

Meta Data**Title :** Timeline of Development Mansabdari System**Subject:** History**Chapter Linkage :** Peasants , Zamindars and the State (Theme 8)**Level:** Grade 12**Objectives:**

The functions of government in medieval times were complex and difficult. It is the object of administrative study to discover, first, what government can properly and successfully do, and, secondly, how it can do these proper things with the utmost possible efficiency. To determine just what are the best methods by which to develop a good administration, and the political conceptions to carry into it. Here we will make an attempt

1. To familiarize the students with the history of development of administration in India
2. To enable them to understand the complexities of the Indian situation as faced by the Mughals- the balancing and appeasing of the various Indian and central Asian social groups
3. To draw comparison and to co- relate different styles of government functioning under the great Mughals

4. Enhance their observation and interpretive skills
5. Develop conceptual learning techniques
6. To study and analyze various factors that shape the administrative structure of any government.
7. Develop critical thinking skills, particularly with regards to political and financial exigencies

Target Audience: Students

Language : English

Tags/Key words: Amir, Amir -ul Umara, jagir, zat rank, sawar rank, mansab, watan jagir, zabti, jama, hasil

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Description


The Mansabdari System

The **Mansabdari system** was the core foundation of the administrative system of the Mughal Empire introduced mainly by Akbar in 1595-96 CE. The word mansab is of Arabic origin meaning rank or position. The system, hence, determined the rank of a government official. Every civil and military officer was given a 'mansab' and different numbers which could be divided by ten, were used for ranking officers. It was also meant for fixing the salaries and allowances of officers. The mansabdars of the Mughal Empire received their pay either in cash (naqd) or in the form of assignments of areas of land (jagir) from which they were entitled to collect the land revenue and all other taxes sanctioned by the emperor and therefore, the mansabdari system was also an integral part of the agrarian and the jagirdari system. Consequently, the numerical strength of the mansabdars and its composition during different periods materially influenced not only politics and administration but also the economy of the empire.

This was the system through which the Mughals tried to rule India more firmly than it had ever been in the past. The job of the mansabdars was to ensure the implementation of the imperial policy. Let's look at the mansabdari system as it evolved under the Great Mughals.

TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT OF MANSABDARI SYSTEM UNDER THE MUGHALS

Period	Name	Features	Some Important Mughal Mansabdars
1526-1530	Zahiruddin Babur	The system is believed to have originated in Mongolia. It was brought to India by Babur and was prevalent during the reign of Humayun as well.	
1530-40 1555-56	Nasiruddin Humayun	Humayun had to devote almost all his time to preserve his empire (though he eventually lost to the Surs) and then in struggling to win it back. He didn't get either the space or the energy to give any solid foundation to the administrative structure of the empire.	

<p>1556-1605</p>	<p>Jalaluddin Akbar</p>	<p>The credit for giving mansabdari system an institutional framework goes to Akbar who made it the basis of Mughal military organization and civil administration. The mansabdars formed the ruling group in the Mughal Empire. Almost the whole nobility, the bureaucracy as well as the military hierarchy, held mansabs.</p> <p>In practice there were 33 grades of mansabs mentioned by Abul Fazl in his book Akbarnama. During the early reign of Akbar, the lowest grade was ten and the highest was 5,000. Towards the end of the reign it was raised to 7,000. Higher mansabs were given to princes and Rajput rulers who accepted the suzerainty of the emperor.</p> <p>The 'mansab' of a noble implied the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Salary of the officer (b) Status of the officer (c) Number of soldiers, horses and elephants etc., maintained by an officer. <p>Two grades delineated the mansabdars. Those mansabdars whose rank was one thousand or below were called the <u>Amir</u>, while those above 1,000 were called the Amiral Kabir (Great Amir). Some great Amirs whose ranks were above 5,000 were also given the title of Amir-al Umara (Amir of Amirs).</p> <p>The king himself appointed the mansabdars. He could enhance</p>	 <p>Raja Todar Mal</p>
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the mansab, lower it or remove it.

2. A mansabdar could be asked to perform any civil or military service.

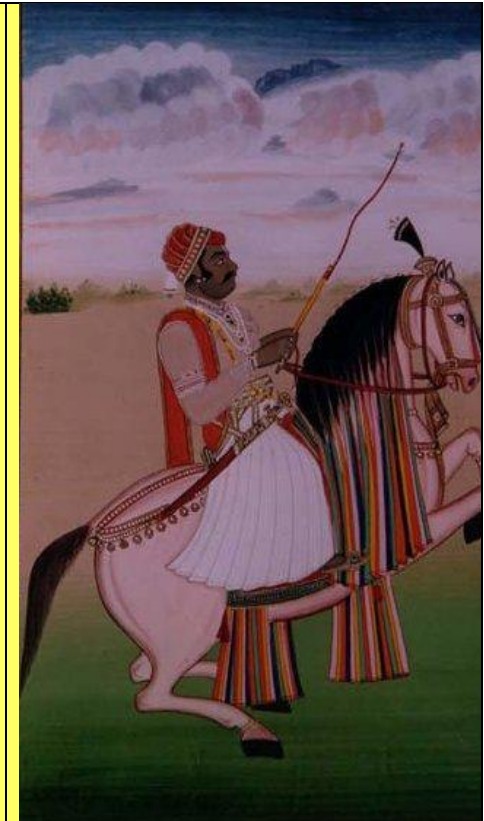
3. For every ten cavalry men, the mansabdar had to maintain twenty horses, for horses had to be provided rest while on a march and replacements were necessary in times of war.

11. A record was kept of the description ('huliya') of each horseman under a mansabdar and of branding ('dag') horses to prevent corruption.

As above-mentioned mansabdars were paid either in cash (naqd) or in the form of assignments of areas of land (jagir). The revenue that was generated through their jagir was handed over to them and the same was deducted from their salary. The mansabdar paid the salary of cavalrymen that he maintained out of his salary. Those who received pay in cash were known as naqdi and those paid through assignments of jagirs were called jagirdars.

It is noteworthy that most of the Mansabdars were foreigners or were of Central Asian, Turk, Persian and Afghan origin though there was also small number of Indians who also got appointments as mansabdars

The mansab or rank was designated by dual representation - one by personal rank (called zat) and the other by cavalry rank (called sawar). Every mansabdar was given the rank of both zat and sawar. The chief use of zat was to place the holders in an



Man Singh

		<p>appropriate position in the official hierarchy. As for sawar rank a mansabdar was paid rupees two per horse eg. in addition to the zat remuneration, a mansabdar was also given rupees one thousand extra allowance if he had received the rank of five hundred sawars.</p> <p>The jagirs were by nature transferable and no mansabdar was allowed to retain the same jagir for a long period. The watan-jagirs were the only exception to the general system of jagir transfers. The watan-jagirs were normally granted to those zamindars who were already in possession of their watans (homelands) before the expansion of the Mughal Empire. Some of the Rajput mansabdars received watan jagirs.</p> <p>The mansab was not hereditary and it automatically lapsed after the death or dismissal of the mansabdar. This system was the law of escheat (zabti). The son of a mansabdar, if he was granted a mansab, had to begin afresh. This measure had been introduced so that the mansabdars did not exploit the people in a high-handed manner.</p>	<p>Raja Man Singh, the first Mansabdar of 7000 zatwas not a minister and still enjoyed a higher rank than Abul Fazl who was a minister in the court of Emperor.</p> <p>Bhagwan Das, another Rajput mansabdar with 5000 zat, also enjoyed a privileged position in the Mansabdari system of the empire.</p>
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**1605-
1627**

Jahangir

The system however, lost some of its efficiency after Akbar necessitating a series of corrective measures. From Jahangir's time higher mansabs were introduced. The mansab of a prince was raised to 40,000 and 60,000 respectively as against of 12,000 during Akbar's reign.

This was the time when a new system of Du-aspah sih-aspah was introduced which literally means trooper with two or three horses. Under this system, selected nobles could be allowed to maintain a large quota of soldiers, without making any change in their zat rank. It implied that a mansabdar or noble holding du-aspah sih-aspah rank had to maintain double the quota of troopers indicated by his sawar rank. Their pay was also hiked accordingly.

He also introduced of the use of conditional rank or Mashrut which means an increase of sawar rank for a short period.

The number of categories of mansabdars was also reduced to 11 as against 33.

With Akbar's death, the control exercised over mansabdars became a bit slack.



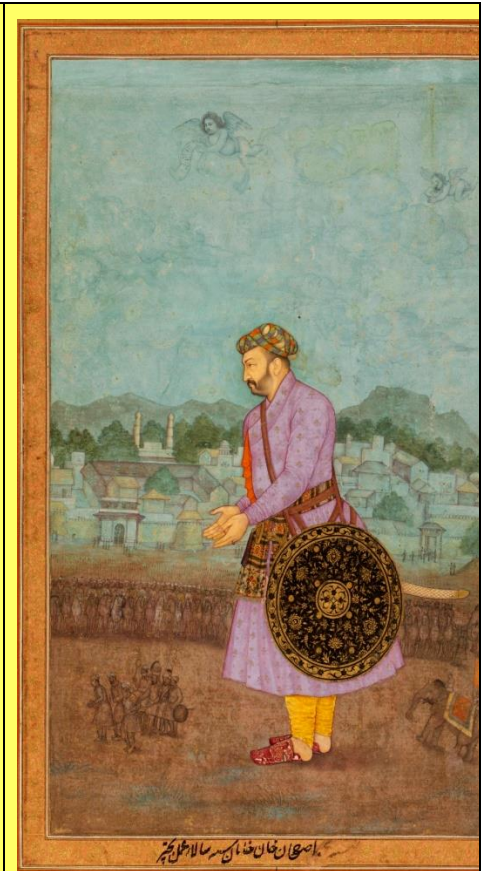
Bhagwan Das

**1628-
1658**

Shahjahan

Shahjahan on his accession to the throne discovered that some of the mansabdars were not maintaining the required numbers of sawars but were drawing the salary. There was also a gap between the actual estimate of income from a jagir (jama) and the actual amount collected (hasil) of a jagir. For example in the last years of Shahjahan's reign the hasil in the Deccan was only one-fourth of the jama. The reduction in salary therefore had to be accompanied by the lowering of the number of troops.

This necessitated the introduction of the Month-ratio or Month-scale system. It was a new scaling device under which the salaries of mansabdars were put on a month scale: ten months, eight months, six months or even less. The obligations of the mansabdars for maintaining a quota of sawars were brought down accordingly. The month-scale system was applied to both jagirs and those who were paid in cash.



Asaf Khan

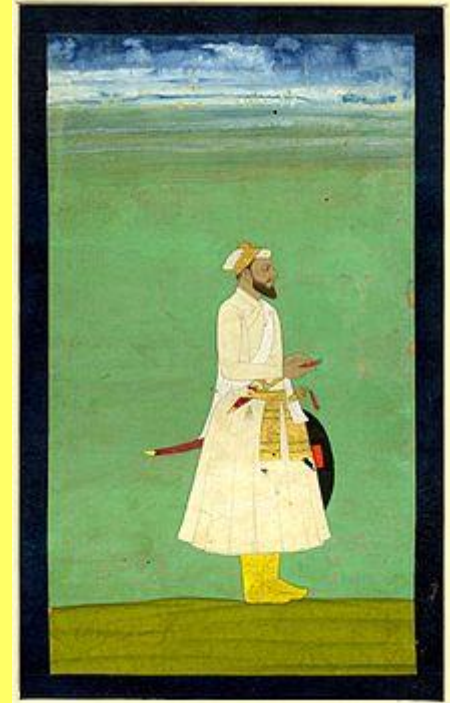
1658-
1707

Aurangzeb

On account of Aurangzeb's acquisition in the Deccan, apart from the Rajputs the Marathas and the Deccanis too came into the mansabdari fold for military reasons.

Another drastic change was the increased number of mansabdars during Aurangzeb's time. From 1803 under Akbar in or about 1595 CE to 14,449 under Aurangzeb, their number kept on increasing. This increase eventually led to the Jagirdari and agrarian crisis. For, though the number of mansabdars increased rapidly there was no increase in the availability of jagir in the same proportion. Thus, there was a lack of sufficient jagirs required for the growing number of mansabdars awaiting grant of jagirs. Due to the constant wars fought by Aurangzeb the treasury was exhausted so the cash payment of salary was also out of question.

This jagirdari crisis fuelled the agrarian crisis leading to the collapse of the great administrative edifice of the Mansabdari system which had sustained the Mughals for over two centuries.



Shaista Khan—the Mughal governor of Bengal

Activity for Students

Answer the following questions-

1. The mansabdari system is believed to have originated in

- a) Mongolia
- b) Persia
- c) Kabul
- d) Uzbekistan

2. The credit of giving it an institutional framework belongs to

- a) Babur
- b) Humayun
- c) Akbar
- d) Jahangir

3. The 'mansab' of a noble implied the following:

- (a) Salary of the officer
- (b) Status of the officer
- (c) Number of soldiers, horses and elephants etc., maintained by an officer

d) All the above

4. **Zat and Sawar symbolised**

- a) Personal rank and cavalry rank
- b) Official position and number of horses to be maintained
- c) zat remuneration and rupees two per horse for sawar maintenance
- d) all the above

5. **The number of categories of mansabdars mentioned by Abul Fazl in his book Akbarnama were :**

- a) 11
- b) 22
- c) 33
- d) 44

6. **A change introduced by Jahangir which allowed a mansabdar to maintain double the quota of troopers indicated by his sawar rank was called**

- a) Mashrut
- b) Huliya
- c) Dagh
- d) Du-aspah sih-aspah

7. The Month-ratio or Month-scale system was introduced by

- a) Akbar
- b) Jahangir
- c) Shahjahan
- d) Aurangzeb

8. The new ethnic groups in the mansabdari system included during the reign of Aurangzeb were

- a) Marathas
- b) Deccani
- c) Rajputs
- d) both a and b

9. Jagirdari crisis during Aurangzeb's time meant

- a) Famine and draught
- b) Shortage of horses
- c) Gap between *jama* and *hasil*
- d) Shortage of jagirs to give to a growing number of mansabdars

10. One important mansabdar during Akbarr's time was

- a) Shaista Khan

- b) Asaf Khan
- c) Man Singh
- d) Bhagwan Das

Answers

(instructions for CIET: correct answer should pop up on screen after a user has attempted answering)

1. (a) Mongolia
2. (c) Akbar
3. (d) All the above
4. (d) all the above
5. (c) 33
6. (d) Du-aspah sih-aspah
7. (c) Shahjahan
8. (d) both a and b
9. (d) Shortage of jagirs to give to a growing number of mansabdars
10. (c) Man Singh

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Short Essay on the Mansabdari System of Akbar

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