

1 *Prelude: The Mughal Empire, 1526–1750*

Although this book is not about the high rule of the Mughal Empire, a brief sketch of its history provides necessary background. What emerges are the essential features that enabled Mughal growth, namely military exploits, bureaucratic leadership, regional alliances, and the establishment of key land and finance systems that created political pull. In this prelude chapter, the consolidation of the Mughal state emerges as dynamic and layered diachronically. It resembled more of a patchwork where Mughal power was concentrated in some areas and contested in others. Because Gujarat was the Mughal gateway to the Indian Ocean, we shall see how the region's economy strengthened the empire at large. A key outcome of Mughal rule in Gujarat was the development of co-beneficial relationships between court officials and business families like the Jhaveris.

Islamicate State Building in South Asia

Let us begin with the longer historical and geographical context within which the consolidation of Mughal influence makes sense. In South Asia between 1200 and 1700, controlling land and labor emerged as the paramount way to consolidate power. The idea of formally organizing land as a productive resource for state building came from discussions by early Islamic jurists about land grants called *qaṭāʿiye*.¹ These were hereditary grants made by Muslim caliphs to their supporters. While *qaṭāʿiye* grants were subject to a tithe called *'ushr*, private property, known as *milk*, was subject to a different land tax called *kharāj*. Fiscal pressures and a desire to bring new areas under a caliph's influence gave birth to a new

¹ A. K. S. Lambton. "The Iqtā': State Land and Crown Land." In *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11th–14th Century*, 97–129. Albany: State University of New York, 1988.

kind of tenurial arrangement called *iqṭāʿ*.² Under *iqṭāʿ*, the fiscal rights of the state over *kharāj* lands were conveyed to a grantee, while the property right remained with the *kharāj* payer. The grantee, known as *muṭṭiʿ*, was obligated to collect tax on land revenue, and then pay a portion of it to the state. The remaining difference was kept as their earning. Alienating rights over land revenue to individuals became, by the ninth century, the primary method of paying salaries, financing administration, and expanding political rule.

Iqṭāʿ soon took on different localized forms. For example, the Abbasid rulers began auctioning rights to collect land revenue in the ninth century across the Arabian Peninsula. In this modified system, which resembled *iqṭāʿ* in that fiscal rights were conveyed to an individual, potential grantees offered the state money in advance. This amount was akin to rent. The practice of auctioning revenue rights set in motion the commodification of the productive use of land. In other words, speculation was introduced as a component of agrarian entrepreneurship and state building, with bidders paying a so-called rent amount for the usufruct of specified lands.³ The chronicles use *ḡamān*, *qabāla*, and *ijāra* to characterize such temporary and often risky juggling of land holdings.⁴ A distinctive feature of *iqṭāʿ* during this early period was its transferability and durability. Military men held onto *iqṭāʿ* rights over specific tracts and could transform them into permanent hereditary investitures under new sovereigns. By recognizing *iqṭāʿ* as a tenurial entitlement corresponding to a preexisting administrative division, aspiring rulers could more easily incorporate existing claims to land revenue into their own fledgling regimes without having to undertake any major overhaul of the land and finance machinery.⁵ It was a way to absorb new gentry without taking away their privileges, especially their landed estates.

Iqṭāʿ as a technology of control was introduced to South Asia in the early thirteenth century by successive Islamic polities that modern

² For this to work, the state propagated the legal fiction that lands under caliphal authority belonged to the *umma*. *Aqṭāʿ* means “assignments of land,” and in its verbal noun form, *iqṭāʿ* means “cutting, dividing, severing; assigning land to a subject on the part of a prince; a tract of land thus assigned.” See Francis Steingass. *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1892, 87.

³ Baber Johansen. *The Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent: The Peasants’ Loss of Property Rights as Interpreted in the Hanafite Legal Literature of the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods*. London: Croom Helm, 1988, 27.

⁴ *Zamān* means suretyship, security, or bail. *Qabāla* means serving surety for another, deputyship, or bill of sale. *Ijāra* comes from the Arabic root *ajr*, meaning recompense. It refers to a privilege or income of variable amount sold or let for a fixed sum, or a revenue farm. See Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 17, 803, 951.

⁵ A. K. S. Lambton. “Eqṭāʿ.” In *Encyclopædia Iranica*, VIII/5, 520–33. New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1998.

historians refer to collectively as the Delhi Sultanate. These include the Mamluk (1206–90), Khalji (1290–1320), Tughlaq (1320–1414), Sayyid (1414–51), and Lodi (1451–1526) dynasties. Despite such dynastic labeling, transitions from one ruling lineage to another marked continuities rather than ruptures. New leaders were usually recalcitrant *iqṭāʿ* holders from a previous sultanate formation or came from the ranks of migrant soldiers from central Asia desiring employment.⁶ For example, the Gujarat Sultanate that controlled western India by the late fifteenth century was established by Zafar Khan, a former provincial governor and *muqṭiʿ* of the Tughlaq state. Members of Zafar Khan's lineage had control over Gujarat until Akbar conquered the area in 1572–3, after which elites from his clan were invited to join Mughal ranks, in many instances keeping their former positions in exchange for pledging allegiance to a new emperor.⁷

During the Sultanate period, *iqṭāʿ* referred to a territorially specific military assignment. The *iqṭāʿ* institution was the main instrument for transferring agrarian surplus to the ruling military elite, and it was the *muqṭiʿ* who was responsible for maintaining a reserve of troops at the beck and call of the sultan.⁸ According to Irfan Habib, Alauddin Khalji (1250–1316) radically transformed the *iqṭāʿ* institution by paying cash salaries to soldiers and earmarking revenue from the *iqṭāʿ* as part of the personal maintenance costs of commanders. Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1309–88) further transformed *iqṭāʿ* by making the right and office hereditary. This put in motion the idea of hereditary superiority, resulting in the bequeathing of key positions from father to son, a practice that continued later during Mughal times.⁹ Khalji also introduced money as

⁶ Sunil Kumar. *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate, 1192–1286*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007; Gavin Hambly and Catherine Asher. "Delhi Sultanate." In *Encyclopædia Iranica*, VII/3, 242–50. New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1994.

⁷ For example, Hamid Bukhari was a third-generation courtier of the Gujarat Sultans who inherited Dholka and Dhandhuka near Ahmedabad as his military prebend. In 1573, Akbar conquered Gujarat and incorporated Bukhari into the Mughal administrative apparatus by recognizing and renewing his entitlements to these districts. Eventually, Bukhari was granted additional resources and rose to the governorship of Delhi under Jahangir. See Samsam-ud-Daula Shah Nawaz Khan. *The Maathir-ul-Umara*. Translated by H. Beveridge and Baini Prashad. 2 vols. Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1941, 1952, Vol. 1, 608–10.

⁸ Irfan Habib. "Iqṭāʿs: Distribution of Revenue Resources among the Ruling Class." In *Cambridge Economic History of India*. Edited by Irfan Habib and Tapan Raychaudhuri, 68–75. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

⁹ M. Athar Ali. *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility, 1574–1658*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985, xvi–xvii; See also Sheth and Zhang, "Locating Meritocracy in Early Modern Asia."

an additional technology of statecraft, especially the minting of coins and earmarking taxes as a function of currency.

During this period, rulers relied on Hindu and Jain specialists to mint, move, and change coins. These groups were drawn into kingly spheres of control because of the opportunities stately associations provided for commerce and personal aggrandizement.¹⁰ For example, the main mint master of the Khalji sultans was Shah Thakkar Pheru, who penned critical titles on gemology, metallurgy, and the assaying of coins.¹¹ We also have Kajar Shah, a Jain or Hindu director of the mint who was accused of debasing royal coins under Firoz Shah in 1370.¹² Experiments with money also were common during this period. For example, in the 1340s the state introduced token copper currency to overcome money shortages. However, this attempt to create fiat currency akin to modern money was a miserable failure and led to severe inflation.¹³ Mints across Rajasthan and Gujarat were also run by Jain metallurgists, their special skills recognized by Islamic rulers down into Mughal times.¹⁴

During the growth phase of the Mughal Empire, *iqṭāʿ* was replaced by the Persian word *jāgīr*, meaning occupying a place. First appearing in a royal order of 1561 by Akbar, the government assignee was known as a *jāgīrdār*. In a significant addition to earlier organizational forms, Akbar also assigned a numerical rank called *manṣab* to officials. So, all *jāgīrdār*s were also high-ranking *manṣab* holders, or *manṣabdār*s. The *manṣabdār* rank was usually a dual figure written as follows: *zāt/sawār*. *Zāt* pegged one's personal pay, while *sawār* corresponded to the size of the military contingent that rank-holders were expected to maintain on behalf of the emperor. *Manṣab* ranks of 1,000/1,000 and above conveyed noble

¹⁰ Moneyed specialists were prominent even during pre-Islamic rule in western India as they were critical to converting agrarian surplus and artisanal products into money during Chalukya rule. See V. K. Jain. *Trade and Traders in Western India, 1000–1300*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990; Samira Sheikh. *Forging a Region: Sultans, Traders, and Pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200–1500*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

¹¹ Pheru served under Alauddin Khalji and continued working for his successors suggesting continuity of expertise and money forms under Shihabuddin Umar (r. 1316) and Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah (r. 1316–20) and Ghiyasuddin Tughluq (r. 1320–5). See Sreeramula Sarma. "A Jain Assayer at the Sulṭān's Mint: Thakkura Pherū and his Dravyaparīkṣā." In *Jaina Studies: Proceedings of the DOT 2010 Panel in Marburg, Germany*. Edited by Jayendra Soni, 7–32. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2012.

¹² Shams Siraj Afif. *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*. Translated by R. C. Jauhari. New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 2001, 195–7.

¹³ Zia-ud-Din Barani. *Tarikh-Firoz Shahi*. Translated by Ishtiaq Ahmad Zilli. New Delhi: Primus Books, 2015, 292–3.

¹⁴ John Deyell. *Living without Silver: The Monetary History of Early Medieval North India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, 247.

status.¹⁵ Another prestigious category was that of the provincial governor, also referred to as *nāẓim* or *ṣūbadār*. These men were the chief nobles and military leaders of the empire and maintained large *jāgīrs*.¹⁶ Often, *jāgīrdārs* would informally sublease their assignments for administrative ease, but such forms of subinfeudation were distinct from *ijāra* or speculative revenue farming, which became commonplace by the early eighteenth century as Mughal officials tried to find ways to raise money quickly during political crisis.¹⁷

The Mughal Empire, c. 1500–1750s

The Mughal Empire refers to a broad political and territorial phenomenon in South Asia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, with vestiges surviving well into the nineteenth. As a political tour de force, the Mughals gained ground through military exploits and grew their influence by building infrastructure, establishing administration, and harnessing revenues from agrarian produce and trade. The founding patriarch Babur was a Central Asian warlord pushed out by rival elites from his native Fergana Valley. His parents were direct descendants of famed military commanders; his father belonging to the lineage of Timur (1336–1405) and his mother to that of Genghis Khan (1162–1227). In fact, it was from his mother and grandmother that he learned political intrigue, recounted in vivid detail in his memoir, *Bāburnāma*.¹⁸ Babur was only eleven years old when his father died. This destabilized his personal and political position. In 1504, at the age of twenty-one, he set out with his mother, brothers, and upward of 300 men to explore opportunities south of his native land. An adroit military commander, Babur captured Kabul by the end of October 1504. He was immediately impressed with its vibrant bazaars, which annually attracted 20,000 merchants who sold slaves, white cloth, refined sugar, and aromatic

¹⁵ By the end of Akbar's reign, this system of pegging monthly pay and allowances to *manṣab* rank-holders consumed 82 percent of the total annual budget. See John F. Richards. *The Mughal Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 2008, 63–5. For an overview of the *jāgīr-manṣab* system, see Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 38–73.

¹⁶ Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 74–94.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of *iqṭā'*, *ijāra*, and *jāgīr* in Mughal India, see Sudev Sheth. "Revenue Farming Reconsidered: Tenurial Rights and Tenurial Duties in Early Modern India, ca. 1556–1818." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 5–6 (2018): 878–919.

¹⁸ Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur. *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*. Translated by W. M. Thackston. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 59.

roots. Merchants earned a whopping 300 percent profit or more on items sold. As the principal depot for Hindustan, Babur noted that goods from Khurasan, Iraq, Anatolia, and China could be found at Kabul.¹⁹

Babur expressed a desire to explore India, or Hindustan as he referred to it, as early as 1504 during excursions across the Indus River.²⁰ His chance would come years later in 1525–6, when he marched some 12,000 troops at the astonishing pace of twenty-five to forty km (15 to 25 miles) per day into northern India.²¹ There, he lured the reigning ruler of northern India, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, into battle just north of Delhi at Panipat. Defeating his rival's large but poorly organized army, he quickly took Delhi and Agra. Babur noted, "On our first coming to Agra, there was remarkable dislike and hostility between its people and mine, the peasantry and soldiers running away in fear of our men."²² Indigenous nobles, including descendants of former Hindu kings such as Bikramajit, offered jewels, amongst which was the famous *Koh-i-Noor* diamond, weighing more than 105 carats.²³ Such sparkling studs failed to placate Babur. He was instead interested in building the foundations of a new political state.

Babur was not particularly pleased with Hindustan. For him, it was a place of business. He notes that:

Hindustan is a country of few charms. Its people have no good looks; of social intercourse, paying and receiving visits there is none; of genius and capacity none; of manners none; in handicraft and work there is no form or symmetry, method or quality; there are no good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, muskmelons or first-rate fruits, no ice or cold water, no good bread or cooked food in the bazars, no hot-baths, no colleges, no candles, torches or candlesticks.²⁴

What Hindustan did have was cheap labor, gold and silver, and sophisticated counting systems including measurements for time, weight, and distance. For Babur, precision counting was proof enough that there was great wealth in Hindustan. It was also the first time he had come across settled tribes and vast lands under cultivation with a wide variety of crops. Such a landscape was starkly different from the unfor-ested grasslands of his home in Fergana Valley.

Babur's greatest challenges came not from the people of Hindustan, but from members of his own entourage. India's humid weather ruined

¹⁹ Ibid, 170.

²⁰ Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur. *The Babur-nama in English*. Translated by A. S. Beveridge. 2 vols. London: Luzac & Co., 1922, 1:377.

²¹ F. Lehman. "Bābor, Zāhīr-al-dīn Moḥammad." In *Encyclopædia Iranica*, III/3, 320–3. New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1988.

²² Babur, *Babur-nama in English*, 2:523. ²³ Ibid, 2:477. ²⁴ Ibid, 2:519.

weapons, books, clothing, utensils, and homes, which he especially noted did not last long. Shortly after arriving, a massive heat wave in Agra caused many deaths. Given such environmental discomforts, “the greater part of the begs [nobles] and best braves became unwilling to stay in Hindustan.”²⁵ Calling a council, Babur said:

Without lands and retainers, sovereignty and command (*pādshāhīq wa amīrlīq*) are impossible. By the labors of several years, by encountering hardship, by long travel, by flinging myself and the army into battle, and by deadly slaughter, we, through God’s grace, beat these masses of enemies in order that we might take their broad lands. And now what force compels us, what necessity has arisen that we should, without cause, abandon countries taken at such risk of life? Was it for us to remain in Kabul, the sport of harsh poverty?²⁶

It was this entrepreneurial spirit that enabled Babur to expand his fledgling empire across key areas in northern India as captured in Map 1.1.

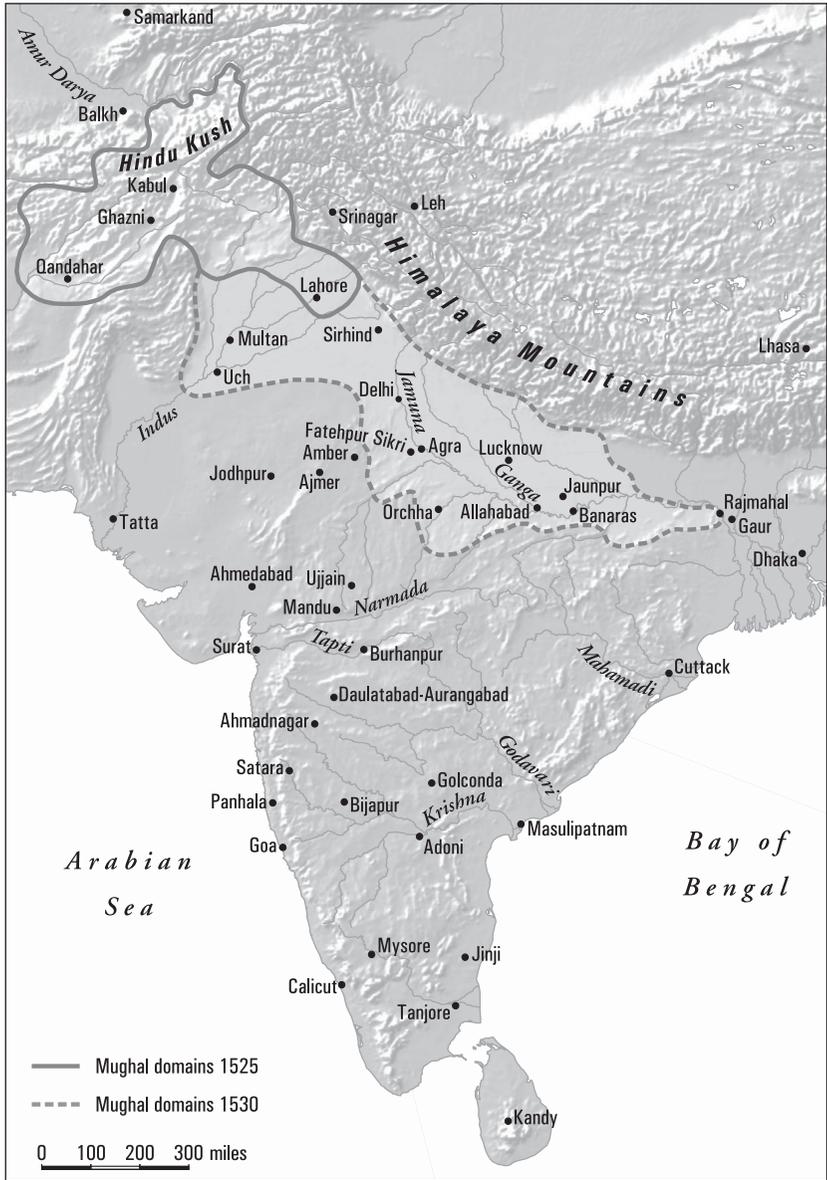
Not wanting to return to the vagaries of mountain life, Babur focused on consolidating authority in Hindustan. He fought Indian kings, or rajas, including the Rajput Maharana Sanga of Mewar and rival Afghan lords in Bengal. These men were *muqti*’s under the Lodi Sultan defeated earlier at Panipat, and now desired autonomy as regional rulers. Babur also employed architects and masons from near and far to construct mosques, tanks, and especially gardens.²⁷ Babur died in 1530, having laid the foundation on which his son Humayun and grandson Akbar would build a mighty empire.

Accounts of Humayun are less detailed, yet we know he faced rivals across northern India.²⁸ In 1531, he overcame the Raja of Kalinjar some 500 km (300 miles) southeast of Agra, and by 1535 had chased Sultan Bahadur of Gujarat into the first of several exiles. In 1537, he moved east to fight the powerful Afghan Sher Shah Sur in modern Bihar. These were dynamic campaigns for money and resources, and victories were short lived. Defeated warriors would reclaim lost lands as soon as Humayun left the area. Sher Shah was an especially worthy opponent, nearly

²⁵ Ibid, 2:524. ²⁶ Ibid, 2:525.

²⁷ Catherine Asher. *Architecture of Mughal India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 20–30.

²⁸ Our understanding of Humayun comes from three major accounts. These are Gulbadan Begum. “Humayunnama.” In *Three Memoirs of Humayun*. Vol. 1. Edited and translated by W. M. Thackston, 1–68. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009; Jauhar Aftabchi. “Tadhkiratu’l-waqiat.” In *Three Memoirs of Humayun*. Vol. 1. Edited and translated by W. M. Thackston, 69–175. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009; Bayazid Bayat. “Tarikh-i Humayun.” In *Three Memoirs of Humayun*, Vol. 2. Edited and translated by W. M. Thackston, 1–178. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009.



Map 1.1. The Mughal Empire by 1525 and 1530 under Babur

drowning Humayun in 1539 and forcing him into exile as far as Herat. As a long-term guest of the Safavid court out west, Humayun rallied resources to reclaim power in India. Finally, in 1555, he defeated the Sur army in Punjab, entered Delhi, and rekindled Mughal aspirations in the region. Unfortunately, Humayun died unexpectedly in January 1556 after tumbling from a staircase.

Humayun's thirteen-year-old son and successor Akbar inherited only a sliver of land, and certainly no forts, as his hereditary patrimony. Akbar consolidated influence over the years via effective leadership, outright war, and diplomacy through money and marriage.²⁹ Akbar grew the Mughal Empire by assimilating regional elites into his fledgling apparatus, the impressive extent to which is conveyed in Map 1.2. This included Muslim elites like the Sayyids of Barha in 1557, who had previously served the Lodis, as well as powerful Hindu Rajput lineages. Raja Bharmal of Amber in present-day Jaipur was brought into imperial relations through marriage, with his daughter Hira Kunwari being wed to Akbar in a significant coming together of Rajput-Mughal relations. Kunwari gave birth to Akbar's successor Jahangir, firmly connecting Rajput rule in Rajasthan to the fortunes of the Mughal Empire.

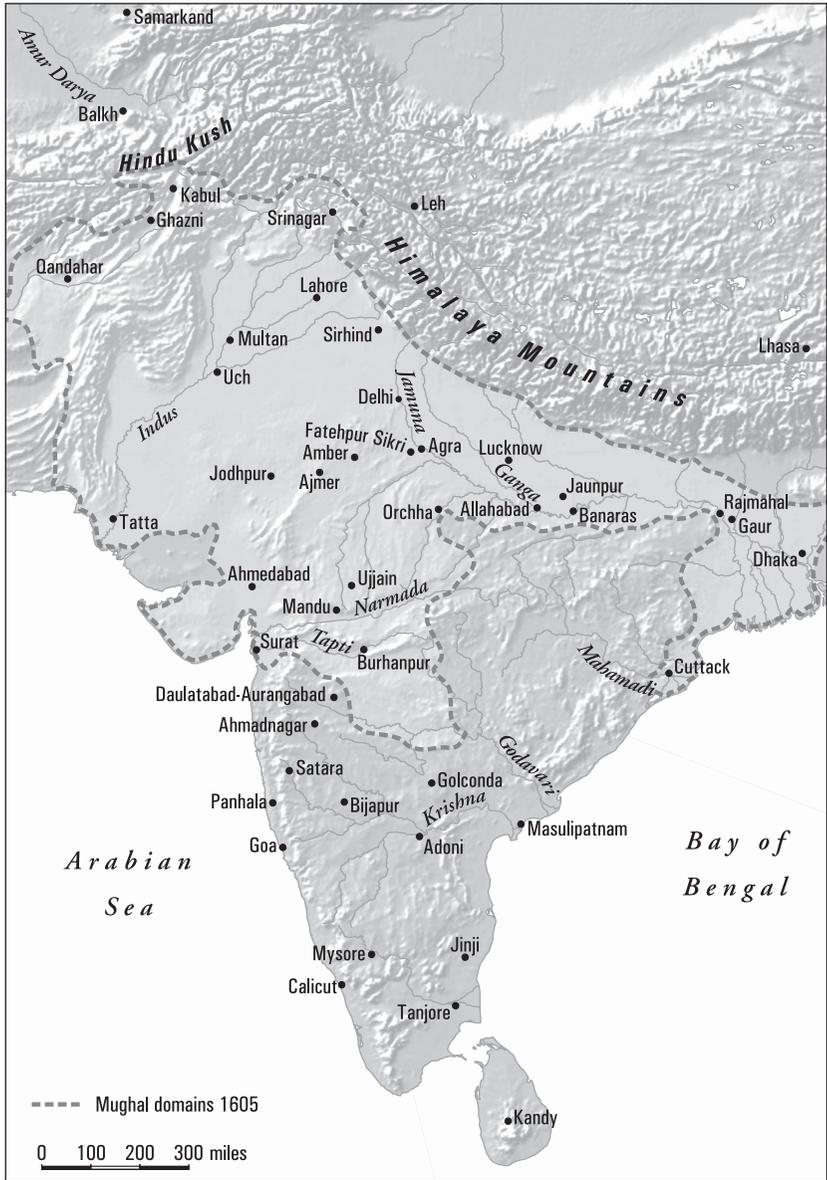
Akbar recognized talent and relied on principles of meritocracy, broadly interpreted, to involve experts in empire building.³⁰ For example, Raja Todar Mal, a self-professed Hindu who was often ridiculed for his idolatry, was also an expert in managing land revenue and organizing the state's fiscal apparatus. Todar Mal entered Mughal service at an unknown but certainly low rank. At the end of his career, he retired at the rank of 4,000/4,000, a very high position suggesting that exceptional abilities were recognized and rewarded by the emperor.³¹

Akbar was also a formidable military commander who expanded his influence through conquest. He captured Bihar in 1574 followed by Bengal in 1576, Malwa in 1561, and the Rajput forts of Chittorgarh and Ranthambore in 1568 and 1569, respectively. This gave Akbar access to immense wealth and territory, paving the way to conquer the

²⁹ We have several accounts of Akbar's kingdom, the most famous being that penned by his chief courtier Abu'l Fazl Allami (1551–1602), who wrote an official chronicle, the *Akbarnāma*, along with a statistical gazetteer *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, which documents details about the royal household, weights and measures, coinage, system of assessing and collecting taxes, rank and file promotion system of the nobility, and the management of lands and resources. A good overview of Akbar can be found in F. Lehman. "Akbar I." In *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/7, 707–11. New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1984.

³⁰ Sheth and Zhang, "Locating Meritocracy in Early Modern Asia."

³¹ Khan, *Maathir-ul Umara*, 2:951–7. See also Kumudranjan Das. *Raja Todar Mal*. Calcutta: Saraswat Library, 1979, 137.



Map 1.2. The Mughal Empire by 1605 under Akbar

prized coastal province of Gujarat in 1572–3. It was during this conquest that Akbar was delighted by the soothing sound of waves crashing at Cambay port. Having never seen the ocean before, this experience must have been exhilarating. By annexing Gujarat, Akbar united the agrarian heartland of the Mughal Empire, including lands of the Gangetic basin and the Punjab plains, with the maritime trade of the Arabian Sea. This not only expanded commercial activity, but enabled foreign merchants, goods, and ideas to permeate Mughal domains. Akbar made further military campaigns in Kashmir (1586–7), Sindh (1591–2), Orissa (1592–3), and touched on territories in the Deccan plateau between 1596 and 1601. However, these were not as decisive as earlier wins.

Prince Salim Jahangir became emperor in 1605. While Akbar inherited the throne at thirteen and immediately entered military tournaments of the day, Jahangir was educated at court and became accustomed to sedentary life. Two of his younger brothers died prematurely due to alcoholism, and Jahangir himself was addicted to opium. In 1600, he rebelled against his father, Emperor Akbar, while serving as Governor of Allahabad, although he later made amends, finally ascending to the throne aged thirty-six on October 23, 1605. Jahangir inherited a stable political organization from Akbar including an enranked nobility comprising ethnic Persians, Uzbeks, Turanis, Hindustani Muslims, Afghans, and Hindu Rajput chiefs. In addition to its ethnic diversity, Jahangir's reign was also an important milestone in growing Mughal influence through the visual display of plenty. Foreign observers began noticing the vastness of Jahangir's domain, the riches of his court, and especially his love for hunting, wine, and opium. It was also during Jahangir's reign that foreign trading companies bearing Dutch, Portuguese, and English flags made inroads into Hindustan.

Take, for example, comments by English merchant William Hawkins, who led the very first English East India Company embassy to the Mughal court in 1609. He was impressed by Jahangir's large daily expenditure, some 50,000 rupees per day, not including 30,000 rupees dedicated separately to the women of the court. To fund his spending, Jahangir harnessed revenues from his five great provinces, Punjab, Bengal, Malwa, Gujarat, and Burhanpur. Yet even these areas were not free from local resistance. Paranoid about such sources of opposition, Jahangir at times accused his own courtiers of disloyalty and even executed them publicly at court.³² Jahangir inherited a robust administration from Akbar. His prosperity was further enhanced by foreign traders who sought permission to

³² William Foster. *Early Travels in India, 1583–1619*. London: Oxford University Press, 1921, 108–9; Jahangir, *Jahangirnama*, 155–6, 271–2.



Figure 1.1. Men inventorying a casket of jewels belonging to courtier Rustam Khan (d. 1658).

From the Late Shah Jahan Album, Marginalia detail by Hunhar, Agra, 1650–8. Accession No. CBL In 07B.35. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

conduct business in exchange for choice gifts. Foreign traders brought gold and silver, which was converted into Mughal coin and used to pay for goods. These coins became a preferred medium for trade since state taxes were also assessed in Mughal currency.

Jahangir was obsessed with rare stones and could not “abide that any man should have any precious stone of value.”³³ His jeweler at Agra was a Vania named Hiranand, likely a Jain, who brought jewels to the court, and whose home Jahangir also visited at least once to make purchases. Jahangir was especially interested in stones above five carats. Although records say that he only paid about one-third of their market value, merchants were likely compensated with other favors and privileges if they offered the emperor the very first look at precious wares for sale. Figure 1.1 presents pictorial evidence from the seventeenth century which suggests that nobles also dedicated resources to regularly cleaning and inventorying jeweled ornaments and gold coins in their possession. It was through the selling of gemstones to Jahangir’s court that the Jhaveris of Ahmedabad started earning favor in Mughal circles.

After reigning for twenty-two years, Jahangir died in 1627 at the age of fifty-eight. Shortly after, his son Muhammad Khurram, better known as Shah Jahan, was enthroned at Agra. Shah Jahan was a military man with considerable experience as a provincial governor and commander in Rajasthan and in the Deccan. Ruling between 1628 and 1658, Shah Jahan commissioned magnificent city works of art including the famed Taj Mahal and the walled capital city of Shahjahanabad at Delhi in 1639.

³³ Foster, *Early Travels in India*, 111.

Shah Jahan enhanced Mughal imperial life and political grandeur through expansion west towards Sindh in modern Pakistan, and further north towards his ancestral home in Balkh near Uzbekistan. Of Shah Jahan's various campaigns, the Deccan region towards southern India captured his imagination the most. He had earlier served there as a princely governor and was enticed by the agricultural and mining wealth of the region. By 1647, Shah Jahan's sphere of influence extended from Sindh to Sylhet, and down into central India. Shah Jahan's court historian Lahori notes that annual revenues tallied to 220 million rupees. Combining the revenues of more than twenty-three provinces, this was more than 20 percent greater than income during Jahangir's time and more than had ever been achieved by the Mughal state since its inception.³⁴

Under Shah Jahan, the Mughal Empire grew very quickly. There soon emerged a discrepancy between one's *sawār* rank, and the actual number of troopers and supplies brought to roll call by *manṣabdārs*.³⁵ It is also possible that *manṣabdārs* purposely diluted their ranks to save on costs and pocket the difference. Raising the pay of *manṣabdārs* so that they could hire additional help would have involved minting thousands of coins. As a stopgap, Shah Jahan fixed new deflated ratios for military responsibilities. Anywhere between one-third to one-fifth of the *sawār* rank was now expected in terms of mustering horsemen and fighting gear.³⁶ In addition, the Mughals also failed to develop militarily. The Mughals did not adapt and refine European firearm technology, perhaps the "most conspicuous [of] Indian failures" during the seventeenth century.³⁷ A different perspective suggests that Indian metallurgy and gunpowder were on par with European developments, but that locals failed to make more efficient trigger and lock mechanisms. This slowed infantry and limited fighting tactics. This was particularly damaging by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century as the overall military culture of the subcontinent shifted from the Mughal-preferred cavalry and cannon attacks to more agile infantry armed with smaller and faster

³⁴ 'Abd al-Hameed Lahori. *Padshahnamah*. Translated by Hamid Afaq Siddiqi. 2 vols. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 2010, 2:288–9; Aziz, *Imperial Treasury*, 67–8.

³⁵ Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 141.

³⁶ Rank-holding officials in the imperial circle almost doubled from 283 officers during Akbar's reign to 445 by 1647. See Ali, *Apparatus of Empire*, xx.

³⁷ Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 195. For recent arguments about how premodern military tournaments in Europe catalyzed innovation in weaponry and labor-saving technology unlike anything witnessed across much of Asia, see Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and R. Bin Wong. *Before and Beyond Divergence: The Politics of Economic Change in China and Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011; Philip T. Hoffman. *Why did Europe Conquer the World?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

handguns. The Mughals ignoring handgun technology also precluded their administration from associated organizational gains, especially the greater skills and better discipline that often came with an evolving infantry.³⁸

It was during Shah Jahan's rule that fratricide also became an essential aspect of Mughal royal culture.³⁹ Of Shah Jahan's four sons, the two eldest, Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb, would make it to the final fight for the throne. Dara, a man of letters and learning, was a mediocre general and reportedly came off as arrogant. Aurangzeb, by contrast, was an experienced military commander who had served as governor in the Deccan for eight years, as governor of Gujarat for three, and as a leader of armies that had invaded Balkh and Qandahar. It was during Aurangzeb's years in the Deccan that he, like his father, became committed to conquering the region. While Shah Jahan eventually adopted a more conciliatory view towards the sultans of the Deccan to maintain stability on the empire's southern frontier, Aurangzeb desired outright conquest of the area. Bijapur and Golconda were resource-rich states with great wealth, and Aurangzeb hoped to annex this part of the sub-continent during his years as princely governor of the region.⁴⁰

Prior to becoming emperor in 1658, Aurangzeb had already made secret alliances with powerful military lords in the Deccan, chief among them Mir Jumla, who governed the Hyderabad Karnatak region on behalf of the Golconda Sultanate. Shah Jahan appointed him *wazīr* or prime minister with the hope that Mir Jumla's existing *jāgīr* in the Karnatak could be absorbed by the Mughal state. Aurangzeb also wanted to invade Bijapur, the capital of the neighboring Adil Shahi state. As he was preparing to take the area in collaboration with Mir Jumla in mid-1657, Emperor Shah Jahan ordered a halt. Shah Jahan preferred receiving a large war indemnity from the Adil Shahi rulers. Immediately after, Shah Jahan fell ill and there ensued a bloody struggle for the throne. As we shall later see, it was during these struggles that princely rivals turned to the Jhaveris in Ahmedabad for access to ready cash. It was princely tournaments for the crown that became the gateway for Mughal dependency on private capital to fund political aspirations, a relationship that would only intensify over time.

As newly crowned emperor in 1658, Aurangzeb stayed at Shahjahanabad for twenty years before converting his court into a

³⁸ Jos Gommans. *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and High Roads to Empire, 1500–1700*. London: Routledge, 2002, 145–62.

³⁹ Faruqi, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 37n17.

⁴⁰ Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 35–8.

peripatetic tent camp. His attempts to capture Mughal ancestral lands at Kabul were met by resistance from local warrior aristocrats, especially Afridi and Pathan tribesmen under the command of the military leader and Pashto poet Kushhal Khatak (1613–89). Aurangzeb also met resistance from the emerging Sikh community of peasants in Punjab. Aurangzeb further alienated this group by executing their spiritual leader, Tegh Bahadur, in Delhi in 1675. The Rajputs, who had served in previous regimes with great pomp, also began to fall slowly out of favor with Aurangzeb. Rajput nobles were limited to ruling in and around Rajasthan over drier tracts that did not yield as much wealth as assignments over greener pastures.⁴¹ Aurangzeb also meddled in various succession disputes among local Rajput elites, further alienating some of them from the Mughal state.⁴²

After Aurangzeb became emperor in the mid-seventeenth century, he was faced with new military challenges at the hands of Shivaji Bhonsle from the Deccan. These proved unlike earlier campaigns that were more easily quelled by Mughal forces. Shivaji was the son of Shahji, a military general in the Ahmadnagar state, and later after its collapse in the 1630s, an official of the Bijapur court in the Karnatak region. Shivaji led a rebellion against his father, overran forts in the environs of Pune, and negotiated new arrangements with local warriors. Significantly, he looted as far north as the Mughal port of Surat, taking considerable wealth from merchants. Infuriated, Aurangzeb sent the high-ranking and experienced commander Jaswant Singh to capture Shivaji at Pune in 1665.

Finally, Shivaji traveled to the emperor's court at Agra with 100,000 rupees as a peace offering. He hoped to be recognized by the Mughal state as a local king and hereditary chief of lands in and around Pune. However, he was gravely insulted at court. Aurangzeb did not acknowledge his presence, let alone offer jewels and robes of honor befitting the rank to which Shivaji aspired. After being held in confinement at the Mughal court, he escaped in 1666. In 1670, he plundered Surat a second time, carrying away 6.5 million rupees in prize money. This was 10 million less than his first raid, but a significant sum suggesting the great wealth concentrated in the prized port city of the Mughals. By 1674, Shivaji had himself crowned a Hindu king.⁴³ He died in 1680, but his son

⁴¹ Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 23–4. Ali cites *Tarikh-i-Aurangzeb* (1671) by the contemporary historian Abu'l Fazl Ma'muri to advance this view.

⁴² Ishwardas Nagar. *Futuh-i-Alamgiri*. Translated by Tasneem Ahmad. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1978, 118.

⁴³ Stewart Gordon. *The Marathas, 1600–1818*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 87–90.

and followers grew the Maratha polity into a credible threat against the Mughals.

Maratha fighting tactics relied on predatory raiding into Mughal and Bijapur lands and the extortion of wealth in exchange for immunity. At least initially, their style of guerilla warfare did not destabilize existing structures of authority but resulted in localized spheres of destruction. To subdue these groups, Aurangzeb relocated the Mughal capital to the Deccan. This was a remarkable move, shifting the epicenter of empire from the north to the south. This became a costly proposition as Maratha armies were agile and unconventional. Aurangzeb targeted Bijapur, which capitulated under military force in 1686. The ruler of Golconda surrendered a year later after a siege, agreeing to cede his territory to the Mughals. Soon after, Aurangzeb's men captured Shivaji's son Shambhaji and his chief minister and had them both executed.

Aurangzeb's successes in the Deccan added some 570,000 square km (221,000 square miles or the size of Kenya) to the Mughal Empire, increasing its overall area by more than 25 percent. Map 1.3 captures these gains made by Aurangzeb by the early eighteenth century. These newly acquired lands were divided between an area under the more traditional system of direct governance in the northern and central Deccan, and a tributary alliance system with former Bijapur nobles further south. These territories were controlled at a great cost, for Aurangzeb could not return to Delhi with any hope of receiving regular revenue from officials in the region. As Mughal-Maratha battles continued, Mughal governors, garrison commanders, and local *zamīndārs* allied to the Mughal state became enervated. As food prices started to increase, many Mughals fled to enemy camps. By 1700, the Marathas successfully crossed the Narmada River in Gujarat, breaching the traditional boundary that separated the Deccan region from the core areas of Mughal control. After decades of fighting and resisting the Maratha push into northern India, Aurangzeb died in 1707.

Aurangzeb's attempts to annex the Deccan stretched Mughal capacity beyond recovery. Although the emperor tried to accommodate elites from the ruling regimes of the south, there was a severe shortage of productive land available to disburse through the *jāgīr-manṣab* system as salary.⁴⁴ Mughal pressure on the Deccan also accelerated dynamics long at play between the Deccan Sultanates and localized states, especially the growth of revenue farming as a way to redefine the fiscal

⁴⁴ Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 29.



Map 1.3. The Mughal Empire by 1707 under Aurangzeb

underpinnings of state power.⁴⁵ For now, suffice to know that the Mughal Deccan campaigns led to the severe under-administration of existing strongholds in Gujarat. This engendered an acute financial crisis that made local businesspersons like the later Jhaveris primary targets of extortion campaigns at the hands of desperate Mughal officials.⁴⁶

By the mid-eighteenth century, Mughal financial dismay and lack of robust political leadership resulted in the contracting of its power. This manifest most obviously in the loss of key provinces and urban centers from former stronghold while enabling rival groups to consolidate power in its path. The reduction of Mughal influence to the Delhi region and the overall boundaries of new emerging states after Emperor Muhammad Shah's death in 1748 are conveyed in Map 1.4.

The Mughals in Gujarat

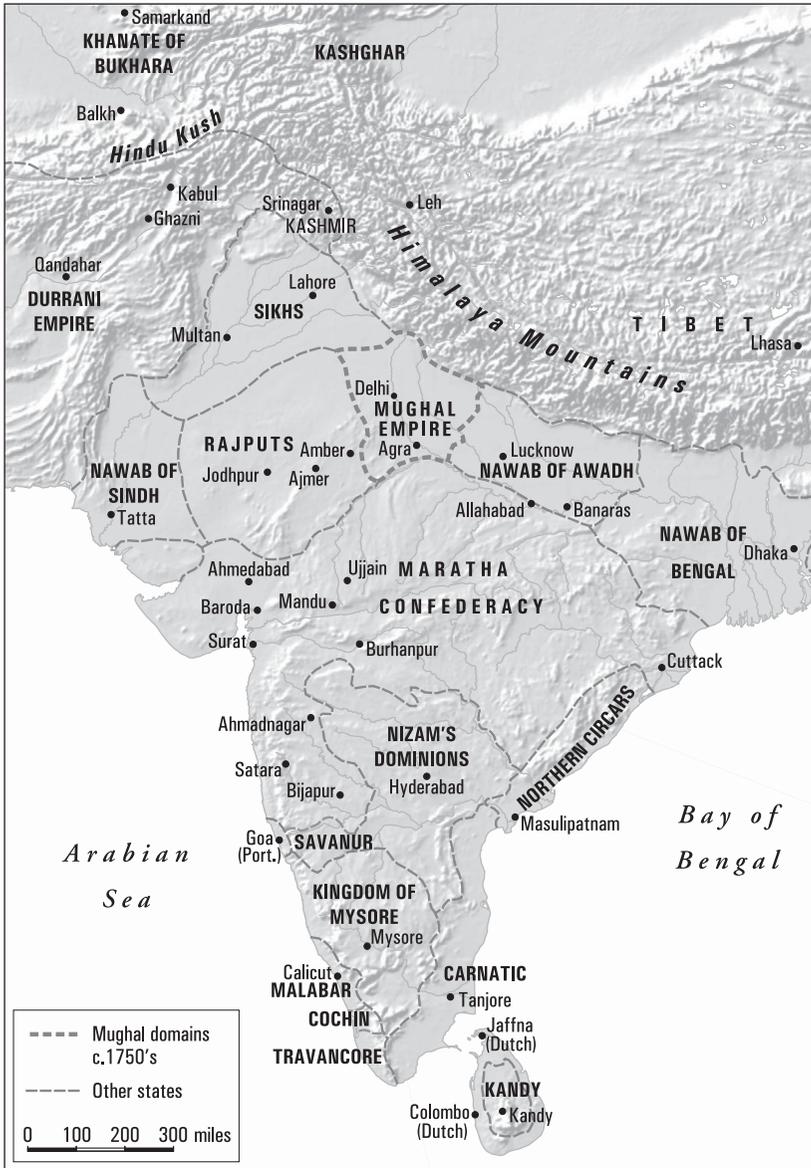
Gujarat first experienced Islamic rule after it was annexed in 1304–5 by the Tughlaq dynasty ruling from Delhi. Zafar Khan was appointed governor and *muqti* of the province. Hailing from the Punjab region, Zafar Khan was born into a Hindu family of shopkeepers. His conversion to Islam likely helped his political career. His son inherited his position as governor of Gujarat in 1371–2, but was displaced by rivals. By 1391, another noble granted the same title of Zafar Khan was appointed to Gujarat. This second Zafar Khan defected from the Tughlaqs and crowned himself sultan of Gujarat under the name Muzaffar Shah. Members of this family continued to rule over Gujarat by parceling out tracts of land to militarized refugees from Delhi and even Muslim slaves from Africa. It was Muzaffar Shah's grandson and successor Sultan Ahmad (1411–42) who founded the capital city of Ahmedabad.

By the early sixteenth century, Ahmad's grandson Mahmud Begada (r. 1458–1511) and great grandson Muzaffar II (r. 1511–26) expanded Ahmedabad into a major trading center. By connecting ports and the hinterland, sultans, merchants, traders, pilgrims, scholars, and saints came into direct contact and created wealth.⁴⁷ In 1527, a later descendant titled Bahadur Shah became sultan and reigned until 1537. During this period, conflict emerged between the Mughal emperor Humayun at

⁴⁵ Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. "The Deccan Frontier and Mughal Expansion, ca. 1600: Contemporary Perspectives." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 3 (2004): 357–89. See also Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Introduction" to *Mughal State*, 36.

⁴⁶ Similar effects of the Deccan campaigns were also felt in Bengal. See Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan*, 15–26.

⁴⁷ Sheikh, *Forging a Region*.



Map 1.4. The Mughal Empire by the 1750s after Muhammad Shah

Delhi and nobles of the Gujarat Sultanate. The catalyst was Bahadur Shah's decision to protect one of Humayun's rival family members who belonged to the Mirza family. Bahadur Shah was assassinated onboard a Portuguese ship at Diu during trade negotiations, and subsequently a youth styled Muzaffar Shah III was made sultan in 1560–1. Abdul Karim Khan, titled I'timad Khan, was his chief advisor and de facto ruler. By the late sixteenth century, no single ruler had emerged dominant in Gujarat. Nobles had control over the royal family; their infighting resulted in a province fragmented into dozens of militarized hereditary fiefdoms.⁴⁸ In such a landscape, by no means were sultans and emperors the only form of socialization. Sufi fraternities, local warrior chieftains, endogamic merchant groups such as the Parsis and Jains, and pilgrimage routes of various denominations also flourished as parallel worlds of community formation.⁴⁹

At Ahmedabad, I'timad Khan cultivated an alliance with the Mirzas. Ulugh and his younger brothers Ibrahim and Muhammad Mirza fled to Gujarat after a conflict with Emperor Akbar during military campaigns in Malwa between 1560 and 1570. As the Mirzas began to widen their

⁴⁸ To partly illustrate, Ahmad Shah's privy purse was Ahmedabad and surrounding areas on the southeastern border of the city. I'timad Khan and his group held Kadi, Jhalavada, Petlad, Nadiad, Bhil, Radhanpur, Sami, Munjpur, Godhra, and Sorath. One Sayad Mubarak held Patan and Cambay along with 84 villages, Dholka, Gogha, and Dhandhuka, Champaner, Sarnal, Balasinor, and Kapadvanj. Imad al-Mulk Rumi and his entourage held Bharuch, Baroda, and Surat. Further, of these shares I'timad Khan bestowed the country of Sorath on Tatar Khan Ghori; the districts of Radhanpur, Sami, and Munjpur on Fateh Khan Baluch; Nadiad on Malik us-Sharq, and some of the dependencies of Jhalavada on Alaf Khan Habshi. Sayad Mubarak conferred the territory of Patan on Musa Khan and Sher Khan Fauladi, Imad al-Mulk Rumi bestowed the district of Baroda on Alaf Khan Habshi and the port of Surat on his wife's brother Khudawand Khan Rumi. This list is meant to convey the highly fragmented nature of political authority and its nature as a coalition based on administrative divisions that were hereditary in nature and could only be entirely upended through battle.

⁴⁹ For these other significant axes of community formation, see for example Jyoti Balachandran. *Narrative Pasts: The Making of a Muslim Community in Gujarat, c. 1400–1650*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020; Aparna Kapadia. *In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth-Century Gujarat*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2018; R. B. Paymaster. *Early History of the Parsees in India from their Landing at Sanjan to 1700 A.D.* Bombay: Zartoshti Mandli, 1954; Sheikh, *Forging a Region*; Sanjay Subrahmanyam. "The Hidden Face of Surat: Reflections on a Cosmopolitan Indian Ocean Centre, 1540–1750." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, nos. 1–2 (2018): 205–55. There were spatial patterns to group identities of this kind. For example, while many Parsis established business houses during Mughal times, their activities were largely confined to coastal cities such as Bharuch, Ankleshwar, Surat, Navsari, and later Bombay, where they could more easily pursue choice businesses of shipbuilding and oceanic commerce. See Ruttonjee Ardeshir Wadia. *The Bombay Dockyard and the Wadia Master Builders*. Bombay: Godrej Memorial Printing Press, 1955.

networks in Gujarat, I'timad Khan worried that his strategy may have backfired. Switching tactics, he invited Akbar to conquer Gujarat and pledged local support. Akbar was all too aware of Gujarat's wealth. He was fond of items purchased from Gujarati merchants, such as rare oxen bought during hunting campaigns in Gwalior in 1559–60.⁵⁰ It took two campaigns to incorporate Gujarat into the Mughal Empire. Even then, Mughal control was concentrated in the urban areas of Patan, Ahmedabad, Cambay, Baroda, and Surat, with outlying communities paying tribute to maintain peace. Firsthand accounts of conquest suggest that Akbar possessed a highly trained and well-equipped army, financial resources, and loyal vanguards. Immediately after, Akbar also cleared personal debts of his officials using money from the royal treasury, a gesture noted independently by two chroniclers Abu'l Fazl and Badauni.⁵¹ The Gujarat campaigns underscore Akbar's state-making abilities.

Akbar's First Campaign in Gujarat

The first Gujarat campaign began on July 2, 1572, from Fatehpur near Agra, and ended with Akbar's return to the capital a year later. Conquest in Mughal times was not swift. Leaders spent considerable time gathering intelligence about rivals, including whether physical battle was even desirable. The entourage, consisting of tents, retainers, family members, staff, and equipped *jāgirdārs*, camped at Dabur before moving to Sanganer where the emperor hunted cheetahs. This was not entirely recreation, but a critical part of building collective spirit among soldiers. In addition, royal hunts could symbolize victories to come.⁵² While encamped at Ajmer on August 12, Akbar sent twenty commanders in advance to Gujarat. His son Daniyal was also born at Ajmer on September 1. The baby's mother was a daughter of Bhari Mal, the Hindu Raja of Amber and a Mughal rank-holder.

The group then moved southward reaching Sirohi on October 29. Letters were dispatched to I'timad Khan informing him of the royal camp's impending arrival. It was after reaching Patan a fortnight later that local fief holders of the Gujarat Sultanate pledged allegiance to the

⁵⁰ Abu'l Fazl. *The History of Akbar*. Vols. 1–6. Translated by Wheeler M. Thackston. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015–20, 3:269.

⁵¹ This suggests that even during Akbar's time, nobles were beginning to contract debts to maintain their musters, but we have very little data on who these groups were and what kind of arrangements were made in terms of money and resources.

⁵² Thomas Allsen. *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2011, 119–40.

emperor and agreed to have his name struck on coins and announced from pulpits. They also agreed to regularly present themselves at court.⁵³ Soon after, I'timad Khan arrived at Patan and rode with the emperor to Kadi in northern Gujarat. Without a single battle taking place, Akbar summoned various nobles of the area and said, "We award this territory to Itimad Khan, and we will station here any of the *amirs* he wishes. It would be appropriate for each one to pledge that there will be no slack in determination and foresightedness and that all requisite courage will be used."⁵⁴

Here, one Mir Abuturab stood as financial guarantor or *zāminīyat* for I'timad Khan's newly acquired revenue farm of Kadi, while I'timad Khan pledged additional financial surety or *ta'ahhud* on behalf of his own subordinates. As conveyed in a contemporaneous court painting in Figure 1.2, resources and territories were split among elites without war through pledges and promises. It is significant that financial assurances were not given by bankers, but by fighting nobles who could stand witnesses and financially back those with limited credibility. Such men acquired administrative control over smaller areas of land through personal recommendations and insurance money provided by their peers. The result of such complex arrangements meant that precolonial sovereignty in Gujarat was a microcosm of empire, a political patchwork rather than a homogenous blanket.

By November 20, Akbar's entourage had moved in on Ahmedabad and captured the walled city and Bhadra Fort without resistance.⁵⁵ Letters of support and tribute arrived acknowledging Akbar's victory. Akbar granted the governorship of Ahmedabad (*hukūmat wa iyālat*) to Mirza 'Aziz Koka. This included everything north of the Mahi River, the natural border between northern Gujarat and central Gujarat. After assigning several loyal warriors to Koka's entourage, Akbar instructed the very first Mughal governor of Gujarat to maintain salaries of those employed in his administration and to "treat his subjects well with competence [and] love of justice."⁵⁶ For the areas on the southern side of the Mahi River, including the cities of Baroda, Champaner, and Surat, Akbar reinstated his cousins the Mirzas, who had promised loyalty, as

⁵³ Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, 5:21. This also suggests that the imperial mint would annex local mints to the Mughal domain. In practice, however, we know that the local currency, referred to as both "Gujarati" and "Mahmudi" continued to function as a currency without signs of abating. See Najaf Haider. "A Sturdy Regional Currency: The Continuous Use of Mahmudis in Gujarat under the Mughals." *Studies in People's History* 4, no. 2 (2017): 162–75; S. H. Hodivala. *Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics*. Bombay: The Numismatic Society of India, 1976, 115–30.

⁵⁴ Abu'l Fazl, *History of Akbar*, 5:21–3. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:24–5. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:32–3.



Figure 1.2. I'timad Khan "Gujarati" bows in submission to Akbar.
By Sur Das, Agra, 1603–5. Accession No. CBL In 03.157. © The Trustees of the
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

administrators.⁵⁷ Baroda was held by Ibrahim Mirza, Surat by his brother Muhammad Hussain Mirza, and Champaner by Shah Mirza. Having never seen the ocean, Akbar traveled to Cambay on December 8, 1572. There, he met merchants from Anatolia, Syria, Iran, and Turan, and took a boat out on the water to experience the cool breeze of the bay.

However, Ibrahim Mirza continued to retaliate and drew Akbar into battle at Surat. Akbar reached Surat on January 11, 1573. Those guarding the area on behalf of the Mirzas relied on local *zamīndārs* for elephants and supplies. Akbar blocked their routes, starving enemy occupants of the Surat Fort. The Mirzas soon fled but Akbar continued his attack, relying on a combination of mines and artillery power.⁵⁸ After a month and half of work, the Mughals took the Surat Fort and Akbar reached Ahmedabad on April 2 where he parceled out new *jāgīrs*. On June 3, 1573, Akbar returned to Fatehpur, exhausted after a year of campaigning. His camp followed several days behind him, including the infant Prince Daniyal and members of the harem. However, celebrations were short lived.

The Second Gujarat Campaign

Muhammad Mirza, who had early escaped Akbar's attacks in Gujarat, attempted to recapture Ahmedabad by July 1573. Perhaps the wealth within the walled city was too lucrative to share with the emperor. The provincial governor 'Aziz Koka requested Akbar's immediate help. Akbar's men did not have enough time to organize their own resources, so "the doors of the treasury were opened, and much gold was poured into the laps of the retainers at court."⁵⁹ On August 23, 1573, Akbar and his crew mounted camels and horses and marched out on a second campaign, one that would end in decisive victory in record-breaking time. By September 1, he had reached Mehsana, moving directly towards Ahmedabad. Through dispatch, he summoned Mughal *jāgīrdārs* from Malwa, Patan, and Kachhwaha near modern-day Jaipur to meet at Ahmedabad. Once his men gathered, Akbar distributed quality armor. Of the twenty-eight men listed as leaders of this campaign, fourteen were Hindu nobles and rajas. Akbar then mounted his horse and arrived at the walled city on September 2, just nine days after departing from Fatehpur Sikri.

As the battle unfolded, Muhammad Mirza and his men led the imperial army to a fight in a thorny cactus patch. Muhammad Mirza lost many

⁵⁷ Ibid, 5:25–7. ⁵⁸ Ibid, 5:83. ⁵⁹ Ibid, 5:129.

men, while on Akbar's side there were several losses including Saif Koka, a relative with whom Akbar had shared a wet nurse. Akbar lost an additional 500 men in the final tally. Later, Akbar paid off creditors at Fatehpur to whom Saif Khan and other dead nobles from the battle had been heavily indebted. Once again, it is significant that these debts were not paid by any private creditors or bankers. Akbar departed Gujarat on September 13. On reaching Bhakri, south of Jodhpur, Akbar met Todar Mal, who had been summoned to Gujarat to investigate and count the revenue potential of the province.⁶⁰ On October 5, the emperor reached the imperial capital at Fatehpur, this time for good.

The Gujarat campaign motivated Akbar to give up assigning haphazard salaries and wages, and instead to implement a branding law that fixed salaries according to how many troops a *jāgirdār* could summon for battle. Raja Todar Mal agreed that this would ensure that rewards were commensurate with readiness to serve militarily. This was a turning point for Mughal administration, as this branding rule helped to establish some discipline, rank, and order among those jockeying for position and influence at the court. It also suggests that by the late seventeenth century, the Mughal state as led by Akbar had grown into a stable and contractually mature formation. In exchange for undertaking administrative and military duties, officials earned salaries according to *manṣab* rank.

Once the branding system was put in place, the nobles of Gujarat followed royal protocol. In 1575–6, Akbar reinstated several *amīrs* from Gujarat who had been disloyal during the first Gujarat campaign but had now earned Akbar's favor. I'timad Khan was made governor of Gujarat in 1583, while others were given valuable *jāgīrs* and responsibilities to oversee lands earmarked as part of the royal demesne in Gujarat. Akbar was certainly pleased with his new acquisition, for not only did Gujarat provide the imperial court with direct access to major port towns like Cambay and Surat, but family members including ladies from the royal harem could now take easier sea routes to the Hejaz for religious pilgrimage. Access to the sea also bolstered Mughal state capacity. Royal banquets were increasingly adorned with foreign curiosities, and nobles developed appetites for luxury items from abroad. Immense quantities of silver and gold also poured in from traders seeking Indian textiles, spices, and other wares.

During Akbar's reign, officials were regularly transferred from their posts in Gujarat to other regions across the empire. In the years that followed, lands managed by these nobles as part of their *jāgīrs* were often

⁶⁰ Ibid, 5:195.

neglected. According to contemporary eyewitness ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni, *amīrs* became “wicked and rebellious, and spent large sums on their stores and workshops, and amassed wealth, they had no leisure to look after the troops, or to take an interest in the people. In cases of emergency, they came themselves with some of their slaves and Mughal attendants to the scene of the war, but of really useful soldiers there were none.”⁶¹ Akbar’s branding of horses, or the *dāgh wa mahal*, failed because leaders put their own servants and ordinary attendants into soldiers’ clothes for periodic counting, and then dismissed them once they obtained quality *jāgīrs* based on such pretense. Those without military skill such as Hindu and Muslim cotton cleaners, carpenters, and greengrocers became soldiers on paper, leading Badauni to lament that the “shop of real military service was deserted.”⁶²

Despite Akbar’s conquest of Gujarat, the emperor had to repeatedly send armies to reestablish control over areas of the province in the years that followed. This happened when, for example, I‘timad Khan was appointed Mughal governor of Gujarat in 1583 and those in the service of the previous governor Shihab-ud-Din Ahmad Khan (1578–83) rebelled. In Gujarat, Akbar also came up against two kinds of elites: those who were easily incorporated into Mughal service and those who fought doggedly for decades against Mughal sovereignty. The career of the same I‘timad Khan suggests how porous administrative boundaries and fickle personal loyalties could be in Mughal India. Having previously served as chief noble of the Gujarat Sultanate, I‘timad Khan had now refashioned himself as a Mughal governor while retaining proprietary control over land and resources that easily transferred into the Mughal administrative idiom. On the other hand, the former sultan of Gujarat, Muzaffar Shah III, continued his bid to control Ahmedabad. After regrouping men and fighting against Mughal officials across localities in Gujarat, he was finally captured at Bhuj in 1592. As he was being marched to the capital as political prisoner, he committed suicide, decisively ending his family’s bid to control Gujarat.

Conclusion

By 1600, the Mughal state was the most dominant form of authority in Gujarat and across much of the northern and western subcontinent. What opportunities did Mughal control of Ahmedabad city, and other

⁶¹ ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni. *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. Vol. 2. Translated by W. H. Lowe. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, repr. 1924, 193.

⁶² *Ibid*, 194.

key nodes across Gujarat more broadly, provide for merchants, bankers, and other members of the business class? First, even before Mughal rule, Ahmedabad had been a major trading center and source of mercantile opportunity. The walled city built by Ahmad Shah in 1411, and subsequently enlarged by Mahmud Begada, was 43 acres large (or about one-half the size of Vatican City). It soon became a dense urban settlement as various professions sought refuge in its protective environs. Such groups often lived in occupation-based neighborhoods called *pols* in Gujarati.⁶³ Traders took opportunities to serve members of the ruling elite, and they did this by facilitating the commodity trade, ranging from basic grain supplies to higher ticket items such as indigo, tobacco, opium, and foreign spices. A more sophisticated order of commercial activity was that in bullion and jewelry, and this was concentrated in the *jhaveriwāda* neighborhood of the walled city. Literally meaning the place of jewelers, this area was famous as the personal residence of prominent Hindu and Jain merchants. It was in this neighborhood that members of the Jhaveri family lived and grew their businesses over the decades.

City-level demographic data for the period is difficult to ascertain. However, Ahmedabad's population increased after Akbar's conquest. Population growth, largely a result of migration to the city, also led to famine and disease.⁶⁴ Such catastrophes also increased the prices of essential commodities like grain.⁶⁵ As the Mughals established greater control over the area, markets stabilized and the city developed. The staple crops of the region became *juwār* or sorghum and *bājṛā* or millet. Prickly plants around grain fields secured property from scavengers, but also made traversing the region difficult. Wheat and other grains were imported from the neighboring Mughal areas of Malwa and Ajmer, while rice came from the Deccan via the Coromandel Coast through itinerant grain dealers known as *banjārās*. In addition, mango, figs, muskmelons, and other fruits were widely available.

In Gujarat, non-agricultural work was also diverse, including those offering services as painters, seal engravers, and craftsmen. Gold thread-work along with handloom textiles were produced in abundance, while

⁶³ C. N. Ray, "The Traditional Neighbourhoods in a Walled City: Pols in Ahmedabad." *Sociological Bulletin* 57, no. 3 (2008): 81–96.

⁶⁴ Several studies have noted that there was no significant population growth in Mughal India. As a result, any "growth" of the Mughal Empire was largely territorial, not demographic. See Shireen Moosvi. *The Economy of the Mughal Empire, c. 1595: A Statistical Study*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 2015, 405–16 and Sumit Guha. *Health and Population in South Asia*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001, 24–67.

⁶⁵ Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, 189; Muhammad Arif Qandhari. *Tarikh-i-Akbari*. Translated by Tasneem Ahmad. Delhi: Pragati Publications, 1993, 232.

many imitations of goods from Turkey, Europe, and Persia were also manufactured quite adeptly. The affluent built stone houses, often with walls containing secret hollow spaces to store and hide wealth. Akbar's chief chronicler Abu'l Fazl notes that in Gujarat by the late sixteenth century, there was "a brisk trade in jewelry and silver" from all over the world.⁶⁶ This influx of precious metals from the New World via Europe would grow significantly by the early seventeenth century, adding to the prosperity of local merchants such as the Jhaveris.⁶⁷

After Akbar's conquest, Ahmedabad became a Mughal provincial capital that successive governors controlled until 1758. Political elites relied on merchant bankers like Shantidas Jhaveri and his descendants to not only procure rare goods for royal consumption, but also as key intermediaries and brokers of Mughal power in the locality. Local business elites helped the Mughals translate practices of governance and political ambition into localized forms. As the story unfolds, we shall see how members of the Jhaveri family came to be linked with Mughal officials, and how the basic contours of this relationship transformed by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as political rivalries intensified and the competition for cash became increasingly fierce.

⁶⁶ Abu'l Fazl. *The A'in-i Akbari*. Translated by H. Blochmann, D. C. Phillott, H. S. Jarrett, and Jadunath Sarkar. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, repr. 1949, 2:247.

⁶⁷ For comparative international perspectives on precious metal flows to Asia, see Dennis Flynn. *World Silver and Monetary History in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1996; John F. Richards, ed. *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1983. Irfan Habib provides evidence on the decline of precious metals coming into India by the late eighteenth century, suggesting that the limited availability of bullion had a deflationary impact on the economy. See Irfan Habib. "The Eighteenth Century in Economic History." In *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History*. Edited by Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra, 217–36. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998, 227–31.