were not engaged in scientific studies. The erudite individuals of the Mughal court possessed extensive libraries. Teaching Quranic reading and religious obligations were integral aspects of the lives of harem women, albeit for a limited duration. However, the foremost focus of the education provided to court women was literary instruction, particularly in the Persian language and literature, with a special emphasis on the works of renowned poets (Simmel, 2007). Consequently, a significant number of women in the Mughal court possessed a strong command of the Persian language and literature. Many of these women were renowned public speakers who actively championed the poets and writers of their era. Their efforts played a crucial role in promoting the growth and influence of Persian culture and literature across the subcontinent. Ali Asghar has provided a description of the intellectual acumen of Mughal women's education in the following manner: During the Mongol era, Muslim women received specialized education that included training in Persian calligraphy, reading, recitation of the Qur'an, and memorization of poetry and artistic works. They replicated this technique and commendable practice of Muslim sultans, along with other matters concerning their leaders and officials, and they raised their Indian and Muslim girls in accordance with these same traditions and conventions (Hakmat, 1958).

The roles and contributions of women in the Indian Mughal court, particularly in the realm of Persian language and literature, extend beyond merely providing support and admiration for poets and authors who produce aesthetically pleasing works. These women made significant contributions to the promotion of Persian language and literature in the subcontinent. They achieved this by writing original and aesthetically pleasing poems, translating important Persian works into common languages, and collecting rare and exquisite books. They founded extensive and well-furnished libraries, specifically dedicated to the notable literary works of the Persian language. The nobility of the Mughal court showed a strong interest in the Persian texts brought by Iranian immigrants to India. As a result, they frequently presented priceless Persian manuscripts as gifts to the kings and elders of the Mughal court (Kanbo, 1967).

Consequently, a substantial amount of Persian literature made its way into the Indian subcontinent. In Homayun Waqbar's tazkira, Bayazid Bayat refers to a substantial library established by Gulbadan Begum, which had a collection of elegant and precious books (Bayat, 2003). Noor Jahan, the wife of Jahangir Shah, had a profound interest in reading and possessed an extensive library filled with great literary treasures. Enormous gardens and structures were also trailblazers in constructing libraries and amassing precious volumes. During the Mughal era, namely under the rule of Shah Jahan, the interpretations and excerpts of key Persian texts were primarily recorded and gathered. This task was carried out under the supervision and efforts of Jahanara Begum. Jahanara's passion for books and manuscript copies was so strong that, like his grandfather Jahangir Shah, he would carefully preserve these works and meticulously record their arrival dates in the library (Simmel, 2007). Zeib al-Nisa, Aurangzeb's daughter, had a profound interest in books and manuscripts. To pursue this passion, she established an extensive library within her father's

palace. She also hired numerous renowned calligraphers of the day to meticulously duplicate her collection of precious and scarce volumes. He had the responsibility of overseeing their work. Furthermore, he enlisted the services of very skilled translators to accurately render magnificent and refined Persian literary masterpieces within his own collection (Shahhosseini, 2004).

Conclusion

Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur founded the Mughal empire in northern India and maintained significant influence for over two centuries. This article primarily examines the rule of Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar, during which the fundamental framework of the sultanate began to emerge and effectively supported the kingdom for a significant period. However, these foundations started to exhibit vulnerabilities during the reign of Aurangzeb. During Akbar's reign, the Mughal administration implemented a system of land revenue collection and treasury management, which had significant political, social, and economic implications. The inhabitants of the towns inside Akbar's realm expressed contentment with the taxes and revenue system. Despite the fact that the peasants were obligated to pay a fixed land revenue for a decade, the Zabt system had greater significance as a method of assessing revenue. The Mansabdari system was initially instituted by Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar, the third sultan of the Mughal dynasty in India, in a comprehensive and methodical manner. The responsibilities of political and military positions were referred to as Mansabdari. Every government official received a monthly wage based on their rank and had multiple subordinates who assisted them in carrying out their responsibilities. Thus, this legal, administrative, and political system was advocated throughout the reign of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur and his son Humayun, the initial and subsequent monarchs of the Mughal empire in India. In this system, individuals of high social status within the court, primarily consisting of immigrants from Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, were granted the privilege to earn revenue from agricultural lands, gardens, and herding activities, referred to as tides. Ultimately, all these officials were subordinate to the king and subject to his absolute control. Furthermore, all the income collected were sent to the government treasury, while the government retained ownership of the property. In his memoirs, Abulfazl Allami, a renowned court scribe and historian during the reign of Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, stated that there were 66 posts recorded in the book Akbarnameh. However, in actuality, there were only 33 primary roles. Out of the total number of jobs, ranging from 7,000 to 10,000, a specific portion was set aside for Mughal princes. It is worth noting that there was no distinction between military and civilian authorities, and the monarch had the authority to transfer individuals between army and civilian roles at any time. Women played a crucial role in the Mughal court, primarily in managing the harem and handling the social, political, and cultural relations between the Mughal empire and Iran. Many of the women in the Mughal court were esteemed figures from the history of the sultanate and served as advisors for each period of the Mughal Sultan's reign.

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