

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE AND ITS SUCCESSORS*

M. Athar Ali

Contents

Political history	302
The imperial structure	310
The social and economic framework	313
High culture	315
State and religion	316
Decline of the empire (1707–1857)	319
Kashmir, Punjab and Sind under the Mughals and their successors	320

Political history

THE MUGHAL EMPIRES FIRST PHASE (1526–40)

At the beginning of the sixteenth century India was divided into a number of regional states. Within the area included in Central Asia for the purposes of this volume¹ were found the independent principality of Kashmir, the Langāh kingdom of Multan (southern Punjab) and the kingdom of Sind under the Jāms. Punjab, with its capital at Lahore, was a province of the Lodi empire, which under Sultān Sikandar (1489–1517) extended from the Indus to Bihar. The newly founded city of Agra was the sultan's capital, while Delhi was in a

* See Map 6, p. 930.

¹ The term 'Central Asia' is used here in the broader sense given to it for the series to which this volume belongs and includes Kashmir and the Indus plains (Punjab and Sind).

state of decay. A large part of the ruling class in the Lodi sultanate consisted of Afghan immigrants, though there was considerable accommodation with local elements.

When Zahīru'ddīn Muhammad Bābur (1483–1530), the Timurid prince celebrated for his memoirs,² fled from his ancestral principality of Ferghana, he established himself in Kabul in 1504. Here he proclaimed his undiminished ambitions by disdaining the designation of *mīrzā* (in Persian, son, descendant of *amīr* and ruler, hence prince, noble) and adopting the style of *pādshāh* (king).³ An alliance with Shāh Ismā'īl of Persia (1501–24) put Samarkand into his hands (1511–12), but a great Uzbek victory over the Safavids drove him back to his safe haven of Kabul. Henceforth Afghanistan and northern India were the fields at whose expense aggrandizement could take place.

It is often overlooked that in subjugating Indian territories, Bābur was in fact preceded by a kindred clan, the Arghūns, who had long been connected with the Timurid kingdom of Herat. Expelled from Kandahar (Qandahār) in 1517, Shāh Beg Arghūn (d. 1522) established himself at Shāl (Quetta), above the Bolan pass, and at Sibi (Siwi), below. From these bases, he conquered Sind in 1520, his remaining two years being spent in defending and consolidating his possession of that province. His son Shāh Hasan (1522–55) expanded his dominions northwards, and early in 1527 occupied Multan.⁴

The successes of the Arghūns, which otherwise would have appeared fairly respectable in scale, were soon overshadowed by Bābur's conquest of the Lodi empire. This large polity was torn with dissension under Sikandar Lodī's son and successor, Ibrāhīm (1517–26). In 1520 Bābur raided western Punjab and in 1524 obtained the submission of Lahore. In 1526, marching upon Delhi, he crushed Ibrāhīm Lodī's host at Panipat. The battle is significant for Bābur's use of musket and cannon. He again used them to good effect at Khanwa near Agra, where he defeated Rāna Sangrām Singh of Mewar and his allies in 1527, and at the battle on the Ghagara river in the east where he defeated and dispersed the remnants of the Afghan opposition in 1529.⁵

Bābur died in 1530, to be succeeded by his eldest son, Humāyūn (1530–56). Bābur had hardly had any time to alter the administrative structure that he took over from the Lodis, and Humāyūn was apparently more interested in the purely ceremonial aspects of royalty.⁶ The practical independence enjoyed by Humāyūn's brother, Kāmran, now in occupation

² Bābur, 1995; 1922.

³ Cf. Williams, 1918, p. 95.

⁴ The most detailed and reliable source for these events is Ma'āsūm, 1938, pp. 112–27, 141–60. Other authorities date the fall of Kandahar to Bābur to 1522 (Bābur, 1922, Vol. 1, pp. 432–5), which does not suit the chronology of the Arghūn progress in Sind. Both the years 1517 and 1522 belong to periods that Bābur's own memoirs do not cover.

⁵ These battles are best analysed in Williams, 1918.

⁶ As may be seen from Khwānd Amīr, 1940.

of Kabul, Kandahar and Punjab, greatly reduced Humāyūn's resources. Nevertheless, his early military successes were quite creditable. In 1532 he routed a fresh Afghan army raised in Bihar by Sultān Mahmūd Lodī, and then in 1535 conducted a brilliant campaign against Bahādur Shāh of Gujarat (1526–37), in the face of the powerful artillery commanded by his opponent. But the revival of Afghan power in the east, this time under the leadership of the redoubtable Sher Khān Sūr, called him away; and in his absence, Mughal forces rapidly abandoned Gujarat in 1536.

Sher Khān Sūr had made himself the master of Bihar after 1532, and then in 1536 he greatly increased his power by conquering Bengal. When Humāyūn, sensing a fresh danger, marched against him, Sher Khān let Humāyūn advance into Bengal and then cut off his supply routes. As Humāyūn's demoralized troops retreated westwards, he was decisively defeated by Sher Khān at Chausa in 1539. Humāyūn fled towards Agra and tried to gather his troops again, but the defeat at Kanauj across the Ganges in May 1540 made further resistance impossible. Meanwhile Sher Khān had himself crowned, adopting the title Sher Shāh, and he swiftly occupied Agra, Delhi and Lahore.

THE SŪR DYNASTY (1540–55) AND THE MUGHAL RESTORATION (1555–6)

Sher Shāh Sūr (1540–5) founded an empire that included not only the territories of the old Lodi empire, but also Bengal, Malwa, much of Rajasthan and Multan. During his five-year reign, he was continuously engaged in military operations and died as the result of a gunpowder explosion at the siege of Kalinjar in central India in 1545.

Despite his short reign, Sher Shāh's administrative measures were remarkable in their scope. He sought to systematize land-revenue assessment and collection by undertaking a crop-wise land survey and fixing rates of tax in kind according to crop (this method was called *zabt*). Tax was, however, collected in money through commutation at notified harvest prices. The currency system was reformed by his coining of a pure silver rupee, the ancestor of the modern currencies of India and Pakistan. He sought to encourage trade by establishing caravanserais at appropriate distances on the main highways. Finally, he sought to enforce the full maintenance of the cavalry by instituting a branding system. Most of these measures were subsequently continued and perfected by the Mughal emperor Akbar.⁷

Sher Shāh's successor Islām Shāh (1545–54) maintained his father's administrative rigour, but faced continuous defiance from within the Afghan nobility, which he suppressed with a heavy hand. While Sher Shāh had built the Purana Qila fort at Delhi, seeming to

⁷ Most of our information about Sher Shāh comes from °Abbās Khān Sarwānī, 1964. Qanungo, 1965, is the standard modern biography.

prefer it as his capital, Islām Shāh made Gwalior his main seat. His death led to internal dissension and the preferring of rival claims to royalty within the Sūr clan; and this gave Humāyūn an opportunity to attempt a recovery of his lost dominions.

After his defeat at Kanauj, Humāyūn had fled to Lahore. Since his way to Kabul was barred by his brother Kāmṛān, he marched into the Arghūn principality of Sind, where, not unnaturally, he did not receive a warm welcome. After some vain wanderings during the course of which his son Akbar was born at Umarnkot in eastern Sind in 1542, he finally left Sind and made his way to Persia through Kandahar and Sistan. In 1544 he received a magnificent reception at the court of the Safavid Shāh Tahmāsp I (1524–76). With the aid of Persian troops he occupied Kandahar in 1545,⁸ and then went on to recover Kabul from Kāmṛān. However, he only managed to consolidate his position in Afghanistan with much difficulty. In 1555 he led an expedition into India, and after defeating the troops of Sikandar Sūr occupied Delhi in the same year. It was here that he died after falling down the stairs in 1556.

AKBAR (1556–1605) AND HIS CONQUESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

A 14-year-old boy at his accession, Akbar's reign began under the tutelage of his *atāliq* (regent), Bayrām Khān. The latter, by his determination, saved the newly restored regime by a victory at the second battle of Panipat (November 1556) over a largely revitalized Afghan army sent by the Sūr ruler °Adil Shāh under his commander Hemu Vikramajit. The reoccupation of Delhi followed, and the Sūr empire finally collapsed.

In 1560 Akbar carried out a coup against his powerful regent and sent him into exile. The unfortunate man was murdered in Gujarat by some Afghans while on his way to Mecca in 1561. Those who like Akbar's foster-mother, Maham Anka, had incited him against Bayrām Khān soon discovered that Akbar was his own master. It is worth noting, however, that he established his position without a spate of executions or massacres. It may be supposed that there were three keys to his success: a continuous series of conquests; the incorporation of fresh groups into the nobility; and a determined effort at administrative systematization.

Malwa was annexed in 1561; Chittor, the capital of Mewar, fell in 1568; Gujarat was conquered in 1572–3; and Bihar in 1574. The 1575 victory at Takorai over the Afghans opened the gates of Orissa for Akbar's commanders, and the conquest of Bengal, a long-drawn-out process, was now begun. By 1579 Akbar was the master of most of northern India, with his dominions touching both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

⁸ For a study of Humāyūn's sojourn in Iran, see Ray, 1948.

Though Akbar was himself a general of no mean ability, and his suppression of a rebellion in Gujarat in 1573 by a lightning campaign launched from his capital Fatehpur Sikri was a brilliant enterprise, he allowed many of his later military undertakings to be conducted by his commanders. These, as well as his bureaucrats, were drawn from varied sources. Akbar promoted Iranians as well as Indian Muslims, along with the Turanians (who had formed the original core of the supporters of the dynasty). From 1562, with the induction of Bhāramal of Amber into the high ranks of the nobility, Akbar began his policy of incorporating Rajput chiefs (often initially subjugated by brute force) into the nobility. Marriages of Rajput princesses into the imperial family cemented the alliances. (This, of course, was also the case with families of higher Turanian and Iranian nobles, who similarly provided brides for the imperial family.) At Akbar's death in 1605, Mān Singh of Amber was one of the two highest nobles of the empire. The patronage also extended to other sections. Akbar's famous finance minister, and an able commander, was Todar Mal (d. 1589), a Hindu of the mercantile Khatri caste; and his principal intellectual counsellor, already prominent by 1579, was Abū'l Fazl (d. 1602) (see below), the celebrated historian and assembler of economic and fiscal statistics.

Akbar's major administrative measures belong to the year 1574–5. He overhauled the revenue system by having permanent revenue rates per unit of area fixed on the basis of information obtained for 10 years (1570–80); these varied according to the crop and were stated in money. To ensure the success of the project, he dispensed with the *jāgīrs* (territories assigned to nobles) in most of his empire and instituted a system of numerical ranks (*mansabs*) that determined both the size of the rank-holder's contingent and the salary to be paid to him. Akbar followed this up in 1580 by dividing his empire systematically into *sūbas* (provinces) and limiting the powers of the governors by placing high-ranking officers within each province who were directly accountable to the corresponding central ministers. He thus created the basic structure of the Mughal empire which lasted until the eighteenth century.

The year 1579 is important, first, because Akbar's departure from Islamic orthodoxy began in that year, with the debacle of the theologians' statement of testimony (*mahzar*) recognizing his authority as the interpreter of Muslim law (see below). A second reason is that hereafter the north-west bordering upon Central Asia became increasingly important for him, especially in view of the rise of the Uzbek leader ^cAbdullāh Khān (1583–98).

Until now Kabul had been in the hands of Akbar's younger brother, Mīrzā Hakīm, and though Akbar had built a strong fort at Attock on his side of the Indus, he had allowed Hakīm to reign in Kabul. In 1580 Mīrzā Hakīm appeared in Punjab to take advantage of a serious rebellion that had broken out in the east against Akbar. Akbar marched personally

into Kabul in 1581; and when Mīrzā Hakīm died in 1585, he sent Mān Singh to annex Kabul permanently to his empire.

Akbar's attention turned next to Kashmir. There had already been certain Mughal incursions into Kashmir under Bābur; and in 1530–1 Kāmṛān had sent in an army that had remained in occupation of the valley for some time. Soon afterwards in 1532–3, the historian Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt, then in the service of Saʿīd Khan of Kashghar (1514–33), led a raid into the valley that caused much devastation. He retired, only to return in 1540 from the south, after he had left Humāyūn's demoralized camp at Lahore. Haydar Dughlāt managed to rule in Kashmir until 1551, when he was killed while leading a night attack.

The overthrow of Haydar Dughlāt did not ease matters in Kashmir, where the Chak family, itself riven with dissension, had seized power while continuing to exercise it in the name of the sultans of the Shāh Mīr dynasty. In 1561 the old dynasty was finally supplanted by the Chaks, whose first ruler was Ghāzī Shāh (1561–3). It was during the reign of Yūsuf Shāh (1579–86) from this same dynasty that Akbar finally decided to annex Kashmir. An army under his commander Bhagwāndās entered Kashmir in 1585 and Yūsuf Shāh surrendered. But it required another expedition in 1586 under Qāsim Khān before the last sultan of Kashmir, Ya'qūb Shāh (1586–8), would surrender. Akbar himself visited Kashmir in 1588.⁹

Kashmir had barely been subdued when it was the turn of Sind. This large kingdom, ruled by Shāh Hasan Arghūn (1522–55), received a jolt when Humāyūn's fugitive forces occupied large parts of it in 1541–3. Multan had been seized earlier by Kāmṛān and was now devastated by a local Langāh chief. Thereafter it was occupied by Sher Shāh Sūr; and from the Sūrs it passed ultimately to Akbar. When Shāh Hasan Arghūn died in 1555, he was succeeded at Thatta in southern Sind by Mīrzā ʿĪsā Tarkhān (1555–67), while Sultān Mahmūd Khān, another officer of the Arghūns, became master of northern Sind with his headquarters at Bhakkar. While sometimes seeking Shāh Tahmāsp's protection, Sultān Mahmūd finally sought a way out of his local difficulties by a request made just before his own death in 1574 that Akbar take over Bhakkar. Northern Sind thus passed peaceably into Akbar's hands; it was treated as part of the *sūba* of Multan when the *sūbas* were formed in 1580 (see above).¹⁰

The Tarkhān family continued to govern lower Sind until in the reign of Jānī Beg Tarkhān (1585–92) (see below), Akbar sanctioned a full-scale invasion under ʿAbdu'l Rahīm Khān-i Khānān from 1590 to 1592. After considerable resistance, Jānī Beg

⁹ The most reliable modern narrative of the events in Kashmir described here will be found in M. Hasan, 1974, pp. 117–93.

¹⁰ Maʿsūm, 1938, and Nisyanī, 1964, are the best sources for Sind during this period.

capitulated on terms. He was now to continue as governor, but with a much reduced territory placed under his direct control.¹¹

Kandahar had been seized by Shāh Tahmāsp in 1558. It was now recovered for Akbar by °Abdu'l Rahīm Khān-i Khānān in 1595. Akbar thus obtained an eminently satisfactory north-western frontier for his empire. As the historian Abū'l Fazl noted, Kabul and Kandahar were the two gateways of Hindustan; and Akbar himself was anxious that the Uzbeks too should recognize the Hindu Kush mountains as their boundary with the Mughal empire.¹²

Akbar remained in the north-western parts of his dominions throughout 1585–98 and Lahore was his capital during this entire period. The death of °Abdullāh Khān in 1598, and the internal strife in the Uzbek khanate following upon this event, set Akbar's mind at ease in regard to threats from that quarter. He now left Lahore directly to go to the Deccan. Here Berar had been seized from the Nizāmshāhi kingdom of Ahmadnagar in 1596, and Akbar personally oversaw the annexation of Ahmadnagar itself between 1599 and 1601. In 1601 the client kingdom of Khandesh was also converted into a Mughal province. The last four years of Akbar's life were spent at Agra, somewhat darkened by a quarrel with his son Salīm, though a reconciliation was attained before his death in 1605.

Akbar was an exceptional individual. His political ambitions did not obstruct the continuous growth of humanitarian ideas. The views he ultimately came to hold about the inequity of men's oppression of women, his dislike of slavery and forced labour, his rejection of all formal religions and his espousal of tolerance for all of them, and his stout support of reason and interest in technological innovation, all make him seem particularly modern. When one adds his great feats as a builder, his purposeful pursuit of realism in painting and his patronage of literature and of translations from Sanskrit, one finds it difficult adequately to express the greatness of the man.¹³

AKBAR'S SUCCESSORS (1605–1707)

Akbar had the further good fortune of having three fairly able successors: Jahāngīr (1605–27), Shāh Jahān (1628–58) and Aurangzeb (1659–1707). Jahāngīr inherited the cultural interests and tolerant ideas of his father. His memoirs are not only an important historical source but also an example of how simple, effective prose could be produced in

¹¹ See Bilgrami, 1997, for the most detailed and careful account of the military and diplomatic history of the annexation.

¹² Abū'l Fazl, 1867–72, Vol. 1, p. 592; 1873–87, Vol. 3, p. 705.

¹³ The main source for Akbar is Abū'l Fazl, 1873–87, Vols. 2 and 3. Badāūnī, 1964–9, Vol. 2, offers a contemporary critic's view. Among modern biographies, Srivastava, 1962, is the most detailed, but not always trustworthy. See Moosvi, 1994, for a selection of contemporary sketches and narratives.

Persian.¹⁴ In 1611 he married Nūr Jahān (1579–1645), a widow belonging to a family of Persian origin. A talented woman, her wide human sympathies, diplomatic wisdom and public works won her a large circle of admirers, including some who were politically hostile to her. Jahāngīr's later years (1622–7) saw considerable political instability, owing mainly to the rebellion of his son Khurram (the future emperor Shāh Jahān). In the Deccan, the Abyssinian statesman Malik Ambar (d. 1626) was able to resurrect the Nizāmshāhi kingdom; and in the north-west, Shāh °Abbās I (1587–1629) seized Kandahar in 1622.¹⁵

Shāh Jahān was able to mount the throne in 1628, just when he had been driven into exile in the Deccan after yet another futile rebellion against his father; and this made him compare himself to Timur, who had had similar turns of fortune. He also had dreams of recovering such parts of the original Timurid dominions as he could. In 1638 he gained Kandahar by the defection of its Persian governor °Alī Mardān Khān; and in 1646 his armies crossed the Hindu Kush to occupy Balkh and Badakhshan. The aggressive policy was, however, not successful. Balkh and Badakhshan had to be abandoned in 1647, and Shāh °Abbās II (1642–66) recovered Kandahar for Persia by an expedition in 1648–9. Three sieges (1649, 1652 and 1653) by large Mughal armies failed to dislodge the Persians from Kandahar. Shāh Jahān was more successful in the Deccan: in 1636 he destroyed the Nizāmshāhi kingdom; and through two wars, in 1655 and 1656–7, large areas were seized from the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkunda.

For many people, Shāh Jahān's greatest claim to fame rests perhaps on his magnificent buildings: the Taj Mahal, the mausoleum at Agra built for his wife Mumtāz Mahal (d. 1631), is a monument known throughout the world (see Chapter 18, Part Two).

Shāh Jahān had the misfortune of being deposed in 1658 by his son Aurangzeb, who defeated Shāh Jahān's own chosen successor, his eldest son, Dārā Shukoh. Shāh Jahān's remaining years (1658–66) were spent as a prisoner in the Agra fort.¹⁶ Aurangzeb °ālamgīr, who formally crowned himself emperor in 1659, was undoubtedly the most militarily active among Akbar's successors. His major concerns, though, lay not in Central Asia, but in the Deccan, where he faced a most skilful opponent in the Marāthā leader ShivĀjī (d. 1680). Aurangzeb himself spent his last 26 years (1681–1707) supervising the annexation of Bijapur (1686) and Golkunda (1687) and capturing and executing ShivĀjī's successor Shambhujī (1689). The Marāthās, however, recovered and gained increasingly in strength,

¹⁴ Jahāngīr, 1863–4.

¹⁵ For the standard biography of Jahāngīr, see Prasad, 1962.

¹⁶ Lāhorī, 1866–72, furnishes the detailed official history of Shāh Jahān's reign (the first 20 years). Its continuation by Muhammad Wārīs, covering the third decade, has not yet been published. See Saxena, 1958, for a modern biography.

so that by the time of Aurangzeb's death in 1707, large areas in the Deccan had come under their control.

Industrious and stern, Aurangzeb maintained a semblance of administration throughout the empire to the last. Unlike his predecessors he introduced an element of religious discrimination, culminating in the imposition of the *jizya* (poll-tax on non-Muslims) in 1679. Otherwise, however, he largely maintained the religiously heterogeneous nature of the Mughal nobility.¹⁷

The imperial structure

The centralized administration, organized on systematic lines, was a notable feature of the Mughal empire in its classical period (1556–1707). This was very largely the creation of Akbar. At the centre, the emperor appointed ministers such as the *wakīl* (deputy), whose office after Bayrām Khān's dismissal in 1560 became largely titular and was often unoccupied. The *dīwān-i a'cālā* (head of the revenue and finance department) came to be the most important minister. He controlled the revenues derived from the emperor's personal domain (*khālisa*, lands whose revenue was directly collected for the monarch's own treasury), determined the assessment figures (*jama'*) on whose basis the *jāgīrs* were assigned, and was in charge of the payment of all expenditure, including cash salaries. He issued instructions to his subordinates, called *dīwāns*, in the provinces (*sūbas*). The *mīr-bakhshī* was in charge of the granting of *mansabs*, the upkeep of the army and the intelligence service. He had his own subordinates (*bakhshīs*) in the *sūbas*. The *sadrū'l sudūr* (head of the *sadrs*, or 'eminences') controlled charity grants and the appointment of *qāzīs* (judges).¹⁸

In 1580, as already mentioned, Akbar divided the empire into *sūbas*, each having a governor (*sipahsālār*, *sāhib-i sūba*, *nāzim*) appointed by the emperor. The governor's powers were greatly restricted by those of other officers, the *dīwān*, the *bakhshī* and the *sadr*, who were directly subordinate to the respective ministers at the centre.

Each *sūba* was divided into *sarkārs* (districts), delimited largely for territorial identification. *Faujdar*s (commandants) maintained law and order over areas which did not necessarily coincide with *sarkārs*. Each *sarkār* was divided into *parganas* (sub-districts), each having a *qāzī* and two semi-hereditary officers called *qānūngo* and *chaudhurī*, who were respectively concerned with land-tax assessment and its collection.¹⁹

¹⁷ For Aurangzeb, the standard biography is Sarkar, 1912–24. See Athar Ali, 1997, for a different interpretation from that of Sarkar.

¹⁸ Ibn Hasan, 1970, is still the major standard work on the Mughal central administration.

¹⁹ Cf. Saran, 1973.

All higher offices (which until the eighteenth century never became hereditary and had, in practice, only short incumbencies) were filled by persons who belonged to the *mansab* cadre. Each of them held a *mansab* indicated by two numbers – for example, 5,000 *zāts*, 3,000 *sawārs* (now conventionally represented in writings of modern historians as 5,000/3,000). The lowest *mansab* was 10/10. The first rank broadly indicated status and personal pay; the second determined the size of military contingent to be maintained by the rank-holder, and the pay due on it. Thus every *mansab*-holder was supposed to be a military officer as well; the higher *mansab*-holders were called *amīrs*, or commanders. Apart from maintaining his contingent, the *mansab*-holder could be appointed to any office or post, for which he received no additional salary. The *mansab* was granted by the emperor alone, and a man rose in service as he received *mansab* enhancements. Imperial disapproval was usually shown by reductions in *mansabs*, while enhancements in *mansabs* indicated promotions and favour.²⁰

The holders of *mansabs*, or *mansabdārs*, received their pay either in cash (*naqd*) or in the form of *jāgīrs* from which they were entitled to collect the land revenue and all other taxes imposed or sanctioned by the emperor. Land reserved for the income of the crown was called *khālisa sharīfa*; and such areas as were due to be assigned, but for the time being were managed by imperial officers, were known as *pāybāqī*.

Since a *jāgīr* was given in lieu of a cash salary, it was essential that it should yield as much as the salary to which the holder was entitled. *Jama^c* was the term given to figures officially determined as representing the net revenue expected from each unit of territory (village, *pargana*, etc.). The *jāgīrs* were by their very nature transferable. That no person should have the same *jāgīr* for a long period was an established principle of the Mughal empire. In practice the transfers were continuously made because a *mansabdār*, when sent to serve in a *sūba*, had to be assigned a *jāgīr* there; similarly, those recalled from a *sūba* would require *jāgīrs* elsewhere. Thus each such transfer, owing to the adjustment with the *jama^c*, necessitated other transfers. Under this system, nobles could never call any part of the empire their own and they all remained dependent on the will of the emperor.

Regarding the fiscal rights of the *jāgīrdārs* (holders of *jāgīrs*), the assignment orders described in set terms the rights that the emperor granted to *jāgīrdārs*. They were entitled to collect the authorized revenue (*māl-i wājib*) and all claims of the state (*huqūq-i dīwānī*) within the assigned territory. No right other than that of collecting the land revenue and authorized taxes was delegated to the *jāgīrdār*, and he was expected to exercise this right, too, in conformity with imperial regulations. Simple statements requiring the *jāgīrdār* not to take more than half the produce occur in the revenue records and other literature of

²⁰ On the *mansab* system, see Athar Ali, 1997.

Aurangzeb's reign. The *jāgīrdār* had to employ his own agents to collect the revenue and taxes within his *jāgīrs*. A practice that particularly appealed to the smaller *jāgīdārs* was that of *ijāra* (revenue-farming). It became very common during the reign of Shāh Jahān and was held to be one of the causes for the ruin of the peasantry.²¹

The French traveller François Bernier (who was in India from 1658 to 1667) presented a closely reasoned analysis of the causes of the weakness of the Mughal empire, arguing that the system of the transfer of *jāgīrs* led inevitably to oppression and the devastation of the country.²² However, the *jāgīr* system in its standard form worked with tolerable efficiency down to the middle of Aurangzeb's reign. Towards the close of his reign, because of the increasing strain of the Deccan wars on the empire's resources and the dislocation of the administration owing to the emperor's absence from northern India, the complicated machinery under which *jāgīrs* were assigned was subjected to great strain. The crisis which shook the *jāgīr* system appeared in the garb of what contemporaries called *bī-jāgīrī* (absence of [available] *jāgīrs*): it occurred because more commanders and officers had to be accommodated on the imperial payroll than could be found *jāgīrs*. Ultimately, in the reign of Farrukh Siyār (1713–19), many *jāgīr* assignments by the court were merely made on paper, so that a large number of persons who were granted *mansabs* never obtained *jāgīrs*. Once this happened, the essential framework under which the empire had so far functioned utterly broke down.²³

The Mughal nobility was theoretically the creation of the emperor. It was he alone who could confer, increase, diminish or resume a *mansab*. In recruitment to the ranks of the nobility, the main factor taken into account was family status. The *khānazāds*, or sons and descendants of *mansabdārs*, had the best claim of all. But a son did not normally succeed to the full *mansab* of his father. As a result, a large number of recruits always consisted of persons who did not belong to families of those already holding a *mansab*. Such persons came from a variety of classes from practically all regions within the empire. A number of them were *zamīndārs* (local hereditary chiefs). Akbar gave great importance to this class by granting *mansabs* to many of the chiefs, especially Rajput rulers. The chiefs were allowed to retain their ancestral domains, which were treated as their *watan-jāgīrs* (permanent assignments held in *jāgīr*), but as government officers, ordinary *jāgīrs* were also assigned to them in all parts of the empire.

There were nobles and high officers of other states, notably Persia and the Uzbek khanates, who were given a place in the Mughal nobility. The Persian diaspora assumed

²¹ For a detailed description of the functioning of the *jāgīr* system, see Habib, 1999, pp. 298–341.

²² Bernier, 1916, p. 227.

²³ Chandra, 1959.

greater importance for the Mughal empire in the seventeenth century than the Turkic (Turanian). Similarly, in the Deccan, military requirements dictated that the large number of nobles and officers of the independent states, both in times of peace and war, be won over to the Mughal side. Almost all the Deccani (Southern) *mansabdārs*, including Marāthās and Abyssinians, belonged to this category. A small portion of the Mughal nobility was recruited from professional classes of office clerks and accountants. Such were the members of the Hindu castes of Khattris, Kāyasthas and Nāgar Brahmans. Finally, *mansabs* were also awarded to scholars, religious divines, men of letters, etc. Both Abū'l Fazl in the time of Akbar, and Sa^cdullāh Khān and Dānishmand Khān during the reign of Shāh Jahān, owed their high rank to their scholarly accomplishments.

The social and economic framework

Beneath the imperial structure existed a more stable class, that of the *zamīndārs*. It is noteworthy that the general revenue regulations issued in the period from Akbar to Aurangzeb excluded the *zamīndārs* from the framework of the standard revenue machinery, the peasants being expected to pay revenue directly to the treasury. Yet there is considerable evidence that the *zamīndārs* paid the revenue on behalf of whole villages. A possible explanation seems to be that every locality had some lands under *zamīndārs*, who from the point of view of the revenue authorities were often seen as simple revenue-payers, or *asāmīs*.

Summary assessments of land revenue and collection through *zamīndārs* must have considerably simplified the task of the *jāgīrdārs* and their agents. Yet it was also from the *zamīndārs* that the *jāgīrdārs* met the greatest opposition. A high assessment would deprive the *zamīndārs* of their income and, in that case, they might use their armed retainers, backed in some cases by the peasants, to defy the *jāgīrdārs*. For such defiance, the *zamīndār* might forfeit his *zamīndārī* rights. But *zamīndārs* could not legally be dispossessed or appointed by anyone except the emperor.

Aurangzeb's reign saw a great increase in the pressure of the Mughal administration upon the *zamīndārs* as a class. According to Manucci, 'usually the viceroys and governors [of the Mughal empire] are in a constant state of quarrel with the Hindu princes and *zamīndārs* – with some because they wish to seize their lands; with others to force them to pay more revenue than is customary'. There was usually 'some rebellion of *Rājas* and *zamīndārs* going on in the Mughal kingdom'.²⁴

The peasants were largely included in the terms *ra^cīyat*, pl. *ri^cāyā* (whence the Anglo-Indian 'ryot'). That they were a greatly differentiated class is suggested by the distinction

²⁴ Manucci, 1907–8, Vol. 2, pp. 431–2, 462.

made between *muqaddams* (headmen), *kalāntars* (great men), etc., on the one hand, and the *reza ri'āyā* (small peasants) on the other. A *farmān* (order) of Aurangzeb established a separate category for peasants who were so indigent as to depend wholly on credit for their seed, cattle and subsistence. Whether the peasants had ownership rights on the land may be doubted; but since land was not scarce, the authorities were more interested in keeping the peasants tied to the land they had been cultivating than in stressing their own claim to evict them at will.

The village was the unit around which peasant society revolved. It was also the real unit of assessment of the state's revenue demand, which was distributed among villagers by the headman (*muqaddam* or *kalāntar*) and the village accountant (*patwārī*). It thus had a financial pool, from which not only tax payments but also minor common expenses (*kharch-i dih*) were met. This seems to have formed the basic factor behind the celebrated, but often elusive, Indian village community.²⁵

Commerce seems to have penetrated the village economy to a great extent, since peasants needed to sell their crops in order to pay their taxes. There was little left them with which to buy any goods on the market. Even so, commerce must have intensified the already existing differences due to the unequal possession of agricultural and pastoral goods (seed, ploughs and cattle). The peasants were usually divided among castes. Even the administration recognized caste hierarchy by varying the revenue rates according to caste, as documents from Rajasthan especially show.

By and large, artisans were in the same position as peasants: they were technically 'free', but hemmed around by many constraints. Though some artisans were bound to render customary services as village servants, most could sell their wares in the market. The need for advances, however, often forced them to deal only with particular merchants, brokers or other middlemen. A small number worked in the workshops (*kārkhānas*) of nobles and merchants.

Merchants formed a numerous and fairly well-protected class in the Mughal empire. This class was also quite heterogeneous in composition. There were, on the one hand, the large bands of the *banjāras* (transporters of goods in bulk), who travelled with pack oxen over enormous distances; on the other, there were specialist bankers (*sarrāfs*), brokers (*dallāls*) and insurers (the business of *bīma*, or insurance, being usually carried on by *sarrāfs*). Some of them, at the ports, also owned and operated ships.

The theory has been put forward by Steensgaard (following Van Leur) that the merchants engaged in Asian and Indian commerce (seaborne as well as inland) were essentially 'pedlars', so that the intrusion of the Dutch and English East India Companies introduced

²⁵ Habib, 1999, pp. 123–68.

radically superior commercial techniques for controlled responses to price variations in different markets. There is, however, little justification for this thesis.²⁶ There were undoubtedly ‘small men’ in Indian commerce, men like the jewel merchant Banārsīdās of Agra (*fl.* 1605), who has left his memoirs. But then there were also large merchants (*sāhs*), who had numerous agents (*bāpāris*, *banjāras*) at different places. One of these large merchants, Virji Vora of Surat (*fl.* 1650), often financed the English East India Company. He had agents not only in all the important towns in India, but also in several ports abroad. A fairly efficient system of bills of exchange (*hundīs*) and insurance (*bīma*) were important aids to the smooth functioning of commerce.²⁷ This was aided by the uniform currency in gold, silver and copper that the Mughals provided throughout their dominions.²⁸

There is an interesting ongoing debate as to whether the Mughal empire had a middle class and so possessed the potential to develop into a capitalist economy. It has been argued that such was the case.²⁹ Leonard has even tried to apply the ‘Great Firm’ theory to explain the decline of the Mughal empire.³⁰ Essentially, proponents of the theory point to the development of commerce, banking and the existence of large professional classes. Opponents of the thesis include Irfan Habib, who has argued that the Mughal urban economy and commerce rested heavily on the system of land-tax extraction and was incapable of independent development into capitalism.³¹

High culture

The Mughal court was the nucleus of a splendid flowering of art and culture, based on a blending of Indian and Perso-Islamic traditions. The most visible evidence of this high culture survives in the great buildings left behind by the Mughals. Akbar built Fatehpur Sikri beside the forts of Agra, Lahore, Allahabad, Srinagar and Attock. Shāh Jahān not only created the Taj Mahal, ‘a dream in marble’, but also built the Red Fort at Delhi and laid out the city of Shahjahanabad adjacent to it.³² Under the Mughal emperors’ patronage, a distinct school of painting took shape. Descended from the Persian school, it freely accepted both Indian and European influences. It produced such masters of miniature painting as Abū’l

²⁶ See Steensgaard, 1974. Cf. Habib, 1990, for a criticism of the theory.

²⁷ For economic conditions in the Mughal empire, see Raychaudhuri and Habib, 1982; Moosvi, 1987.

²⁸ Cf. Hodivala, 1923.

²⁹ See Smith, 1944; Khan, 1975.

³⁰ Leonard, 1979.

³¹ Habib, 1995, pp. 180–220.

³² A recent (though not uniformly reliable) work on Mughal architecture is Asher, 1992.

Hasan (who flourished under Akbar), Mansūr (under Jahāngīr) and Bichitr (under Shāh Jahān).³³

Persian was the language of the Mughal court and administration, and Akbar's court brought together a notable assemblage of Persian writers. The poets ʿUrfī Shīrāzī and Fayzī have permanent niches in the history of Persian literature. Abū'l Fazl (d. 1602) was not only a master of Persian prose of the very ornate kind, but also a reflective writer; he compiled two distinctive works in Persian, a detailed history of Akbar's reign (*Akbar-nāma*) and a largely statistical description of Akbar's empire and its administrative structure (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*) (c. 1595). The Mughals did much to spread the use of Persian; ultimately, in the eighteenth century, a literary language based on a blending of Hindi and Persian appeared in the form of Urdu, whose very name proclaimed its association with the court (*urdū* means 'camp').

Akbar also patronized a truly liberal school of thought. Unfortunately, this new rational attitude did not extend to an inquiry into European scientific and technological discoveries: yet there were valuable achievements even after Akbar's time. Sādiq Isfahān compiled a singular atlas of the Old World in 33 sheets (at Jaunpur in 1647), for example. But the most notable achievement was the work on astronomy by Sawāi Jai Singh (d. 1744), based on records of observations established by him at Delhi, Jaipur, Mathura, Varanasi and Ujjain; yet despite the use of some of de La Hire's astronomical tables, Singh's universe remained strictly Ptolemaic.

State and religion

Called upon to govern a multireligious country, Akbar invoked pantheistic principles to justify a semi-divine monarchy, one that was not associated with any particular religion. Much has been written about the evolution of Akbar's religious ideas. It was probably in the realm of the relations between political sovereignty and theological law that the vital contradiction germinated in 1579. There is also no doubt that Safavid Persia exercised a considerable influence on the thought and manners at Akbar's court. Since the Safavid shah was also a religious figure, and superior to all religious divines in the country, it was not unnatural that Akbar should aspire to such a status within a Sunni framework. It was obviously with this in view that at the ʿIbādat Khāna (Prayer House, where later on people of all religions assembled to discuss theological problems) consultations with theologians had been initially undertaken in 1570. Akbar hoped to implement what the theologians told him, and in return secure from them a recognition of his own supreme position. In

³³ See Brown, 1924; Verma, 1994, pp. 47–55.

1579 they were at last persuaded to sign a statement of testimony (*mahzar*) recognizing that Akbar possessed a particular religious and juridical status as a 'just sovereign'. The authority assigned him was, however, soon found to be of marginal import – yet it was a novelty whose implications were considered dangerous enough to arouse the hostility of traditionalist Muslims. It therefore marked the end of Akbar's dialogue with orthodox Islam.

Akbar had already begun looking towards other religions, first out of curiosity and then, perhaps, out of an increasing desire to put his own position beyond the narrow framework of traditional Islam. A serious rebellion in 1580–1 set the seal on his alienation from Islamic orthodoxy, and a phase now opened in which Akbar defined his own views more and more sharply.

Akbar wished to assert his strong belief in God in all circumstances, but his concept of the way God should be worshipped was independent of both Islam and Hinduism. He believed, as do the Sufis, that God is to be grasped and worshipped according to the limitations of each person's individual knowledge. God is formless (*be-sūrat*); and to worship such a being, physical action in prayer (*sūrī-paristish*) is suitable only for the unawakened. Akbar therefore deprecated both the image-worship of the Hindus and the prayer rituals of the Muslims. In time, his ideas came to be heavily influenced by the pantheism of Ibn ʿArabī: God creates visible differences whereas Reality is always the same. Akbar saw a close relationship between the Divine Sovereign and the temporal sovereign. Just to see a sovereign (*farmāndeh*) was indeed a form of worship of God; and for the sovereigns themselves, in return, the dispensing of justice and administering the world was the real mode of worship.

One may pass over the principal injunctions and petty rituals that Akbar instituted for his 'disciples'. Akbar insisted that his religious ideas had to be reflected in his own practice. While the real doctrine of pantheism was to be prudently conveyed to a select group of disciples, the principle of *sulh-i kul* (Absolute Peace) that flowed from it was held to be of general import for imperial policy as well as ordinary conduct in all spheres.

A noteworthy element of Akbar's policy was not only a general tolerance of men of all faiths, but also his tolerance of Shiʿites and his prohibition of Sunni-Shiʿite conflict. Jahāngīr could say with justifiable pride that while elsewhere Shiʿites persecuted Sunnis and vice versa, in his father's empire 'Sunnis and Shiʿites prayed in one mosque.'

In a way, then, Akbar made the Mughal empire a neutral force as regards the controversies within Islam as well as the relations between Islam and other faiths. But there is also the complaint in orthodox texts that Islam as a whole suffered during Akbar's last years.³⁴

³⁴ See Athar Ali, 1982, pp. 14–39.

When Jahāngīr succeeded Akbar in 1605, he continued the policy of tolerance pursued by his father and maintained a distance from orthodoxy. He was an admirer of the Vaishnavite divine Chitrarup (d. 1637–8) and put the anti-Shi'ite cleric Shaykh Ahmad Sirhīndī (d. 1624) in prison.

Textbooks often present Shāh Jahān as an orthodox Muslim ruler, and indeed he did take some pride in calling himself a king of Islam. But he basically continued the tolerant policy of his two predecessors. In 1637, for example, out of a total of 194 known holders of high *mansabs*, 35 were Rajputs. Shāh Jahān also patronized Hindi poetry, the poet Sundar Kavi Rāi being one of his favourite courtiers. But beyond this, it was in his reign that there again emerged a movement to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Islam and evolve a common language for both religions. This was associated with his son Dārā Shukoh.

Dārā Shukoh (d. 1659), the eldest son of Shāh Jahān and heir apparent, had taken a great interest in religious matters from an early age and he was an admirer of the famous Qadri mystic, Miyān Mīr of Lahore. Dārā Shukoh's interest extended from Muslim mysticism to Hindu Vedantic philosophy. His studies led him to the conclusion that the difference between Islam and Hinduism was merely verbal (*lafzī*), and to prove this he wrote a tract called the *Majmū' al-bahrayn* [Meeting of Two Oceans]. In this he gave an exposition of the Hindu view of Truth and the Universe, giving Sanskrit terms and explanations of their meanings.³⁵ From this small tract, Dārā Shukoh went on to attempt a more ambitious enterprise: a translation into Persian of speculative philosophy, the ancient texts of the *Upanishads*. This was completed in 1657 under the title *Sirr-i Akbar* [The Great Secret]. Much of the modern interest in the *Upanishads* in a sense goes back to Dārā Shukoh because it was his Persian translation of these philosophical texts that first introduced them to the outside world.

Shāh Jahān's successor Aurangzeb adopted a more orthodox religious policy than his predecessors, perhaps as a means of gaining firmer Muslim support. He doubled customs duties on non-Muslims in 1665, sanctioned the destruction of temples in 1669 and imposed the *jizya* in 1679. These measures were not applied universally, however. Many great ancient temples as well as numerous minor ones were allowed to stand, and the Rajputs and Hindu officers were exempted from the *jizya*. The Rajput and Marāthā component in the nobility was not substantially affected by the new policy. The Rajput revolt of 1679–81 involved only the Marwar and Mewar principalities, and the ruler of the latter reaffirmed his allegiance to the Mughal emperor in 1681. On the whole, while one might deplore the long-term effects of Aurangzeb's religious policy, especially the way its echoes poison and embitter modern minds, the short-term effects were probably not as significant.

³⁵ Dārā Shukoh, 1929; see also Hasrat, 1982, pp. 12–14.

Aurangzeb was greatly interested in Muslim jurisprudence and patronized the compilation of the *Fatāwā-i ʿālamgīrī* in Arabic, this being the largest compendium of Muslim jurisprudence (based on the Hanafite school but also drawing on other schools) prepared in India. He was not greatly inclined to mysticism though he was not unfriendly to the Naqshbandi order of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhīndī. His attitude towards Shiʿism was one of aloofness, but he did not allow this to influence his policy towards the influential Persian nobles who were mostly of that persuasion.

Decline of the empire (1707–1857)

Aurangzeb's death in 1707 plunged the empire into a gruelling war of succession among his sons. The short reign of the victor, Bahādur Shāh I (1707–12), was followed by yet another bitter conflict in which, upon Farrukh Siyār's (1713–19) success, notable supporters of a defeated claimant were for the first time executed *en masse*. Muhammad Shāh's long reign (1719–48) saw a steady decline of Mughal power as the Marāthās extended their power over central India and Gujarat. Provincial governors, like those of Bengal and the Deccan, tended to become autonomous. Finally, in 1739–40 Nādir Shāh's invasion and sack of Delhi proved a devastating blow from which the empire never recovered. The Kabulsūba and southern Sind were seized by Nādir Shāh; and henceforth the Mughal emperor was virtually powerless to impose his authority on any part of the empire nominally owing allegiance to him.³⁶ The Mughal dynasty formally continued in existence (after 1803, under British tutelage) until 1857, when the British deposed the last emperor Bahādur Shāh II – an exceptionally fine Urdu poet – and sent him as a prisoner to Rangoon.

There have been numerous attempts to explain the fall of the Mughal empire. For historians like Irvine and Sarkar, the decline could be explained in terms of a personal deterioration in the quality of the kings and their nobles, who are thought to have become more luxury-loving than their seventeenth-century predecessors. Sarkar, in his monumental *History of Aurangzeb*, also dwells on Hindu–Muslim differences: Aurangzeb's religious policy is thought to have provoked a Hindu reaction that undid the unity that had been so laboriously built up by his predecessors.³⁷

More recently, there has been an attempt at a more fundamental examination. Chandra seeks to find the critical factor in the Mughals' failure to maintain the *mansab* and *jāgīr* system, whose efficient working was essential for the survival of the empire as a centralized polity.³⁸ Habib, on the other hand, has explained the fall of the Mughal empire as a

³⁶ Irvine, 1995, and Sarkar, 1988, 1991–2, offer the best surveys of this period.

³⁷ Sarkar, 1912–24, Vol. 3, pp. 283–364.

³⁸ Chandra, 1959, pp. xiii–xiv.

consequence of the working of this very system: the *jāgīr* transfers led to intensified exploitation, and such exploitation led to rebellions by *zamīndārs* and the peasantry.³⁹ All these factors are sometimes supposed to be compounded by yet another – the rise of ‘nationalities’ (such as Afghans and Marāthās), which subverted and shattered the unified empire. This thesis, developed by Soviet scholars like Reisner and maintained by a school of popular Indian Marxist writers, has received corroboration from scholars who have found new regional power groups emerging in the states that arose during the eighteenth century.⁴⁰

In following the scholarly discussion over the break-up of the Mughal empire, one is often struck by the fact that the discussion should have been conducted in such insular terms. The first part of the eighteenth century did not only see the collapse of the Mughal empire – the Safavid empire also collapsed; the Uzbek khanate broke up; and the Ottoman empire began its slow, but inexorable decline. Are all these phenomena mere coincidence? It would be somewhat implausible to assert that the same fate overcame all the large empires of the Indian and Islamic worlds at precisely the same time, but owing to quite different (and miscellaneous) factors operating in each case. One can, perhaps, plausibly argue that the decline of the Mughal empire derived essentially from a cultural failure, a failure shared with the entire Islamic world: the failure to learn from Europe and to make advances in the fields of science and technology. It was perhaps this same failure that had tilted the economic balance in favour of Europe well before European armies reduced India and other parts of Asia to Europe’s colonial possessions, protectorates and spheres of influence.⁴¹

Kashmir, Punjab and Sind under the Mughals and their successors⁴²

KASHMIR

Once Kashmir had finally been annexed to the Mughal empire in 1586–8, it became a highly prized possession on which the Mughal emperors lavished much care. Akbar himself visited it three times (in 1588, 1592 and 1597) and Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān kept up the tradition of regular visits. Akbar had the land-revenue system reformed to reduce the revenue burden to half the produce; he also forbade the land tax being levied in money

³⁹ Habib, 1999, pp. 364–405.

⁴⁰ See Bayly, 1983, pp. 164 et seq.

⁴¹ Cf. Athar Ali, 1975, pp. 385–96.

⁴² For the political and economic geography of these regions in the Mughal empire, see the maps and text in Habib, 1982.

instead of in kind as hitherto. When he built the Nagar fort at Srinagar in 1599, he had an inscription placed on the gate⁴³ proclaiming that he had not used any forced labour (*begār*) and everyone working on it had received wages from the treasury.⁴⁴ Akbar also abolished the obligation imposed on the peasants to pick out saffron seeds from saffron and to bring wood from distant places for official purposes. Such practices persisted, however, and in 1633 Shāh Jahān issued a strongly worded proclamation giving details of these and other practices and forbidding them altogether. For good measure, the proclamation was prominently inscribed on the gateway of the principal mosque in Srinagar.⁴⁵ The Mughal emperors also built canals, laid out gardens,⁴⁶ and constructed caravanserais on the high road leading from Punjab to Kashmir.

Yet Mughal rule in Kashmir was not a simple story of a benevolent government anxious to lighten the burden on the people. In 1597 Xavier reported widespread complaints about the oppression of Akbar's officials, who 'bleed the people by their extortions'.⁴⁷ The people's complaints might, it is true, have been louder than usual just then because a famine raged there at the time; Kashmir was visited by another famine in 1640.

Under Mughal rule, Kashmir was certainly 'opened up' for the admiration of the world. The classic account in Abū'l Fazl's *Ā'in-i Akbarī* was followed by those of a succession of writers and poets. Jahāngīr, who described Kashmir so enthusiastically in his memoirs, directed his artists to paint its flowers. The famous French traveller François Bernier, who accompanied Aurangzeb's entourage to Kashmir in 1663, left a memorable account of it.⁴⁸

Aurangzeb's 1663 visit to Kashmir was the last by a reigning Mughal emperor. Kashmir inevitably suffered from the increasing laxity of imperial control after Aurangzeb's death in 1707. Under Muhammad Shāh, Kashmir was entrusted to Amīr Khān (1728–36), who governed entirely *in absentia*, leaving everything to deputies. Safdar Jang (the famous Awadh nawab), who was given charge of it in 1745, did the same. Finally, in 1752, the last Mughal governor (or sub-governor) Abū'l Qāsim Khān was defeated and taken prisoner by Abdullāh Khān, the commander of a force sent by the Afghan ruler, Ahmad Shāh Durrānī.

The Afghan regime in Kashmir was inaugurated by a spate of deprivations. An Indian governor, Sukh Jīwān (1754–60), sought to establish an autonomous government when he failed to meet the excessive demands from the Afghan court, but he was ultimately deposed and executed. Another governor, Amīr Khān (1770–6), built the Amirakadal bridge in

⁴³ Habib, 1999, pp. 255, 257–8, 263–4, 277.

⁴⁴ Inscription seen personally by the author.

⁴⁵ The inscription is still preserved *in situ* in the mosque. For the text, see Pīr G. Hasan, 1954, Vol. 2, pp. 500–1.

⁴⁶ Pīr G. Hasan, 1954, Vol. 1, pp. 292–7.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Habib, 1999, p. 371n.

⁴⁸ Bernier, 1916, pp. 358–428.

Srinagar but is accused of having ravaged many Mughal buildings for the purposes of his own constructions. In its later stages, the Afghan regime was affected by the recurring internecine struggles in Afghanistan; and finally in 1820 Kashmir was occupied by the troops of the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh's regime was no less rigid than that of the Afghans: the slaughter of cows and the repair of mosques were both prohibited. However, 'Colonel' Mahān Singh (governor, 1834–41) established an effective administration, which made attempts to maintain low prices and encourage cultivation. Sikh rule ended after the first Punjab war, when the British victors sold Kashmir to the Dogra ruler of Jammu, Gulāb Singh, for a consideration of Rs. 7.5 million by the treaty of 1846. The Dogra principality of 'Jammu and Kashmir' itself came under British 'paramountcy', which lasted until India's independence in 1947.⁴⁹

PUNJAB

Punjab, as we have seen, was the first territory in India to fall to Bābur, and Lahore was the imperial seat under Akbar from 1585 to 1598. Thereafter until 1712, it continued to be treated, along with Agra and Delhi, as one of the three capital cities of the empire. Under the arrangements for provinces (*sūbas*) made in 1580, the region was divided between two *sūbas*, Lahore and Multan. A large tract where Panjabi is spoken, comprising the *sarkār* (territorial division) of Sirhind, was part of the *sūba* of Delhi.

Lahore in around 1600 was considered to be a very large city, and its population has been estimated at over 250,000.⁵⁰ Multan too was a commercial centre of considerable importance, so much so that Hindu merchants in Iran and Transoxania were often called 'Multanis'. In 1696 a local historian expressed the opinion that Punjab benefited greatly from the security against foreign raids afforded by the Mughal possession of Kabul, so that there had been a large expansion of cultivation and growth of new towns.⁵¹

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the rise of Sikhism in Punjab (see Volume IV, Part Two, pp. 89–90). Relations between the Mughal administration and the Sikh *gurūs* began to sour after 1606 when Gurū Arjān, the fifth in line from the founder Nānak (1469–1539), was executed. The situation deteriorated still further when the *gurūs* acquired armed followers and began to create an area under their authority in the Himalayan sub-hills. After Gurū Tegh Bahādur's execution in 1675, his son Gobind Singh (d. 1708), the last *gurū*, carried on a dogged struggle in an area near Sirhind against the Mughals and the

⁴⁹ For a detailed though not always reliable history of Kashmir under the Mughals, Afghans and Sikhs, see Pīr G. Hasan, 1954, Vol. 2.

⁵⁰ Habib, 1999, p. 83.

⁵¹ Sujjan Rai, 1918, pp. 66–7. For Punjab in the seventeenth century generally, see Singh, 1991.

hill chiefs allied with them. After a truce with the Mughals he was murdered by an Afghan at Nander in the Deccan; but a major revolt broke out under his disciple Banda, first in the Sirhind area and then in Lahore province itself (1709–10 and 1713–16). In late 1715 Banda Bahādur and his followers were finally surrounded and captured by the governor of Lahore, °Abdu'l Samad Khān, at Gurdaspur. They were taken to Delhi and killed in a series of public executions.⁵²

Lahore province thereafter enjoyed a long period of peace under the governorship of °Abdu'l Samad Khān (1713–26). He subsequently took charge of Multan (1726–37) while his son, Zakarīya Khān, succeeded him as governor of Lahore (1726–45). From 1737 onwards Zakarīya Khān governed Multan province as well. Even after Nādir Shāh's invasion in 1739–40, he still managed to hold on to these two provinces on condition of remitting an annual tribute of Rs. 2 million to the conqueror.

After Zakarīya Khān's death in 1745, Punjab fell prey to conflicts caused by factional feuds and was then subjected to repeated Afghan invasions. Ahmad Shāh Durrānī's unsuccessful invasion of 1748 was followed by a raid the following year during which the governor, Mu'īnu'l Mulk (1748–53), was compelled to accept the same terms from Ahmad Shāh that Nādir Shāh had imposed on his predecessor. In 1752 Mu'īnu'l Mulk was further compelled to accept the transfer of both Lahore and Multan to Afghan suzerainty. After his invasion of 1756–7, Ahmad Shāh Durrānī left his son Tīmūr Shāh as governor at Lahore, but in 1758 Tīmūr Shāh was driven out by the Marāthās. Ahmad Shāh Durrānī's great victory over the Marāthās at Panipat in 1761 removed all threat from the Marāthās, but there was now a revival of Sikh power which rapidly undermined the Afghans' possession of Punjab.

The Sikhs had developed a number of institutions enabling them to wage a dispersed and yet united war. Bands, known as *asmisals*, operated independently under their chiefs, ravaging different areas. However, the concept of a single Khalsa (from Persian *khālisa*, the special domain [of the *gurū*]) was fortified by the practice of an annual meeting of the chiefs to decide on issues by consensus, the decisions being known as *gurmatā*. Ahmad Shāh's numerous expeditions into Punjab proved unavailing against such a foe, and by the time of his death in 1772 Lahore province had been irretrievably lost.

The Sikhs still needed to be forged into a single power, for their very successes now led to constant internecine struggles. Ultimately, out of these struggles, a man of exceptional ability emerged to enforce the writ of a single authority – this was Ranjit Singh. A sturdy opponent of the Afghan ruler Zamān Shāh during his invasion of 1798–9, Ranjit Singh established himself in 1799 in Lahore, from where he reigned until his death in 1839.

⁵² Cf. Grewal and Habib, 2001, pp. 110–62, for Banda Bahādur's rebellion.

There were to be four major pillars on which he built: an appeal to the Sikh faith and soldierly tradition; the institutions of Mughal administration; the Hindu symbols and rituals of royalty; and the reorganization of his army on European lines. His territorial acquisitions gave him a fairly large realm: the successive annexations included Amritsar (1805), Multan (1818), Kashmir (1819), Dera Ghazi Khan (1831) and Peshawar (final occupation, 1834).

The negative aspects of Ranjit Singh's regime, especially his lack of any great vision and only limited concern for public welfare, together with the contradictions inherent in having a modernized army without modern education or social institutions, perhaps explain the succession of crises in which, after his death, the Sikh state was enveloped. Nonetheless, the heroic resistance offered to the British in the first and second Punjab wars (1845–6 and 1848–9) by the forces of the Khalsa (Sikh community) was a testimony to the military power that Ranjit Singh had created. But when the wars were over, the whole of Punjab lay prostrate before the might of the British empire.⁵³

SIND

When Akbar subjugated the Tarkhān principality of Thatta in 1592, Sind (present official spelling 'Sindh') was shared by two provinces: northern Sind (Bhakkar, adjacent to modern Sukkur, being its headquarters) belonged to Multan, while central and southern Sind, with Thatta as the capital, was made into a separate province. Akbar allowed the Tarkhān ruler Jānī Beg to retain his governorship of Thatta, though he was forced to remain at the imperial court until his death in 1600. Thereafter his son, Ghāzī Beg, took charge in conditions of de facto local autonomy. When Ghāzī Beg died in 1612, the province was taken away from the Tarkhān family and the standard provincial administration of the Mughal system was established there.

Akbar had been greatly interested in Sind because of the access it gave him to the Arabian Sea from his then capital at Lahore. He had harboured grandiose plans of building seagoing ships at Lahore to be launched from Lahari Bandar, the outer port of Thatta. Indeed two such ships were actually built.⁵⁴ Lahari Bandar remained an important port throughout the seventeenth century, while Thatta itself was a large centre of the textile industry and probably had a population of over 200,000 in 1635.⁵⁵ A major market crop cultivated for export was indigo, the Sehwan indigo being especially valued. But for

⁵³ See Grewal, 1990, for the most recent scholarly interpretation of Sikh history.

⁵⁴ Habib (ed.), 1997, pp. 144–6.

⁵⁵ Habib, 1999, pp. 83–4.

reasons not easy to establish, its cultivation seems to have declined over the first half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁶

A remarkably detailed survey of the various localities in Sind and their administrative history was compiled in 1634 by Yūsuf Mīrak.⁵⁷ The author is highly critical of the oppressive nature of the Mughal administration in Sind, especially Sehwan. However, apart from skirmishes with the hill and desert tribesmen, Sind remained largely at peace during the period of Mughal rule.⁵⁸

In 1740, after his sack of Delhi, Nādir Shāh marched into Sind to enforce the treaty by which the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shāh had ceded lower Sind to him. After Nādir Shāh's assassination in 1747, the Afghans, under Ahmad Shāh Durrānī, claimed a similar suzerainty over Sind, demanding a fixed annual tribute.

Just before Nādir Shāh's expedition, the appointment in 1737 of Nūr Muhammad-Khudāyār Khān as governor of Thatta as well as Sehwan and Bhakkar had signified the establishment of the Kalhora dynasty in Sind (and the unification of upper and lower Sind). Both Nādir Shāh and the Afghans remained content simply to recognize as governors such members of this family as succeeded in establishing their authority on the basis of their own strength.

Under the Kalhoras, a new shift in the urban settlements of Sind became permanent. The Kalhoras' initial seat at Shikarpur in northern Sind, away from the Indus but *en route* to the Bolan pass, became an important commercial centre, at the obvious cost of Bhakkar (and Sukkur). Similarly, Karachi, west of the Indus delta, unheard-of in the seventeenth century, replaced Lahari Bandar as Sind's major seaport. Finally, Nirun, which a mighty shift in the course of the Indus placed on its left instead of its right side, became the site of the new capital of Hyderabad, established by the Kalhora ruler Ghulām Shāh (1760–72); the old capital, Thatta, accordingly declined.

The Kalhora regime was overthrown by the Baluch clan of Talpurs under their *amīr* (*mīr*) °Abdullāh (1780–1), an event which provoked a devastating Afghan invasion. Finally, in 1783 the Talpurs under Mīr Fateh °Alī Khān (1783–1801) expelled the last Kalhora ruler °Abdu'l Nabī and obtained a diploma of recognition from the Afghan ruler Timur Shāh. The Afghan king Shāh Shujā°'s invasion of 1803 was the last major attempt by the Afghan kings to force the emirs of Sind to pay them tribute (Rs. 1 million were paid to buy off Shāh Shujā°). Sind itself was carved up among different branches of the Talpur family, but Hyderabad was held to be the principal seat.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 48n.

⁵⁷ Mīrak, 1962.

⁵⁸ For a study of Sind during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Ansar Zahid Khan, 1980.

The start of British interest in Sind was marked by a treaty concluded in 1809 with the Sind emirs headed by Ghulām °Alī Khān (1802–11). This stipulated 'eternal friendship' between the two governments and obliged the emirs to exclude 'the tribe of the French' from Sind. Another treaty in 1820 widened the scope of those excluded from Sind to cover 'any European or American'. The British imposed yet another treaty in 1832, this time on Murād °Alī Khān (1828–33), providing, with supreme irony, that neither of the contracting parties would 'look with the eye of covetousness on the possessions of each other'.

In 1838 it was 'discovered' by the British that though Shāh Shujā° had not been the ruler of Afghanistan for decades, the emirs of Sind still owed him large arrears of tribute that the British government had arrogated to itself the right to impose on Shāh Shujā°'s behalf. In 1839, by the device of a separate treaty, Khairpur was detached from Sind. Sind itself was obliged to accept British troops and to pay for their expenses by the terms of the treaty of 5 February 1839, concluded with Nūr Muhammad Khān (1832–40). Finally, when Nūr Muhammad's successor Muhammad Nāsir Khān (1840–3) refused to accept yet another treaty, which would have ceded large chunks of Sind territory to the British, the British commander Charles Napier marched on Hyderabad and routed the emirs' troops at Miani in February 1843. The massacre and the subsequent plunder were both on a considerable scale. Napier himself took £70,000 as 'prize money', and he fittingly described the British action as 'a piece of humane [!] rascality'. Sind stood annexed to the British empire and, as we have seen, the turn of Kashmir and Punjab was soon to come.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ For extensive translations of texts on the history of Sind down to the British annexation, see Fredunbeg, 1903, Vol. 2. For an account sympathetic to the emirs, see Eastwick, 1973.