THE AGRARIAN SYSTEM
OF MOSLEM INDIA

A Historical Essay with Appendices

BY
W. H. MORELAND
C.S.I., C.I.E.

Author of India at the Death of Akbar, and From Akbar to Aurangzeb

Exclusively Distributed by
MUNSHIRAM MANOHARLAL
ORIENTAL PUBLISHERS, & BOOKSELLERS
POST BOX 1165, NAISARAK, DELHI-6.

Oriental Books Reprint Corporation
Book Publishers, 10-B, Subhash Marg, Delhi-6.
it regularly in practice; Muhammad Tughlaq combined extraordinary subservience to the Khalifa with systematic and gross breaches of Islamic law; and it is only in Firūz that we meet a ruler who regularly sought guidance from jurists, and framed his policy in accordance with their rulings. As will be explained in the next chapter, we have no record of the actual circumstances attending the assumption of fiscal authority by the Moslem conquerors, but the facts which have been stated lend probability to the view that, at any rate, it was not dominated by meticulous ecclesiastics.

The reader will perhaps ask if the concurrence of the Hindu and Moslem systems is a fortuitous coincidence, or can be explained on historical grounds. I cannot give a definite answer, but the latter alternative seems to me to be more probable. Tithi-land is definitely an Arabian institution, but the rules regarding tribute-land appear to have been worked out to meet the situation arising from the Moslem conquests towards the East; and it would not be matter for surprise if the indigenous institutions of those regions resembled those of India. The question must, however, be left to students of the pre-Islamic history of Persia and Iraq, a subject of which I have no knowledge.

Chapter II.

The 13th and 14th Centuries.

I. THE MOSLEM KINGDOM OF DELHI

The Moslem Kingdom of Delhi dates from the year 1206, when Qutbuddin, the Governor appointed by the King of Ghazni, assumed the title of Sultān and ascended the throne. At this time, however, India had already obtained some experience of Moslem rule. Apart from the episode of Arab rule in Sind, Afghan Kings had maintained governors in Hindustan¹ for more than a century; and, since the collection of revenue was an essential part of administration, we must assume that contact between the Hindu and Islamic agrarian systems was established during this period. Of the details of this contact I have found no record, and the nature of the arrangements for collecting revenue can only be guessed. The position of the Moslem governors was at times precarious, and the force at their disposal can scarcely have been sufficient for the effective subjugation of the country nominally in their charge; the conditions suggest rather centres of authority at Multān, Lahore, and (later) Delhi, and a sphere of influence round each fortress, varying in extent with the personality of the Governor and the other circumstances of the time. Reading back from the facts of the next century, we may infer that the Hindu Chiefs were the dominant factor in the situation, and that the success of a Governor depended on the relations he could establish with his neighbours, relations which would depend

¹ "Hindustan" in the chronicles is a word of fluctuating meaning, but at this period the general sense is the country to the South and East of the centre of Moslem power, wherever it might at the moment be located. When, for instance, the King of Ghazni in 1098 confirmed a Governor of Hindustan (T. Nasiri, 22), his charge was merely a corner of North-West India; but about 1256 the King of Delhi marched to Kanauj on his way to Hindustan (ibid. 210). In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the word usually points to the country beyond the Ganges, or, less commonly, to Rajputana and Central India.
partly on his personal qualities, and partly on the force he could command; but in the absence of any record of facts it is useless to carry conjecture further.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries form a well-marked period in the history of India. During it, the Kings of Delhi ruled with something like continuity from the Indus to Bihār, and from the Himalayas to the Narbada, with temporary extensions of authority further to the South and East; but by the end of the fourteenth century this large kingdom was disintegrating, and it was soon to be replaced by a number of independent States. The principal first-hand authorities for the period are three. Minhāj-ul Sirāj, who was Chief Qāzī of Delhi in the middle of the thirteenth century, recorded the history copiously from the days of Adam down to his own times; nearly a hundred years later Ziyā Barnī, a retired official, took up the story where Minhāj-ul Sirāj had left off, and carried it down to the early years of Firūz; while Shams Aḥfī, also an official, writing soon after the year 1400, essayed to complete Ziyā Barnī's unfinished work. So far as regards the agrarian system of the period, practically everything which is found in later chronicles can be traced to one or other of these writers; and, while I have referred to the condensed accounts given by Badāūnī, Firishta, and others, I do not think it necessary to cite them as authorities. Of the three contemporary chroniclers, the first was apparently little interested in agrarian topics, but the second and the third had personal connections with the Revenue Ministry, and furnish much relevant information. It is given in the official jargon of the period, which was soon to become obsolete, and is consequently at times difficult to interpret; but it is undoubtedly authoritative, and, so far as I can see, is not vitiated by prejudice or flattery, two characteristics which are in evidence occasionally in the accounts of political or dynastic affairs.

Some description of the administrative organisation of this large kingdom is necessary for our present purpose. From the outset we find it broken up into regions which I shall describe as Provinces, in charge of Governors; by

1 The position of the Governor at this period is discussed in Appendix B.

"Province" I mean a primary division of the kingdom, and by "Governor" an officer who received orders directly from the King or the Ministers at Court. These provinces varied in number with the size of the kingdom, and possibly also with its development; but most of them appear in the chronicles with sufficient regularity to be regarded as permanent, though two or more might on occasion be held by a single Governor. Apart from the ordinary provinces, two particular regions require separate notice.

1. The Delhi Country (havālī-dī Delhi). This region was bounded on the East by the Jumna, and on the North by the Siwāliks, or rather by the line of forest at their foot. On the South it marched with Mewāt, a fluctuating boundary, because at times the turbulent Mewātīs threatened Delhi itself, and at others they were penned up in the Rajputana hills, but they were never really subdued. On the West, it was bounded by the provinces of Sirhind, Samāna, and Hānsī (known later as Hisār). Its administrative position was exceptional in that it had no Governor, but was directly under the Revenue Ministry.

2. The River Country. This region is described in the chronicles as "between the two rivers," and translators have usually written of it as "the Doāb." That rendering is, however, misleading, because in modern usage the Doāb extends to Allahabad, while the region referred to by the chroniclers was much smaller; it lay between the Ganges and the Jumna, and on the North it extended to the sub-montane forest, but on the South it did not reach much further than Aligari. During the thirteenth century, this region was divided into three provinces, Meerut, Baran (now Būlandshahr), and Kol (now Aligarh); but Allāuddin brought it directly under the Revenue Ministry on the same footing as the Delhi country. In a later section we shall see how it was desolated under Muhammad Tughlāq.

These two regions formed the heart of the kingdom. The provinces which can be identified outside their limits are

1 The word havālī occurs occasionally in the general sense of "neighbourhood," but in many passages it denotes what was obviously a specific administrative area. It should not be identified with the subdivision known in the Mogul period as Havelli-Delhi, which was much less extensive.
as follows. Below the River Country came Kanauj, and below that Karra, the two together completing the area now known as the Doáb; but Kanauj had apparently some jurisdiction across the Ganges, while Karra extended across both rivers. Beyond the Ganges, we find Amroha and Sambhāl on the North, and next to these Badaūn. In the earlier period, the next province recorded to the East of Badaūn was Awadh (Ajudhiya, or Fyzābād), but later we hear of Sandila between the two; and beyond Awadh to the South-East was Zaffarābād, which became known as Jaunpur when that city was built by Firāz. To the North of the Gogra was Bahrāin; then came a portion of Awadh including Gorakhpur, and then Tīrhat, or North Bihār. Beyond Tīrhat was Lakhnauti, or Western Bengal, which was sometimes a province, but usually a kingdom, subordinate or independent according to circumstances.

Crossing the Ganges and returning westwards, we have the province then known as Bihār, which was separate from Tīrhat. The country lying to the West of this Bihār was not really within the kingdom, and the next province we meet is Mahoba, and next to it Bayāna, which was united with Gwalior during the periods when that fortress belonged to the kingdom. Bayāna marched with Mewāt, the unadministered region South of Delhi to which reference has already been made. West of Delhi, the provinces were Sirhind, Samāna and Hānsi (Hissār), and beyond them Lahore, Dīpalpur, and Multān. The last three were frontier provinces; almost throughout the period the Mongols were established on or near the Indus, and the danger resulting from their presence was a determining factor in the politics of the kingdom.

To the Southward, Gujarāt was a recognised province, and there were some provinces in Mālwa, but the chronicles say curiously little about this region, and I am not certain of the number. Of Raiputana also, we hear very little; there

1 Apparently this part of Rohilkhand was at times administered as part of the River Country: I take this to be the meaning of Afīl’s occasional phrase “between-and-beyond-the-two rivers.” In one passage (p. 323), Barni seems to include Amroha in the River Country, mentioning it, along with Meerut, Bura, and Kol, as being under direct administration.

occasionally a reference to Chitor as a province, but there is little trace of effective jurisdiction in this region. This enumeration brings us down to the line of the Narbada. Afīl’s Dun carried the Moslem flag across this river, and for a time there was a large and important province at Deogir or Daulatābād, and others extending as far as the South-East Coast, but this extension was not retained for long. There were thus in all from 20 to 30 provinces, the numbers varying from time to time as the kingdom grew or shrank; and the phrase “the twenty provinces,” used by Ziyā Barni (p. 50) in recording the resources of the kingdom under Balban, may be taken as a more or less precise description.

We have then the kingdom divided into provinces, while the villages were grouped in parganas, and the question naturally arises whether there was any intermediate administrative unit corresponding to the district of later times. I have failed to find materials for a decisive answer to this question. In a few passages we read of “divisions” (shiqq), in terms which suggest that these were in fact districts; but the passages are not decisive, and leave room for doubt whether these divisions, if they existed, were normal or exceptional, or whether the word is not a mere synonym. My impression is that during the fourteenth century the word shiqq was coming into use as a synonym for the terms which I have rendered “province”; but a full discussion of the question would carry us too far, and, since it is not really important for the present purpose, I shall leave the matter open.

We have no actual description of a province at this period, but it would, I think, be a mistake to picture an area with strictly defined boundaries, and with uniform administrative pressure over all its parts. At the provincial capital was the Governor with the troops maintained by him, and there may have been smaller centres of authority, though this is doubtful; in some villages, his officials might be dealing directly with the peasants, in others there would be resident grantees or assignees, in others—as I think the majority—there would be Chiefs to whom the Governor looked for the revenue. If Chiefs rebelled, that is to say, did not pay the
revenue, the case was one for military force; and if rebellion in this sense was widespread or serious, the King might lead, or send, a punitive expedition to put matters right. It is reasonable to infer that rebellion was conditioned largely by distance or accessibility, that it was comparatively rare near the provincial capital, and comparatively common near the boundaries; and that there might be areas where the Chiefs were practically independent, because the Governor was not in a position to reduce them to submission. In any case, the relations between a Chief and his peasants would not be affected by the establishment of Moslem rule, except in so far as more money might have to be raised in order to pay the revenue; inside the villages the established agrarian system would continue to function.

2. THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

There is no record of any large change in the agrarian system of the Delhi kingdom earlier than that which was effected by Alâuddin Khaliq about the year 1300, and the question arises whether any inference can be drawn from the silence of the chroniclers regarding the thirteenth century. So far as the first half of the century is concerned, I do not consider silence as necessarily significant. Minhâj-ul Sirâj, the chronicler of this period, was an ecclesiastical jurist, who for long periods was at the head of the qaâds of the kingdom; his chronicle shows no trace of interest in economic or social matters; and I think it is quite possible that he might have ignored changes of importance in the agrarian system. He might indeed have noticed discussions as to the legality of the system, if they had occurred in his time, for in that case he would necessarily have taken part in them; but he was courtier as well as qaâzi, and it is easy

1 For examples, see Barni, 57 ff. Balban did not dare to go on distant wars of conquest owing to the threat from the Mongols on the frontier, but he spent much of his time in these punitive expeditions, to Mewât, or Kanaaj, or Badîn, as necessity arose.

2 His praise of King Balban is extravagant, but he does not mention the fact, recorded by Barni (p. 47), that this King paid no attention to Islamic law in matters of government. The topic was certainly important to a man in his position, but it was obviously an inconvenient one at a time when Balban ruled the kingdom.

to suppose that he would have passed over in silence decisions which were unfavourable to his views.

The case is different with Ziyâ Barnî, who came of administrative stock, and, as his personal narrative shows, was interested in agrarian matters. I think it is probable that he would have heard of, and duly recorded, any large change made by Balban, the only ruler in the second half of the century who is likely to have done anything of the kind; and his silence suggests that there was nothing to be told. However that may be, the only materials available for this century consist of incidental remarks, and one or two anecdotes. We see the peasantry supporting the kingdom by the revenue they furnished, and we read of rebellious, or defaulting, Chiefs being punished; but we are told nothing of the methods by which the revenue was assessed and collected, nor have I found any details bearing on the life of the peasants or their relations with their Chief. It is clear that Grants were freely given by the Kings, and that Assignments were common; as regards the former we have no particulars of interest, but something must be said of the assignment-system, the scope of which was in some respects wider than in some later periods.

For practical purposes we must distinguish between small and large Assignments, both of which classes were described as iqâd, and implied liability to military service. By small Assignments I mean those which were given to individual troopers, who were bound to present themselves, with horses and arms, whenever they were called up for service or inspection. Their position can be illustrated by the story told of the “Shamsi iqâdâr” (Barni, 60, 61). Early in King Balban’s reign, reports were made to him regarding Assignments which had been allotted to about 2000 troopers in the time of Shamsuddin. Most of these men had become old or unfit for service, and the rest had come to terms with

3 Barni tells us (p. 248) that his father was “Nâib and Khwâja” in the province of Baran: the duties of the Khwâja at this period are not described, but the word Nâib indicates that he was Deputy-Governor, or the second man in the province; and he retained a position there long enough for his son to acquire the sobriquet by which he is usually known. Barni does not tell us what positions he himself occupied, so probably he never rose very high; but in one passage (p. 504), he speaks of having been employed at headquarters for more than 17 years under Muhammad Tughlaq.
the clerks of the Army Ministry, and so escaped the liability to serve; sons had been tacitly allowed to succeed their fathers; the holders lived in their villages as if they were proprietors; and a claim was now put forward that the holdings were Grants and not Assignments. The King passed orders on these reports, resuming the Assignments of those who were unfit for service, and giving them small pensions in cash, while the Assignments were continued to men who were able and willing to perform their duties; but subsequently these orders were cancelled on a picturesque appeal ad misericordiam, and we are left to infer that, in these particular cases, the Assignments were allowed to develop into Grants free from liability.

The story is interesting for the light it throws on the agrarian position in the vicinity of Delhi. An individual trooper could apparently settle down quietly in a village, and enjoy the revenue it yielded; and, since these individuals obviously regarded their holdings as well worth keeping, we must infer that the peasants accepted the arrangement without much difficulty. The life of the village doubtless went on as before: the only novelty was the new revenue-collector who remitted to live in it, with the authority of the King behind him, but obviously with no great force at his own disposal. We may guess that in some cases there may have been friction due to the attitude of a particular assignee; but the duration of the Assignments indicates that, in the thirteenth century, as in later times, the peasants were content to acquiesce in arrangements made over their heads, and pay the revenue to anyone who claimed it with authority.

No similar account exists of the larger Assignments, that is to say, those held by men of position. Their existence is indicated, but that is all, and we do not know whether the position involved merely liability to personal service as officers, as was the case in the fourteenth century, or whether it included also the maintenance of a body of troops, as was the rule in other Moslem countries at that time, and in India during the Mogul period. Taking a general view of the position, it is clear that Assignments were fairly common in the neighbourhood of Delhi; but in this region there was also Reserved (khālisā) land, that is to say, land administered directly by the Revenue Ministry for the benefit of the treasury. The King thus drew revenue from two principal sources, the receipts from the Reserved lands, and the surplus-income remitted from the provinces.

Something can be added to this vague outline by arguing back from the reforms of Alāūddin to the system which he changed. It is clear that, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Hindu Chiefs were sufficiently numerous and important to dominate the political outlook, and consequently they must have been of great importance from the agrarian standpoint also. As remuneration for their services to the kingdom, they were allowed a portion of land free from assessment, and the income from this source, described as their "right" or "perquisite" (haqiq), was intended to suffice for their maintenance; but they were suspected—and the suspicion is at least probable—of taking more from the peasants than they paid to the State, so that "the burden of the strong fell upon the weak," to use a phrase which occurs more than once in the discussions. Clearly then the arrangements for assessment and collection from the peasants were in the hands of the Chief, where one was recognised.

Now the course of events in the thirteenth century was not, on the whole, favourable to an increase of the Chiefs' authority: despite occasional periods of weakness, there was a considerable extension and development of the King's power, and it is probable that the Chiefs, regarded as a whole, were at least as strong in the middle of the century as at its close, and that they were stronger at the beginning than in

---

1 From the nature of the case we hear very little of this topic, but a Superintendent of Reserved Lands is mentioned in T. Nasiri (p. 249) before the middle of the century. The word ḥālisā means "pure" or "free," hence, "unencumbered," and its use in this special sense would be natural in the Revenue Ministry, but "Reserved" gives the actual position more clearly, because, at any moment, certain lands were kept apart for the Treasury, while the remainder were assigned. The common rendering "Crown lands" is, I think, misleading, because in modern use the phrase carries with it the idea of permanence, while throughout the Moslem period there was no permanence whatever, reserved land being assigned, and assigned land being reserved, at the will of Ruler or Minister: the distinction between the two classes was permanent, but a particular area might pass from one to the other at any moment.

2 Surplus income is denoted by the word ḥusaynā (Barni, 164, 220, &c.).
the middle. It may well be, then, that the chroniclers' silence in regard to agrarian changes is explained by the fact that there was nothing to record; that throughout the century the old agrarian system continued to function under the established Chiefs; and that their methods were followed in the areas where Moslems were in direct contact with peasants. The relations between Governor and Chief would probably be, in the main, matters for negotiation, while the relations between Chief and peasants would be outside the scope of the Revenue Ministry, which would be gradually accumulating experience in the management of the areas which were neither held by Chiefs nor assigned to individuals. It cannot be said that this view is established by an adequate mass of recorded facts, but it seems to me to be the most probable interpretation of the few facts which have been preserved.

As regards the areas managed by Moslem officials, the only fact which emerges is that the position of the headmen was recognised. The passages given in Appendix C show that in the matter of perquisites headmen were on the same footing as Chiefs; and it is safe to infer that, in the one case as in the other, the perquisites were intended as remuneration for service to the King, or, in other words, that the villages which were not under Chiefs were managed through their headmen. There is nothing on record to show the extent of the headman's authority: all that can be said is that his position was recognised by the Moslem administration.

Before leaving this century, it may be well to ask what was the attitude of the sovereign towards the peasants under his rule. The question can be answered only in the case of Balban, whose power extended over nearly half the period. In his advice to his son, whom he placed on the throne of Bengal, he insisted (Barī, 100), on the danger of making excessive demands on the peasants, even when they were justified by precedent, and on the need for firm but just administration. With regard to assessment, he advised a middle course: over-assessment would result in the impoverishment of the country, but under-assessment would render the peasants lazy and insubordinate; it was essential

that they should have enough to live on in comfort, but they should not have much more. It may fairly be said then that Balban had grasped the main principles of rural economy in an Indian peasant-State, at a period when the environment afforded little scope for individual advance; he aimed at a peaceful and contented peasantry, raising ample produce and paying a reasonable revenue; and he saw that it was the King's duty to direct the administration with this object in view.

3. ALAÚDdíN KHÁLJí (1296-1316)

In the year 1296, Aláuídín obtained the throne of Delhi by the murder of his uncle, the reigning King, and consolidated his position by lavish distribution of the wealth he had obtained by his raid into the Deccan. Just at first, he appears to have thought that a kingdom so obtained would stand of itself; but from a succession of revolts in the opening months of his reign he learned the need for vigorous administration, and thenceforward he stands out as a strong and absolutely ruthless ruler, intent only on the security of his throne and the extension of his dominions. The changes made by him in the agrarian system did not arise from any economic, still less any philanthropic, motive, but were inspired solely by political and military considerations. Personally he was unpopular, at the outset he had no trustworthy body of nobles or officers on whom to rely, nor could he count on the support of orthodox Moslems; his subjects were ready to rebel, while the Mongols, massed on the Indus, constituted a perpetual danger on the frontier. The need for security, internal as well as external, was thus the dominant note of his policy, and extension of the kingdom was deliberately postponed until he judged that he was safe at home.

1 The narrative in the text is based entirely on Barī (241 ff.), who wrote from personal knowledge, and who condemns some portions of Aláuídín's conduct severely, while he praises certain of his measures. He may fairly be regarded as impartial, at least in intention; and, from the form in which he gives the King's regulations, I judge that he must have had access to the official records, or else had preserved copies of some important documents. His chronology is difficult, for dates are often wanting, and his narrative does not always follow the order of time; but close reading usually makes it possible to ascertain the sequence of events, though not the actual dates.
Internal security was the first consideration, and, in or near the year 1300, the King took steps to bring his officers under closer control. His regulations issued with this object were numerous and varied, but the only measure which concerns us is the resumption of nearly all the existing Grants, which at his accession he had confirmed to the holders, the idea being apparently that men of position should have no income independent of the King’s continued favour. This measure is important as showing that Grants were in fact held merely at the King’s pleasure, and were liable to resumption at any time; but the area affected by it cannot have been large relatively to the extent of the kingdom, and the outstanding fact is the action which was taken about the same time to keep the Hindu Chiefs and rural leaders in subjection.  

The view taken by Ala’uddin and his counsellors was that Chiefs and leaders would be rebellious so long as they had the resources necessary for rebellion; and a consideration of the actual position suggests that this view was probably sound. The Chiefs had behind them a long tradition of independence, maintained entirely by the sword: they cannot, in the mass, have had any particular reason for loyalty to the foreign rulers who had annexed the country by force, and who derived a large revenue from it; while the arrogance of individual Moslems must have furnished on occasion a strong incentive to rebellion. It is easy then to believe that the Chiefs, or some of them, were in fact ready to throw off the Moslem yoke whenever an opportunity should occur, and that they employed their surplus income largely in strengthening themselves in the traditional ways, by maintaining troops and accumulating weapons; but, however this may be, the view accepted by Ala’uddin led directly to a change in agrarian policy, designed to deprive the Chiefs of a large part of their resources. The measures taken were:  

1. The standard of the revenue-Demand was fixed at one-half of the produce without any allowances or deductions.  

2. The Chiefs’ perquisites were abolished, so that all the land occupied by them was to be brought under assessment at the full rate.  

3. The method of assessment was to be Measurement, the charges being calculated on the basis of standard yields.  

4. A grazing-tax was imposed apart from the assessment on cultivation.  

These measures were in themselves well suited to achieve the object in view. A Demand of half the produce cannot have left the ordinary peasant with any substantial surplus, and would thus strike at the private revenue which the Chiefs were suspected of levying; while the assessment of the Chiefs’ holdings at full rates would reduce them practically to the economic position of peasants, and the grazing-tax would operate to diminish their income from uncultivated land. The economic result would be to draw the bulk, if not the whole, of the Producer’s Surplus of the country into the treasury; to stereotype the standard of living of the ordinary peasants; and to reduce the standard of living of the Chiefs, who would not be in a position to maintain troops, or accumulate supplies of horses and other military requirements. The only question that arises is whether such a policy was, or could be, carried out effectively.  

On this question we have the definite statement of the chronicler that the regulations were strictly enforced, and
that their object was realised. As the result of some years' continuous effort, the Chiefs, and the headmen of parganas and villages, were impoverished and subdued; there was no sign of gold or silver in the houses of the "Hindus"; the Chiefs were unable to obtain horses or weapons; and their wives were even driven by poverty to take service in Moslem houses. We may suspect some rhetorical exaggeration in the language of the chronicle; but the success of the King's policy seems to be established by the fact that, six years after its adoption, his kingdom was at peace, and he was able to detach strong armies for his long-meditated project of the conquest of the Deccan. Nor is there any record of serious internal revolt during the remainder of his reign; and we may fairly accept the inference that, for the time being, the Chiefs were set aside, and the Administration was brought into direct relations with the peasants throughout a large part of the kingdom.

The extent of country over which these regulations operated is not entirely clear. The chronicler gives (p. 288) a long list of provinces, but, as commonly happens with such lists, some of the names are corrupt; and, in the absence of any definitive text, there is no certainty that others may not have dropped out in the course of copying. Taking the list as it stands, we learn that the regulations were applied by degrees to Delhi, the River Country, and the rest of the Dūb. To the East, Rohilkhand was included, but not Awadh or Bihār; to the South, portions of Mālwa and Rajputana were included, but not Gujarāt; while on the West, all the Punjab provinces are indicated with the exception of Multān. So summarised, the list inspires some confidence, because it covers the centre of the kingdom and omits the outlying provinces; but, as I have just said, the possibility remains that some of the omissions may be the work of copyists. Even, however, if the list has not been accidentally curtailed, it represents a very large administrative achievement on the part of the Deputy-Minister, Sharaf Ėlī, to whose efficiency the chronicler pays a glowing tribute.

The establishment of direct relations with the peasants over this large area must necessarily have involved a rapid increase in the number of officials; and in the 14th, as in the 16th, century such an increase was apt to result in an orgy of corruption and extortion. That something of the sort occurred on this occasion must be inferred from the chronicler's description (pp. 288–9) of the measures taken by the Deputy-Minister for the audit of the local officials' accounts, measures so drastic as to render the Service unpopular for the time being; "clerkship was a great disgrace," and executive position was accounted "worse than fever." The only point, however, which concerns us is that the records of the village-accountants were used in the audit. This is one of the very rare glimpses we obtain of the interior of a village at this period, with the accountant recording meticulously every payment, whether lawful or not, made to each official. We shall see in a later chapter that Aurangzeb's Revenue Minister advised his controlling staff to adopt the same expedient in order to detect unauthorised levies by their subordinates; and we may fairly infer that the functions of the village-accountant constitute one of the permanent features of the agrarian system.

The main changes effected by Alāūdīn originated in the effort to realise internal security; but one important detail was the result of the pressure of the Mongols on the frontier. Shortly after the adoption of the regulations which have just been described, the King made an expedition into Rajputana. It was not very successful, and when he returned with his army tired and disorganised, a strong force of Mongols appeared suddenly outside Delhi. For a short time the kingdom was in imminent danger; and, when the Mongols eventually withdrew, the King turned his attention to the prevention of such attacks in future. The frontier defences were duly re-organised; but, in addition to the troops stationed there, he decided that it was necessary to maintain a large and efficient standing army, not scattered over the country in Assignments, but concentrated in the neighbourhood of the capital, and paid in cash from the royal treasury. Here, however, financial considerations obtruded themselves. It was a time of inflation; prices, and consequently wages, were high; and it
was found that the accumulated treasure of the kingdom would very soon be exhausted if the necessary forces were maintained. To meet this difficulty, Alāūdīn determined on his famous policy of reduction and control of prices, so that the resources of the kingdom might be able to bear the expenditure deemed to be necessary for its security.

A little must be said on the general aspects of this policy, because, on the one hand its possibility has been questioned, while on the other hand its extent has been exaggerated. It seems to me that the chronicler’s account must be accepted in substance, to the extent that, in and near Delhi, prices were in fact reduced, and were stabilised at the lower level for a period of about twelve or thirteen years, a period which was not marked by anything like serious dearth, though some seasons were unsatisfactory. Ziyā Barnī had no motive for inventing such a story, and, what is more significant, he obviously did not possess the power of economic analysis which would have been needed for its invention. The long and detailed price-regulations (pp. 304 ff.) can be summarised very shortly. Their essence was, (1) control of supplies, and (2) control of transport, with (3) rationing of consumption when necessary, the whole system resting on (4) a highly-organised intelligence, and (5) drastic punishment of evasions. This summary, it will be seen, applies almost precisely to the system of control which was elaborated in England during the years of war, and which was proved by experience to be effective. It is quite inconceivable that a writer like Ziyā Barnī could have invented these essential features out of his head; but it is quite conceivable that, in the economic conditions of the time, a King like Alāūdīn, aided, as he certainly was, by competent Ministers, should by degrees have arrived at the essentials of the policy he was determined to enforce. He

Barnī implies (p. 308) that there were seasons which would otherwise meant famine in Delhi, but his language shows that he was straining effect, and consequently it requires to be discounted. Other references to "famine" indicate that the word meant for him a scarcity of provisions in the city, rather than a deficiency of production throughout the country; and we should not be justified in inferring from his language that there was a famine in the ordinary sense during the period, though there were seasons when, without Alāūdīn’s regulations, a rise in prices would have been needed to draw adequate supplies to the capital.

was, it must be remembered, strong just where modern systems are weak, for he could rely on an elaborate organisation of spies, and there was no sentimental objection in the way of effective punishment. The question of practicability is, however, mainly a matter of extent. No attempt was made to keep down prices throughout the kingdom; effort was limited to Delhi, where the standing army was concentrated; and the regulations extended only to a region sufficiently large to ensure the isolation of the Delhi market. Isolation was favoured by the circumstances of the time. To the North lay the submontane forests, to the South the disturbed and unproductive country of Mewāt. The city depended for its ordinary supplies on the River-Country to the East, and on the productive parts of the Punjab to the West; the cost of transport was necessarily high in the case of bulky produce; the industry was specialised in the hands of the professional merchants; and, given effective control of these, the isolation of the market could be completely effected.

The point which specially concerns us in these regulations is the supply of agricultural produce. The whole revenue due from the River Country, and half the revenue due from Delhi, was ordered to be paid in kind, and the grain so collected was brought to the city, and stored for issue as required; while peasants and country traders were compelled to sell their surplus at fixed prices to the controlled merchants, with heavy penalties for holding up stocks. I think it is quite clear that this rule involved a change in practice, or, in other words, that, in this part of the country, collections had been ordinarily made in cash, and not in produce, during the thirteenth century. Taking all the

1 There are definite indications that the system was perfected by degrees. At the outset (p. 304), the King wished to avoid severe punishments, but the shopkeepers would not abandon their practice of giving short weight (p. 318), until at last a rule was made that, on detection, the deficiency should be cut from the seller’s person; and (p. 319) the fear of this punishment proved sufficient to put a stop to fraud.

2 Barnī calls the professional merchants kārkāṇṭāṇa; they may safely be identified with the banjārs of later times. The merchants were compelled to deposit their wives and children as security for their conduct, and these pledges were settled near Delhi under the control of an overseer (p. 306).
regulations together, they lend no support to the view which has been occasionally put forward, that Northern India was, at this period and even later, a country of Arcadian simplicity; the cash-nexus was well-established throughout the country, there were grain-dealers in the villages as well as in the cities, and we may safely infer that prices were a matter of interest to the peasant at least as far back as the thirteenth century.

The result of the changes in the agrarian system introduced by Alauddin, and maintained throughout the rest of his reign, may be summarised as follows:

1. Delhi and the River Country, together with part of North Rohilkhand, were Reserved (khallisa), and were managed by the Revenue Ministry, through its officials, in direct relations with the peasants. The Demand was fixed at one-half of the produce, assessed by Measurement, and collected, wholly or partly, in grain. There were doubtless some Assignments or Grants in this region, but apparently they were not important. The peasants were restricted in the sale of their surplus produce, the prices of which were fixed by authority.

2. Round this nucleus lay an inner ring of provinces, administered by Governors in direct relations with the peasants, claiming half the produce, assessing by Measurement, and—apparently—collecting in cash. There is no record of restrictions in regard to marketing in these regions.1

3. In the outlying provinces, the Governors had not been placed in direct relations with the peasants, and we may assume that they continued to deal largely with the Chiefs: we are not told what was the Demand, how it was assessed, or in what form it was collected; and we can only guess that no change was made in the arrangements previously in force.

A glimpse of the position occupied by the Chiefs in this reign is furnished by the story of the birth of King Firuz, as related by the chronicler Shams Affif (pp. 37 ff.). The Governor of Dipalpur selected as a bride for his brother the daughter of a Hindu Chief living within his jurisdiction. The Chief rejected the proposal in terms which were regarded as insulting, and the Governor thereupon led his troops to the spot, and proceeded to collect the year’s revenue by force directly from the headmen, who would ordinarily have paid it to the Chief. The suffering caused by these measures induced the lady to sacrifice herself for her tribe, the marriage duly took place, and King Firuz was its offspring. The point of the story lies in the chronicler’s remark that the people were helpless, for “in those days Alauddin was on the throne,” and no protest was possible; and it may fairly be inferred that a strong Governor, serving under a strong King, could treat the Chiefs very much as he chose.

Alauddin was, as a rule, opposed to the alienation of revenue by way of Grant or Assignment. As we have seen, he resumed all existing Grants early in his reign, and he appears to have made few if any, in later years. His Court, indeed, was brilliant, but rewards to scholars and artists were on a moderate scale, and apparently they were usually given in cash.1 As to Assignments, he probably disliked the whole system; for the later chronicler, Shams Affif, records (p. 95) that he condemned assignments of villages on the ground that they constituted a political danger, the assignees forming local ties, which might easily develop into an opposition party. He certainly did not give small Assignments to individual troopers, his large army at the capital being paid entirely in cash; and there is, so far as I can find, no record of his giving large Assignments to officers. It is quite possible that some Assignments were given or continued, because the silence of the chronicles is not conclusive on such questions, but it is clear that the practice had, for the time being, fallen out of favour. Of Farming, I have found no trace during this reign. Here, too, it is possible that our information is incomplete; but, speaking generally,

1 Barni, 341, 365–6. He contrasts Alauddin’s conduct with that of Mahmud of Ghazni. The latter, he says, would have given a country or a province to a poet like Amir Khushd, while the former merely offered him a salary of 1000 tankas.
the reign was characterised by vigorous, direct administration, and not by such expedients as Farming or Assignment.

4. GHIYĀSUDDĪN TUGHLAQ (1320–1325)

Ālūddīn’s system did not survive its creator.¹ His son and successor, Qutbuddīn, a charming and popular lad, devoted himself entirely to pleasure. He formulated no agrarian policy of his own, but his father’s minute regulations were allowed to lapse in their entirety. The revenue-demand was reduced, but in what manner is not recorded; the work of the Revenue Ministry fell into disorder; speculative Farmers appeared; Grants and Assignments were made lavishly; and the capital, following the king’s example, indulged in a period of debauchery, during which the administration went to pieces. Qutbuddīn was eventually murdered by a favourite, who ascended the throne and exterminated the royal family; but the favourite and his adherents were in turn exterminated by Ghiyāsuuddīn Tughlaq, a Frontier veteran who, in the absence of any other candidate, became king with general consent.

Ghiyāsuuddīn reorganised the revenue administration of the kingdom. The proportion of produce which he claimed is uncertain, and the point is discussed later on; he discarded Measurement in favour of Sharing; and he restored the Chiefs to something like the position they had lost. His reasons for changing the method of assessment are indicated in the phrase, “he relieved the peasants from the innovations and apportionments of crop-failure,” a phrase which is cryptic as it stands, but which can be interpreted from the later history of assessment by Measurement. Under this method, the peasant’s liability depended on the area sown, and consequently he was, in theory, bound to pay the full Demand even though the crop might be an entire failure. In practice, however, such a rule could not

¹ Barai (pp. 381 ff.) is again the only contemporary authority for the reigns of Qutbuddīn and Ghiyāsuuddīn. It is clear that he was a great admirer of the latter’s reforms, but his account is extremely crabbed and unsystematic; from the style, I judge it to be a compilation, from notes or from memory, of phrases which he had heard directly from the King. A translation will be found in Appendix C.

be enforced, because, when the charge was relatively heavy, as was the case throughout the Moslem period, the peasant would be unable to pay. Almost wherever we read of the system then, we find reference to allowances in case of crop-failure. Under Akbar, the rule was, as we shall see, that the area of failure was deducted, and the charge made only on the area which matured; and I take the word “apportionments” to indicate that something of the same sort was done under Ālūddīn, the area sown being apportioned between “success” and “failure”; while the other word, “innovations,” can be explained by the fact that he had introduced Measurement in places where it was not already customary. It is matter of common knowledge that such allowances for crop-failure require an administration both honest and efficient. They have to be made hurriedly, often at the very end of the season; there is little time for adequate verification of the facts; and the local staff are under strong temptations to negotiate with the peasants, and to overstate, or understate, the extent of loss according to the amount of the gratification they receive. In the conditions which prevailed in the fourteenth century, it seems to me to be quite certain that Measurement must have involved a large amount of extortion and corruption of this kind, and it is possible that the alternative method of Sharing was open to less objection in practice; but, however that may be, Measurement as the standard method of assessment now disappeared, to be restored two centuries later by Sher Shāh.

In regard to the Chiefs and headmen, Ghiyāsuuddīn rejected Ālūddīn’s view that they should be reduced to the economic position of peasants. They had, he considered, large responsibilities, and were entitled to remuneration accordingly; their perquisites were to be left to them without assessment, and their income from grazing was not to be taxed; but the Governors were to take measures to prevent them from levying any additional revenue from the peasants. In this way it was hoped to enable the Chiefs to live in comfort, but not in such affluence as might lead to rebellion. So far as this policy was carried out in practice, it may be inferred that the Chiefs regained in
essentials the position they had held in the thirteenth century, but—where the Governor was sufficiently strong—with less freedom in regard to their treatment of their peasants.

A third element in the policy of Ghiyāsuddīn was his insistence on the dignity of provincial Governors, and on a correspondingly high standard of conduct on their part. It is clear that, at his accession, speculative farming of the revenue was common; and the Ministry was crowded with touts and pests of various kinds, whose functions have to be guessed from the designations applied to them,—"spies," "farmers," "enhancement-mongers," and "wreckers." The King put a stop to the activities of these pests, and chose his Governors from the nobility; he ordered that they were to receive all due consideration from the audit-staff of the Ministry; but he made it clear that their position and dignity would depend on their own conduct. They might honourably take the ordinary perquisites of the post, described as "a half-tenth or half-eleventh, and the one-tenth or one-fifteenth of the revenue"; while their subordinates were allowed to appropriate "a half or one per cent." in addition to their salaries; but exactions were to be limited to these figures, which we may assume were already traditional, and any substantial misappropriations were to be sternly punished.

These orders call for a few words of explanation regarding the relations which subsisted between the provincial executive and the audit staff of the Revenue Ministry. The audit was periodical, not continuous. An official was left at work for some time, and then called to the Ministry for the two-fold process denoted audit (muhāsāba) and recovery (mutālaba); the auditors, as might be expected, strove to bring out a balance due, and payment of this balance was enforced by torture. The first mention I have found of recovery by torture is in the proceedings of Sharaf Qāʾ, which have been referred to under the reign of Alāʾuddīn (Barni, 288). There is no suggestion in that passage that officers of the rank of Governor were tortured, but the orders

1 Ibn Batītā, who was in India during the next reign, mentions (iii. 112) that Governors received a half-tenth on the revenue as a regular thing.

of Ghiyāsuddīn indicate that they had not been exempt, since he found it advisable to prohibit anything of the kind. The prohibition was renewed (574) by Fīrūz, so it may be assumed that torture had been practised under Muhammad Tughlaq. The next chronicler, Shams Affī, also records (347) the friendly nature of the audit of Governors' accounts under Fīrūz; but elsewhere (488 ff.) he tells how a high officer was flogged periodically for some months in order to recover what he had embezzled when Deputy-Governor of Gujarāt. We may infer then that, while torture was an ordinary incident in the case of officials, it might be applied under some kings, or in exceptional cases, even to an officer of the rank of Governor. The subject recurs in the sixteenth century, when, as we shall see in a later chapter, some of Akbar's officers practised recovery "after the ancient fashion"; and the flogging of defaulting Governors is recorded in the seventeenth century in the kingdom of Golconda. It is necessary therefore, in trying to realise the position of revenue-payers, to bear in mind that a Governor or other official might have a very strong motive for oppressive conduct in cases where the choice lay between torturing defaulters and being tortured himself.

Apparently the Governors appointed by Ghiyāsuddīn, while they were to be men of rank, were to hold their posts on farming-terms, that is to say, the surplus-revenue, to be remitted to the treasury, was to be a stated sum, and not a matter to be settled by annually balancing accounts of actual receipts and sanctioned expenditure. This seems to me to be the most reasonable interpretation of the orders that the Ministry should not make "an increase of more than one-tenth or one-eleventh on the provinces and country by surmise and guess-work or on the reports of spies and the representation of enhancement-mongers."

The Demand on the peasants was, as we have seen, to be assessed by Sharing, and would therefore depend on the seasons: the Ministry would not be in a position to vary the amount of revenue, except by varying the share which

1 See Methwold's Relations of the Kingdom of Golconda, in Purchas His Pilgrimage, 4th edition, p. 996. A Governor of Māsulpātā "for defect of full payment, was beaten with canes upon the back, feet, and belly, until he died."
was claimed; and minute variations in the share are recorded on no other occasion, and are in themselves highly improbable. On the other hand, if the Governor was liable to pay a stated sum by way of surplus revenue, it would be the natural procedure of the Ministry to endeavour to increase this sum as quickly, and as largely, as possible. The result of such an increase would be that, in some form or other, the Governor would increase the burden on the peasants, and this would tend to hinder the development of the country, which was the King’s great object. To limit the enhancement on a province to about ten per cent. at a time would from this point of view be a reasonable rule of practice: development would be gradual, and the Governor’s payment should increase pari passu, but should not be allowed to get ahead of the paying-capacity of the province.

The sentence I have just examined has been read in a different way, as stating that the Demand was limited to one-tenth or one-eleventh of the produce. This interpretation would be a welcome addition to our knowledge of the period, but I do not see my way to accept it; the references to spies and enhancement-mongers cannot, so far as I see, be interpreted on these lines; the context indicates that the reference is to the relations between the Ministry and the Governors, not between the Governors and the peasants; and the point of the passage is enhancement of the sum payable, not the fixing of its proportion to the produce. The proportion claimed by Ghiyāṣuddin is not stated elsewhere in the authorities, and we can only infer that he did not alter the figure which he found established, but this figure again is not on record. Ziyā Barī informs us merely (p. 383) that Qutbuddin “removed from among the people the heavy revenues and severe demands” imposed under Alauddin. The passage is rhetorical rather than precise; it cannot possibly mean what it seems to say, that he abolished the land-revenue altogether; and we can only guess that he reduced its incidence to some figure below Alauddin’s claim of half the produce, or in some other way alleviated the burdens on the people.

1 Ishwari Prasad, Medieval India, p. 231. The same view is taken in the Cambridge History (iii. 128).
inconsistencies, and the final position of the chronicler is not one of uncritical eulogy, nor yet of prejudiced detraction, but of astonishment and perplexity. He tells us that he had never heard or read of such a character, he could not place it in any known category, and, more than once, he takes refuge in the view that the King was one of the wonders of creation, in fact, a freak of nature. In such a position, it is safe to assume that the chronicler’s language is exaggerated in both directions: he was striving to emphasise the contrasts presented by the reign—the King’s brilliant gifts and his practical incompetence, or his subservience to the Khalifa and his disregard of Islamic law, and both sides of the case are inevitably overstated. It is advisable then to discount the chronicler’s superlatives, but there is, so far as I can see, no reason to distrust his statements of fact regarding the King’s agrarian measures, the only topic with which I am at present concerned.

For this reign we have no formal statement of agrarian policy, and no direct indication of the King’s ideals; but we have a series of episodes which fall into two groups, the treatment of the provinces generally, and the special measures taken in the River Country. One of the King’s earliest measures was an attempt to assimilate the administration of the outlying provinces to that of Delhi and the River Country, which were, it will be recalled, directly under the Revenue Ministry. The chronicler gives a caustic description of this attempt at centralisation, which is closely in accordance with his picture of the King as a brilliant but unpractical man; he tells us of detailed accounts being submitted from the most distant provinces, and of the uttermost penny in them being wrangled over by the audit staff at the capital; and he mentions that the experiment lasted only for a few years. The sequel is not formally recorded, but two episodes show that the speculative Farmer supervened in the provinces. One episode (p. 488) is that of a man who had taken a three-year farm of Bidar, in the Deccan, for a payment of a kror of tankas. The chronicler describes him as “by occupation a corn-merchant, timorous, incompetent”; he was a stranger to the locality; and, when he found that he could not realise more than a third or a fourth of his contract, he went into rebellion, and shut himself up in the fort. He was, however, easily captured, and was sent as a prisoner to Delhi.

The other case is that of the farmer of the province of Kota. The chronicler’s scorn for him is expressed in language too idiomatic for exact translation, but “a contemptible, drug-soaked, little idiot” gives, I think, the general sense. He took the farm without capital, adherents, or resources of any kind, failed to collect even a tenth part of the sum he had promised to pay, and then, gathering a rabble round him, went into rebellion, and assumed the title of King. The rebellion was easily crushed by the nearest Governor, the rebel farmer was flayed, and his skin sent out to Delhi. Even if we assume that the chronicler’s description of these two speculators is overdrawn, the fact remains that they were speculators pure and simple, with no local ties, and no claim to be governors except that their share of revenue had been accepted. Nor would we be justified in inferring that these two farms were exceptional. The only reason for the chronicler’s record of them is that they rebelled in rebellions, the heading under which the episodes are recounted, but their terms are stated in such a matter of fact way that it is reasonable to conclude that they were typical of the ordinary provincial arrangements, after the attempt at centralised administration had broken down. We hear of the speculators who failed and rebelled,
but not of those who succeeded in meeting their engagements, or who submitted to the penalty of failure; and the nature of their relations with Chiefs and peasants is left to be imagined.

The fate of the River Country during this reign must be told in some detail. Here, as elsewhere, the precise dates are sometimes uncertain, but the sequence of events can be traced: the story extends over nearly a quarter of a century, and the main features are—ruinous enhancement of revenue, loss of market, restriction of cultivation, rebellion, drastic punishment, attempts at restoration defeated by the failure of the rains, and, finally, a spectacular policy of reconstruction, ending in an almost complete fiasco.

At the outset of his reign, Muhammad decided (p. 473) to enhance the revenue of the River Country, which was, in the main, reserved for the treasury. The enhancement was ruinous 1 in amount, the peasants were impoverished, and those of them who had any resources became disaffected. Not long afterwards, the King carried out his plan of transferring the capital to Deogir in the Deccan, and in the year 1329 Delhi was evacuated by practically the entire population. The economic effect of this measure on the peasants in the River Country can be readily understood from a study of Alauddin's regulations. Delhi was the one large market for the surplus produce of the country, and when that market was summarily abolished, there would be no object in raising produce which could not be sold; in

1 Barni, 473. The enhancement is described as yakhi bā dāk wa yahi bā bist. Mr. Ishwari Prasad rightly objects (Medieval India, 239.) that Dowson's rendering (Elliot, ii. 238) "ten or five per cent." does not explain the results which followed; while he observes, also rightly, that the alternative rendering, "ten or twenty times," is impossible if taken literally. The fact is that the phrase is rhetorical and not arithmetical; it is one of Ziyā Barni's favourite locutions, and he runs up and down the scale, ten-fold, 100-fold, 1000-fold, according to the humour of the moment, and not with any precise numerical significance. The idea of percentage is ruled out by such passages as that on p. 50, where an increase of "one to 100" brought tears to the spectators' eyes, or that on p. 568, where it is said that the effect of irrigation will be to increase the cattle "one to 1000." Other passages are 84, 91, 109, 138, 204, 250, 531; the list is not exhaustive, but it suffices to place the meaning of the phrase beyond doubt, as "huge," "marvellous," "enormous," or any rhetorical expression suited to the context.

other words, cultivation must have been curtailed, and the revenue correspondingly reduced. 1

Some years later, perhaps about 1332 the King returned for a time to Delhi (p. 479), leaving the capital still in the Deccan, and found that, as the result of the excessive exactions, the River Country was in disorder; stores of grain had been burnt, and the cattle had been removed from the villages. Such conduct, in the circumstances of the time, constituted rebellion, seeing that the primary duty of the peasants was to till the soil and pay the revenue; the country of the rebels was therefore ravaged under the King's orders, many of the leading men were killed or blinded, and when Muhammad returned to the Deccan, we may safely infer that he left the River Country more unproductive than before. 2

Then, somewhere about the year 1337, came the restoration of Delhi as the capital (p. 481): and when the troops and the city-population returned, they found that supplies for them were not available, for, in the chronicler's rhetoric, "not one thousandth part" of the cultivation remained. The King endeavoured to reorganise production, and gave advantages for the purpose, but at this juncture the rains failed, and nothing could be done. Eventually (p. 485), the King, together with his troops and most of the city population, moved to a camp on the Ganges, not far from Kanauj, where supplies could be obtained from the provinces of Kurna and Awadh. After staying there for some years, Muhammad returned to Delhi, 3 and spent three years in administrative business, including (p. 498) an attempt to restore the River Country to prosperity.

With this object a special Ministry was constituted, the region was divided into circles, and officials were posted to

1 Barni does not say how the enhanced assessment was made in the River Country at the time, though he mentions that cesses were imposed in the process. A later chronicle, T. Mubarakshah, says it was by Measurement, and this is not improbable (Or. 5318, f. 344.)

2 Ibn Batūta arrived at Delhi in 1334 (iii. 91, 144). The King was then at Kanauj, where he went after the River Country had been ravaged, so that probably this took place in 1333.

3 On the data given by Ibn Batūta (iii. 338, 356), the date of the King's return would be about 1341. He was at Delhi when the Khallīfa's envoys arrived in 1343 (Barni, 492). Ibn Batūta left Delhi in 1342, and his narrative then cesses to be of use for chronological purposes.
them with instructions to extend cultivation, and improve the standard of cropping. These aims are expressed in magniloquent language: "not a span of land was to be left untilled," and "wheat was to replace barley, sugarcane to replace wheat, vines and dates to replace sugarcane"; but in essence the underlying idea was obviously sound, and, as so often in this reign, it was the execution which broke down. The officials, nearly 100 in number, who were chosen for the purpose, were an incompetent and esurient lot. They undertook to complete the task in three years, and started out with ample funds for the grant of advances; but much of the money was embezzled, much of the waste land proved to be unfit for cultivation, of 70 odd lakhs issued by the treasury in the course of two years, "not one-hundredth or one-thousandth part" produced any effect, and the officials were—naturally—in fear of drastic punishment. Before, however, the fiasco became manifest, the King was called away to the Deccan, whither he went in the year 1345. The chronicler opined that, if he had returned to Delhi, not a single one of these officials would have escaped with his life; but he was not destined to return, and, under his mild successor, the advances were written off as irrecoverable.

The story speaks for itself, and only two points in it require notice. In the first place, the desolation of this tract has sometimes been attributed solely to a long series of bad seasons, but the summary I have given shows that it was essentially administrative in its origin. There was undoubtedly severe famine in parts of India at this period, and the first attempt at restoration was defeated by a failure of the rains; but the second met with no such obstacle, and in view of the later failure it is not easy to suppose that the earlier attempt would in any case have been successful. It will be recalled that in this chronicler's language, the word "famine" usually refers primarily to the population of the city. There was clearly famine in Delhi when

1 Aff. 93-4. This chronicler puts the total of advances at 2 korems. Barnes' figure of 70 odd lakhs is apparently for the first two years only, and the balance may have been issued later; but it is perhaps more probable that the sum had been exaggerated by tradition in the half century which intervened before Aff. wrote.
The 13th and 14th Centuries

52 The Agraman System of Moslem India

The Emir that he represented only personal salary, and not the cost of maintaining troops, had to be accounted for as the orders of the Emir himself. The pay of the provincial governors was low, as the Emir himself. The pay of the provincial governors was low, as the Emir himself.

The large number of revenue officials, the importance of the king's administration, the chronicles are largely based on the king's own and his relatives, who were the actual. The king's administration was largely based on the king's own and his relatives, who were the actual. The king's administration was largely based on the king's own and his relatives, who were the actual.

6. Firuz Shah (1331-1388)

Muhammad Tughluq, who had been for some time employed in the administration of the province of Ghor, was made governor of the province of Ghor, and was given a large number of officials. The provincial governors were appointed by the king and were responsible to him. They were responsible to the king and were responsible to him. They were responsible to the king and were responsible to him.

The contents of this page are not fully visible, but it appears to be discussing the Agraman System of Moslem India during the 13th and 14th centuries, specifically focusing on the Emir and his officials, as well as the provincial governors and their salaries. The page seems to be discussing the nature of the king's administration and the role of revenue officials. It also mentions Muhammad Tughluq and his governance, including his appointment as governor of Ghor and the responsibilities of the provincial governors.
in the chronicles, and I can find no contemporary authority for the view which has been put forward by some modern writers that it was only one-tenth\(^1\); the actual figure is a matter of conjecture. The method of assessment adopted was Sharing, and we are told that “apportionments and excess-demands, and crop-failures, and conjectural-assessments” were entirely abolished. The words rendered “apportionments” and “crop-failures” are the same as those which have been noticed in connection with the reforms of Ghiyāšuddin, and their use here may indicate that Measurement had been practised in some places during Muhammad Tughlaq’s reign; but it is also possible that the chronicler was writing at random, and merely expressing his own preference for the method of Sharing. The other two expressions are not explained, but they point to actions over and above the regular revenue. So far then as concerns the Demand to be made on the peasants, the position was that they were to pay a share of their produce, and nothing more; there is nothing to show whether the payment was to be made in cash or in grain. The question: Who was to receive the payment? brings us to two important topics, the provincial Governors, and the Assignees.

Ziyā Barni makes it clear (p. 575) that, at the outset of the reign, the provincial Governors, like the other high officers, were chosen for their personal character, and not for speculative offers of revenue; and the administration was again purged (p. 574) of touts and pests, as it had been purged by Ghiyāšuddin. At the same time, the severity of the Audit and Recovery procedure was relaxed; while, by an altogether exceptional order, the value of the Governors’ annual presents to the King was set off against the revenue due from their provinces. The position of the Governor was therefore such as to make for a fair treatment of the revenue-payers, and the evidence of rural prosperity during the reign suggests that on the whole the peasants had a reasonable chance.\(^2\) Cases are on record where the King’s discrimination was at fault, as when a Deputy-Governor, who had already been dismissed for misconduct in Sambāna, was appointed to Gujarāt, and after some time had to be dismissed again, to the great relief of the people;\(^3\) but there are not many such cases in the chronicles, and they may, I think, be regarded as exceptional.

At this period, however, the Assignee must have been no less important to the peasants than the Governor, for Firdūs relied largely on the Assignment system. The salaries of his officers were fixed in cash on what appears to be an exceedingly liberal scale, and the corresponding amount of revenue was assigned to them, while the practice of assigning villages to individual troopers was revived. Shams Affī doubtless exaggerates, when he says (p. 95) that all the villages and parganas were assigned to the army, for the king must have had some revenue for himself; but it may fairly be inferred that Assignment was now the usual arrangement throughout the kingdom.

The precise nature of the Assignments given to troopers is obscure. Some passages in the chronicles suggest that, according to the usual practice, the troopers assumed charge of the villages assigned to them; while another, and very difficult, passage can be read in the sense that a trooper was not placed in direct contact with his village, but merely received a document entitled him to draw his pay from it, and that he discounted this document with one of the

---

1 Barni, 574, says that as the result of the King’s orders, the provinces became cultivated and tillage extended widely. Affī, 295, says that a single village in the River Country remained uncultivated, and that in the provinces there were “four cultivated villages to the brok” (\(1\) mile). The language of both writers is rhetorical, but we may safely infer from it that there was much improvement compared with the preceding reign. More satisfactory evidence is contained in a later passage (Afl. 321), which records the preservation for sport of a large area in Rohilkhand; the extension of cultivation had reduced the supply of game, and, if this area had not been preserved, it would, we are told, have come under cultivation like the rest of the kingdom.

2 Affī, 454, 455. A Deputy-Governor was appointed in cases when the Governor held also a post at Court.
bankers at the capital who specialised in this business, and who made a handsome income out of it. The difference might be material to the revenue-payers, but it does not affect the matter with which we are immediately concerned, that in this reign the bulk of the revenue was assigned.

The wide extension of the practice of Assignment brings us to a technical but important question of procedure, which, in the absence of any recognised name, I shall describe as Valuation. The salaries of officers, and the pay of troopers, were fixed in cash; the revenue-Demand, assessed by Sharing, necessarily varied from season to season with the area sown and with the yield at harvest; and the duty of the Revenue Ministry in allotting Assignments was thus to see that each claimant received a fluctuating source of income equivalent on the whole to the amount of his fixed claim. For this purpose, the actual Demand of any particular year would not serve as a standard; if a man was entitled to, say, 5000 tankas yearly, it would not suffice to assign to him an area which had yielded 5000 tankas in the previous year, because this figure might be altogether exceptional. Wherever then the Assignment system prevailed, there must have been some sort of calculation and record of the standard, or average, Income which villages and parganas could be expected to yield, one year with another, to the assignee; the future Income, in fact, had to be valued in order that claims upon the State might be met; and it is this process, together with the record of it, which I denote by the term Valuation. We must think of a list of the parganas and villages of the kingdom, maintained in the Revenue Ministry, and showing the value of each from this point of view; as each order for an Assignment was received, the task of the Ministry would be to find in this list an available area with a Valuation equivalent to that of the Assignment, and, having found it, to allot it to the claimant.

It will be obvious that successful administration must have depended on a Valuation substantially in accordance with the facts. Where the Income was over-valued, claimants would be disappointed, and the result would be a dissatisfied Service, a thing which no Moslem king in India could afford to tolerate; if it were under-valued, claimants would be contented, but the resources of the kingdom would be dissipated. We have seen in the last section that, under Muhammad Tughlaq, the Assignments were said to yield much more than their estimated value, or, in other words, in his time under-valuation was general. At the outset of his reign, Firuz ordered a new Valuation to be prepared; the work took six years (Aff, 94), and the total came to 51 krors of tankas. This is the first actual record of a general Valuation which I have found in the chronicles; we shall meet with others in the Mogul period, when they bulk largely in the administrative literature.

Firuz retained this Valuation throughout his reign; and, since cultivation extended largely in the period, we may infer that his officers benefited progressively as the actual Income mounted above the accepted figure. This fact alone would go far to explain the glowing descriptions of the general happiness given by Shams Aff, a bureaucrat thinking primarily in terms of his own environment; while the fiscal effect would not necessarily have been serious, because the revenue from the Reserved sources would also have increased as the result of extended cultivation. Some allowance must also be made for the fact that the prices of produce were now on a much lower level than had ruled in the second quarter of the century, after Alauddin’s regulations had been allowed to lapse. Shams Aff insists (p. 203 4) on the facts that the prevailing cheapness was not due to any action taken by Firuz, and that, while prices varied with the seasons, the general level remained low; in other words the main effects of inflation had now disappeared, and the increase in cash revenue would be less than proportionate to the increase in produce due to extended cultivation. On the whole, however, it may be
inferred that assignees of all classes enjoyed at least their fair share of the prosperity of the kingdom; and we may perhaps go further, and say that they were under less temptation than usual to exploit the peasants who had come under their control. The nobles at any rate became rich (p. 297), and accumulated large stores, while we now begin to hear of great fortunes being left at death, a topic which becomes familiar in the Mogul period.

Firuz was liberal in the matter of Grants. At his accession, he restored1 to the claimants large numbers of Grants which had been resumed by his predecessors, and in the early years of his reign he made fresh Grants "every day" to the host of candidates present in the capital. The chronicler speaks of the restoration of Grants which dated from 170 years back; this carries us beyond the establishment of the Delhi kingdom, and the passage is so fervid that not much stress can be placed on its wording, but it is allowable to infer that Firuz recognised his predecessors' Grants as establishing a claim which ought to be satisfied. This inference is confirmed by a passage in the King's Memoir, where he records that he directed claimants to Grants which had been resumed to produce their evidence, and promised that they should receive the land, or anything else, to which they were entitled. In this reign, therefore, we come within measurable distance of the idea of a proprietary right in Grants; but the idea was not destined to develop, and in the Mogul period the practice of arbitrary resumption was well established.

Under Firuz we hear very little of the Hindu Chiefs, the other important class of Intermediaries. The general averments of continued tranquillity, taken with the absence of records of punitive expeditions, suggest that their relations with the Administration were normally friendly, but I have found no details throwing light on their position, except in regard to two Chiefs belonging to the province of Awadh. When the King was marching through this province on an expedition to Bengal, the Chiefs (Rai) of Gorakhpur and Kharosa, who had formerly paid their revenue in Awadh, but for some years had been in "rebellion," and had withheld

1 Barni, 550; Futubat, as in Elliot, iii. 386, and Or. 2039, f. 304r.

their payments, came to make their submission (Barni, 587), and offered valuable presents. At the same time they paid into the Camp treasury "several lakhs" of tankas on account of the arrears of former years, and agreed to the sums to be paid in future, for which they gave formal engagements. They accompanied the King for some marches through their country; and, in recognition of their submission, orders were issued that not a single village of theirs was to be plundered, and that any animals which had been seized were to be restored. I think we may reasonably take this incident as typical of the period. The Chiefs had "rebelled" when the disorganisation of Muhammad Tughlaq's administration gave them an opportunity; but when the royal army reached their country and resistance was impossible, they submitted with a good grace, and renewed their engagements. We may assume that, if they had not done so, their villages would have been ravaged in the ordinary course. It will be noticed that formal engagements were taken for the revenue fixed to be paid in future years. This makes it plain that at this period the revenue due from such Chiefs was not assessed on the produce of each season, as was done in the case of peasants, but was more like a tribute, the amount of which was settled by negotiation for some time ahead.

Lastly, we have to consider the attitude adopted by Firuz towards the peasantry. According to the eulogies of the chroniclers, it was substantially the same as that of Ghayasuddin. The administration was to aim at extension of cultivation and improvement in cropping; and, with these objects in view, it was to treat the people equitably. After denouncing the language used, we are justified in concluding that this policy was on the whole carried out, to the extent that cultivation was extended, and rural prosperity increased; but Firuz also made a specific contribution to the tradition of agricultural development by undertaking the construction of irrigation-works. Some of these, it is true, were intended in part to bring water to the new cities which he built; but that they served the country also is apparent from the statement (Afif, 130) that during the rains officers were specially
deputed to report how far the floods caused by each canal had extended, and that the King was exceedingly pleased when he heard of widespread inundation. The canals were thus of a somewhat elementary type, and should not be thought of in terms of those which now exist in the Punjab, but their value to the country cannot be questioned; the same chronicler records (p. 128) that in the country round Hissâr, where formerly only kharif crops were grown, both kharif and rabi crops could be matured with the aid of the canal. The extent of their value can be inferred from the fact that they brought in an annual income of two lakhs of tankas; this is not a large sum when compared with the Valuation of the kingdom (5½ krors), but obviously it was important for the limited areas where water was made available.

The assessment of this irrigation-revenue furnishes some points of interest. To begin with, the King referred to an assembly of jurists the question whether he could lawfully claim any income in return for his outlay, and was informed that it was lawful to take “Water-right” (haaq-i shirb), a term of Islamic law, denoting a right, separate from that of the holder of land, arising from the provision of water. The jurists defined this right as “one-tenth,” presumably of the produce, and the King proceeded to assessment accordingly. The chronicler’s account of the procedure (Affîf, 130) is highly technical, and I am not absolutely certain of its meaning, but a distinction was apparently drawn between existing villages, and the new “colonies” (in the modern Indian sense of the word) which were founded in country previously uncultivated. From the former, water-right was collected, and its amount, together with the entire revenue derived from the “colonies,” was excluded from the public accounts and paid into a special treasury, the receipts of which were earmarked for the King’s charitable expenditure.

1 The _Hedaya_, translated by C. Hamilton, iv. 147. Thomas, in his _Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi_, p. 271n, took the assessment as ten per cent. on the total outlay, but it seems to me doubtful whether an idea so closely allied to usury would have found favour with Moslem jurists of the period. I have found no authority showing how water-right was to be calculated in ordinary cases.

One difficulty arises in interpreting this account. Revenue due from the peasants was assessed by Sharing, and consequently the ordinary Demand would increase automatically with every increase in produce resulting from the supply of water, at first sight then, there was no reason for a separate assessment. The water-right was claimed on the specific ground that the King was entitled to some return for his outlay, but the Sharing-method of assessment would of itself have yielded an adequate return. The point is not explained by the chronicler, but the explanation is to be found in the circumstances of the time. We have seen that the Valuation was not altered during the reign, and consequently the benefit of irrigation would accrue to the State, the State could hope to benefit only from the Reserved areas administered by the provincial Governors. If the Governors held on farming terms, that is to say, if they were liable only to remit fixed sums to the treasury, then the benefit of the canals would enure to them, and the King would in fact derive no income until the contracts were revived. The terms on which Governors held their provinces during this reign are not on record, but all incidental references to their position are consistent with their holding on farming terms, and I think this explanation is, at least, probable.

The reference of the water-question to jurists is not an isolated occurrence. In his general administration Firuz endeavoured to follow the rules of Islamic law, and in regard to finance in particular he insisted that no taxation should be received in the treasury which was not strictly lawful. In accordance with this principle, he abolished all miscellaneous cesses. Most of the examples given are of the nature of town-dues, but the inclusion of the grazing-tax seems to indicate that his orders were intended to relieve the villages as well as the cities from these imposts. This action had no permanent effect, for cesses of the same nature were abolished by Akbar, and again by Aurangzeb, but were still in existence at the opening of the British period; we may, however, infer that the orders were effective for the time, or, at the least, that Firuz tried to limit the burdens on the peasants to the regular revenue-Demand.

1 Lucknâ, as in Elliot, iii. 377; Or. 2039, f. 300r
7. SUMMARY

The death of Fīrūz marked the end of an epoch. In the course of a few years the kingdom broke up, and during the first half of the fifteenth century there was no longer a single predominant Moslem power in India. The Deccan and Khāndesh, Gujarāt and Mālwa, Bengal and Jaunpur, had become independent kingdoms; Lahore and Delhi were sometimes at variance; and for the time being there was no opportunity for the revenue administrator to make his mark on the institutions of the country as a whole. Before leaving the fourteenth century, it may be well to attempt a summary of the features of the agrarian system as it had developed under the Khalji and Tuglaq dynasties.

The King's share of the peasant's produce was fixed by Alāūddin at one-half; the figure during other reigns is not recorded, but was probably less, rather than more. As regards the method of its assessment, there were two currents of opinion, one of which favoured reliance on the area sown, while the other looked at the produce reaped. Individual kings chose one method or the other, and doubtless their orders were carried out in the country which they administered directly; but the larger area was controlled by Governors, sometimes holding in farm, or by Chiefs retaining their internal jurisdiction, and it would be rash to infer absolute uniformity of practice throughout the kingdom. The more probable view is that the different methods of assessment persisted side by side, gaining or losing ground in accordance with circumstances, but neither yielding entirely to the other; and the existence of Assignments must be regarded as a factor working strongly in favour of local diversity, because it involved the appearance of a large number of persons more intent on collecting their dues than on the maintenance of any particular method of assessment. The form in which the Demand was ordinarily made on the peasants is not recorded in so many words, but the fact that Alāūddin, for special reasons, ordered collections in some areas to be made in grain shows that cash payments were, at any rate, common, though in this matter, as in others, individual Chiefs and assignees may have followed their own inclinations.

It can be said with confidence that the records of the century disclose no trace of either the institution, or the conception, of private ownership of land in the sense which the term "ownership" bears to-day. All forms of tenure were liable to summary resumption at the King's pleasure, and, with a succession of despots of strong characters and varying views, the phrase "the King's pleasure" must be taken in its literal sense; even religious endowments, the nearest approach to what would now be called ownership, could be annulled by a stroke of the pen. The attitude of Fīrūz to Grants in general was, indeed, such that a right of ownership in them seemed to be developing, but this development was not destined to proceed through later periods. So far as the peasants were concerned, the idea prevalent in Hindu times, that cultivation was a duty to the State, and not a right of the individual, still persisted, and manifested itself on occasion in administrative practice. The position of the Chiefs was a matter of politics rather than of law. Ordinarily they could hope to retain their jurisdiction so long as they paid the stipulated revenue; when they defaulted or rebelled, the matter in dispute was settled by force or by diplomacy according to circumstances.

Regarding the internal organisation of the villages, the chronicles are silent, and, if we take them by themselves, it is almost impossible to point to a single definite phrase indicating the existence of anything which could be described as an organised village; chance references to the headman's perquisites, and to the records of the village-accountant, are practically all that has survived. The inference that such institutions did not exist would, however, be unjustifiable. We shall meet them at later periods, bearing indisputable marks of their great antiquity; it is incredible that they should have originated in the intervening centuries; and there are no grounds for questioning their continuity from a date antecedent, at any rate, to the Moslem conquest. It is better to interpret the silence of the chronicles, not as showing that organised villages did not
exist, but as indicating that at this period they did not present any serious administrative problem. The Moslem administration was concerned mainly with the problems presented by the Chiefs, who, within the area of their authority, stood between the peasants and the Government. The extent of country allowed to remain in their hands cannot be calculated, but it was certainly important. The policy adopted after the lapse of Alauddin’s regulations may be regarded as on the whole favourable to the Chiefs, and would make for stability so long as revenue was paid, and friendly relations were maintained with the local authorities; but obviously the individual Chief had no security as against a King sufficiently strong to oust him.

Whether the peasants enjoyed in practice the security of tenure which is nowadays regarded as a primary condition of successful agriculture, is a question on which the records of the period throw no direct light. The episode of the River Country shows that they could be driven to abscond, but it stands by itself, and there is no hint of anything which could justly be described as ejectment. It is clear, however, that there was fertile land to spare, waiting for men with the resources needed to bring it under the plough; and, in such circumstances, the question of ejectment is of little practical interest, because the essence of good management is to keep the peasants at work, and help them to extend their holdings. Nor could the connected question of limitation of rent arise in such circumstances, since, on the assumption that rent-paying tenants existed, they would be certain of a welcome elsewhere, and consequently would be in a position to resist unreasonable demands. The facts on record are too scanty for a precise description of the position of the peasantry as a whole, but what facts there are, are consistent with the existence of a fairly stable condition in normal times, the peasants of a village cultivating more or less land according to their needs and resources, and treating their tenants, if there were any, well enough to keep them at work. Given reasonably good weather, and a reasonable administration, a village would continue to function; failure of crops, or oppressive administration, might send the inhabitants elsewhere; later on, the village might be repopulated, either by its former inhabitants, or by new settlers, as the case might be; and another cycle in its history would then begin.

The view that productive land was waiting for men with adequate resources is fully established by the agricultural policy of those sovereigns whose pronouncements are on record; their primary object was extension of cultivation, with an immediate increment of revenue accruing from each field brought under the plough. Two methods of securing this object are indicated in addition to administrative pressure. One of these was the provision of State irrigation works, so that, in the picturesque terms borrowed from Islamic law, the “dead lands” might be brought to life; this expedient was, so far as the chronicles show, practised only by Firuz, and it does not again become prominent until the reign of Shahjahan. The other expedient was the grant of advances, which are mentioned particularly as the foundation of Muhammad Tughlaq’s attempts to restore the River Country, but in terms which imply that the practice was already familiar. It is safe to infer that capital was the principal requirement for the accepted policy of development; but the records show that, in this period, as in later times, State advances were apt to be embezzled by the officials employed in their distribution, and consequently the value of the expedient was in practice limited. For the second line of development, improvement in cropping, no practical measures are indicated in the chronicles; possibly some effect was produced by a combination of advances and administrative pressure, but we are not told of any actual progress in this direction. We have merely the praiseworthy aspirations of Kings or officials; the result is matter for conjecture.

\[1\] The question of tenants living in the village but not included in the Brotherhood is discussed in Chapter VI. I have found no evidence to show whether such tenants existed in the fourteenth century.
Appendix B.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES. 1

The words "Province" and "Governor" are used in Chapter II to represent two groups of terms, which I take to be either precisely synonymous, or else distinguished only by minor differences, of no practical importance for our present purpose. The first group is wilāyat, wâlî. The word wilāyat is used in the chronicles in various senses, which can almost always be recognised with certainty from the context: it may mean (1) a definite portion of the kingdom, that is, a province; (2) an indefinite portion of the kingdom, that is, a tract or region; (3) the kingdom as a whole; (4) a foreign country; (5) the home-country of a foreigner (in which last sense a derived form has recently become naturalised in English as "Blighty"). Wâlî occasionally means the ruler of a foreign country, but the ordinary sense is Governor of a province of the kingdom, that is to say, a localised officer serving directly under the orders of the King or his Ministers.

So far as I know, it has never been suggested that the Wâlî held anything but a bureaucratic position at this period, and the word Governor represents it precisely, as is the case throughout the history of Western Asia. The position is different in regard to the second group of terms, iqṭâ, muqti (more precisely, iqṭâ, muqti). Various translators in the nineteenth century rendered these terms by phrases appropriated from the feudal system of Europe; their practice has been followed by some recent writers, in whose pages we meet "fiefs," "feudal chiefs," and such entities; and the ordinary reader is forced to conclude that the organisation of the kingdom of Delhi was heterogeneous, with some provinces ruled by bureaucratic Governors (Wâlî), but most of the country held in portions (iqṭâ) by persons (Mûqti), whose position resembled that of the barons of contemporary Europe. It is necessary, therefore to examine the question whether these expressions represent the facts, or, in other words, whether the kingdom contained any element to which the nomenclature of the feudal system can properly be applied. The question is one of fact. The nature of the European feudal system is tolerably well known to students: the position of the Muqtis in the Delhi kingdom can be ascertained from the chronicles; and comparison will show whether the use of these archaic terms brings light or confusion into the agrarian history of Northern India.

The ordinary meaning of Iqtâ in Indo-Persian literature is an Assignment of revenue conditional on future service. The word appears in this sense frequently in the Mogul period as a synonym (along with tuyûl) of the more familiar jâr; and that it might carry the same sense in the thirteenth century is established, among several passages, by the story told by Barnî (60, 61) of the 2000 troopers who held Assignments, but evaded the services on which the Assignments were conditional. The villages held by these men are described as their iqṭâs, and the men themselves as iqṭâdârs. At this period, however, the word iqṭâ was used commonly in a more restricted sense, as in the phrase "the twenty iqṭâs," used by Barnî (50) to denote the bulk of the kingdom. It is obvious that "the twenty iqṭâs" points to something of a different order from the 2000 iqṭâs in the passage just quoted; and all through the chronicles, we find particular iqṭâs referred to as administrative charges, and not mere Assignments. The distinction between the two senses is marked most clearly by the use of the derivative nouns of possession; at this period, iqṭâdâr always means an assignee in the ordinary sense, but Muqti always means the holder of one of these charges. The question then is, was the Muqti's position feudal or bureaucratic?

To begin with, we may consider the origin of the nobility from whom the Muqtis were chosen. The earliest chronicler gives us the biographies 1 of all the chief nobles of his time, and we find from them that in the middle of the thirteenth century practically every man who is recorded as having held the position of Muqti began his career as a royal slave. Shamsuddin Itutmish, the second effective king of Delhi, who had himself been the property of the first king, bought foreign slaves in great numbers, employed them in his household, and promoted them, according to his judgment of their capacities, to the highest

---

1 The substance of this Appendix was printed in the Journal of Indian History, April, 1928.

1 T. Nâsîrî, book xxii., p. 229 ff. I follow the Cambridge History in using the form Itutmish for the name usually written Altamsh.
positions in his kingdom. The following are a few sample biographies condensed from this chronicle.

Tağhân Khân (p. 242) was purchased by Shamsuddin, and employed in succession as page, keeper of the pen-case, food-taster, master of the stable, Muqti of Bedānū, and Muqti of Lakhnau, where the insignia of royalty were eventually conferred on him.

Saifuddin Aibak (p. 259) was purchased by the king, and employed successively as keeper of the wardrobe, sword-bearer, Muqti of Samānā, Muqti of Baran, and finally Vakīl-i dar, apparently, at this period, the highest ceremonial post at Court.  

Tughril Khân (p. 261) also a slave, was successively deputy-taster, court-usher, master of the elephants, master of the stable, Muqti of Sirhind, and later of Lahore, Kanauj, and Awadh in succession; finally he received Lakhnau, where he assumed the title of king.

Ulugh Khân (p. 281), afterwards King Balban, is said to have belonged to a noble family in Turkistan, but was enslaved in circumstances which are not recorded. He was taken for sale to Baghdad, and thence to Gujarāt, from where a dealer brought him to Delhi, and sold him to the King. He was employed first as personal attendant, then as master of sport, then master of the stable, then Muqti of Hānsī, then Lord Chamberlain, and subsequently became, first, deputy-King of Delhi, and then King in his own right.

It seems to me to be quite impossible to think of such a nobility in terms of a feudal system with a king merely first among his territorial vassals: what we see is a royal household full of slaves, who could rise, by merit or favour, from servile duties to the charge of a province, or even of a kingdom—essentially a bureaucracy of the normal Asiatic type. The same conclusion follows from an examination of the Muqti’s actual position: it is nowhere, so far as I know, described in set terms, but the incidents recorded in the chronicles justify the following summary.

1. A Muqti had no territorial position of his own, and no claim to any particular region: he was appointed by the King,

1 Dāwāt-dār. The dictionary-meaning of “Secretary of State” does not seem to be appropriate here, for we are told that on one occasion Tağhân Khân was sharply punished for losing the King’s jewelled pen-case, and I take the phrase to denote the official responsible for the care of the king’s writing materials. In later times the Chief Dawatdar was a high officer.

2 The exact status of the Vakīl-i dar at this period is a rather complex question, but its discussion is not necessary for the present purpose.

3 The chronicer is so fulous in his praise of Balban, under whom he was writing, that this statement may be merely a piece of flattery, but there is nothing intrinsically improbable in it, having regard to the circumstances of the time. Writing in the next century, Ibn Batūta recorded (iii. 171) a much less complimentary tradition; it is unnecessary for me to enquire which account is true, because both are in agreement on the essential point, that Balban was brought to India as a slave.

who could remove him, or transfer him to another charge, at any time. The passages proving this statement are too numerous to quote; one cannot usually read ten pages or so without finding instances of this exercise of the royal authority. The biographies already summarised suffice to show that in the thirteenth century a Muqti had no necessary connection with any particular locality; he might be posted anywhere from Lahore to Lakhnau at the King’s discretion. Similarly, to take one example from the next century, Barni (427 ff.) tells how Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, on his accession, allotted the iqtā among his relatives and adherents, men who had no previous territorial connection with the places where they were posted, but who were apparently chosen for their administrative capacity. Such arrangements are the antithesis of anything which can properly be described as a feudal system.

2. The Muqti was essentially administrator of the charge to which he was posted. This fact will be obvious to any careful reader of the chronicles, and many examples could be given, but the two following are perhaps sufficient. Barni (p. 96) tells at some length how Balban placed his son Bughrā Khân on the throne of Bengal, and records the advice which he gave on the occasion. Knowing his son to be slack and lazy, he insisted specially on the need for active vigilance if a king was to keep his throne, and in this connection he drew a distinction between the position of King (iqtimādār) and that of Governor (wilāyatādār). A king’s mistakes were, he argued, apt to be irretrievable, and fatal to his family, while a Muqti who was negligent or inefficient in his governorship (wilāyatādār), though he was liable to fine or dismissal, need not fear for his life or his family, and could still hope to return to favour. The essential function of a Muqti was thus governorship, and he was liable to fine or dismissal if he failed in his duties.

As an instance from the next century, we may take the story told by Afif (414), how a noble named Ainulmulk, who was employed in the Revenue Ministry, quarrelled with the Minister, and was in consequence dismissed. The King then offered him the post of Muqti of Multān, saying, “Go to that province (iqtā), and occupy yourself in the duties (kharbā wa kardān) of that place.” Ainulmulk replied: “When I undertake the administration (‘umal) in the iqtā, and perform the duties of that place, it will be impossible for me to submit the accounts to the Revenue
Ministry; I will submit them to the Throne." On this, the King excluded the affairs of Multān from the Revenue Ministry, and Ainulmulk duly took up the appointment. The language of the passage shows the position of a Muqti as purely administrative.

3. It was the Muqti's duty to maintain a body of troops available at any time for the King's service. The status of these troops can best be seen from the orders which Ghiyāṣuddin Tughlaq issued to the nobles "to whom he gave iqtās and wilāyāts." "Do not," he said, "covet the smallest fraction of the pay of the troops. Whether you give or do not give, them a little of your own rests with you to decide; but if you expect a small portion of what is deducted in the name of the troops, then the title of noble ought not to be applied to you; and the noble who consumes any portion of the pay of servants had better consume dust." This passage makes it clear that the strength and pay of the Muqti's troops were fixed by the King, who provided the cost; the Muqti could, if he chose, increase their pay out of his own pocket, but that was the limit of his discretionary power in regard to them.

4. The Muqti had to collect the revenue due from his charge, and, after defraying sanctioned expenditure, such as the pay of the troops, to remit the surplus to the King's treasury at the capital. To take one instance (Barni, 220 ff.), when Alā'uddin Khalji (before his accession) was Muqti of Karra and Awadh, and was planning his incursion into the Deccan, he applied for a postponement of the demand for the surplus-revenue of his provinces, so that he could employ the money in raising additional troops; and promised that, when he returned, he would pay the postponed surplus-revenue, along with the booty, into the King's treasury.

5. The Muqti's financial transactions in regard to both receipts and expenditure were audited by the officials of the Revenue Ministry, and any balance found to be due from him was recovered by processes which, under some kings, were remarkably severe. The orders of Ghiyāṣuddin Tughlaq, quoted above, indicate that under his predecessors holders of iqtās and wilāyats had been greatly harassed in the course of these processes, and he directed that they were not to be treated like minor officials in this matter. Severity seems to have been re-established in the reign of his son Muhammad, for Barni insists (pp. 556, 574) on the contrast furnished by the wise and lenient administration of Firūz, under whom "no Wāli or Muqti" came to ruin from this cause. The processes of audit and recovery thus varied in point of severity, but they were throughout a normal feature of the administration.

This statement of the Muqti's position indicates on the face of it a purely bureaucratic organisation. We have officers posted to their charges by the King, and transferred, removed, or punished, at his pleasure, administering their charges under his orders, and subjected to the strict financial control of the Revenue Ministry. None of these features has any counterpart in the feudal system of Europe; and, as a student of European history to whom I showed the foregoing summary observed, the analogy is not with the feudal organisation, but with the bureaucracies which rulers like Henry II of England attempted to set up as an alternative to feudalism. The use of feudal terminology was presumably inspired by the fact that some of the nobles of the Delhi kingdom occasionally behaved like feudal barons, that is to say, they rebelled, or took sides in disputed successions to the throne; but, in Asia at least, bureaucrats can rebel as well as barons, and the analogy is much too slight and superficial to justify the importation of feudal terms and all the misleading ideas which they connote. The kingdom was not a mixture of bureaucracy with feudalism: its administration was bureaucratic throughout.

The question remains whether there were differences in status or functions between the Wāli and the Muqti. The chronicles mention a Wāli so rarely that it is impossible to prepare from them a statement similar to what has been offered for the Muqti. The constantly recurring double phrases, wāls and muqtis, or iqtās and wilāyats, show that the two institutions were, at any rate, of the same general nature, but they cannot be pressed so far as to exclude the possibility of differences in detail. A recent writer has stated that the difference was one of distance from the capital,

1 Barni, 431. For a full translation of the passage, see Appendix C.

---

1 Qanunoglu's Sher Shah, p. 349, 350. Barni, however, applies the term wālīyāt to provinces near Delhi such as Baran (p. 58), Amroha (p. 58), or Samāna (p. 48); while Mūllān (p. 58) and Marbat, or the Maratha country (p. 390) are described as iqtā. Some of the distant provinces had apparently a different status in parts of the fourteenth century, being under a Minister (Vāzin) instead of a Governor (Barni, 379, 397, 454, &c.), but they cannot be distinguished either as wāliyāts or as iqtās.
wilāyāts; but this view is not borne out by detailed analysis of the language of the chronicles. Looking at the words themselves, it is clear that Wālī is the correct Islamic term for a bureaucratic Governor; it was used in this sense by Abū Yūsuf (e.g. pp. 161, 163) in Baghdad, in the eighth century, and it is still familiar in the same sense in Turkey at the present day. I have not traced the terms Iqtā or Muqti in the early Islamic literature to which I have access through translations, but taking the sense of Assignment in which the former persisted in India, we may fairly infer that the application of iqtā to a province meant originally that the province was assigned, that is to say, that the Governor was under obligation to maintain a body of troops for the king’s service. It is possible then that, at some period, the distinction between Wālī and Muqti may have lain in the fact that the former had not to maintain troops, while the latter had; but, if this was the original difference, it had become obsolete, at any rate, by the time of Ghiyāsuddin Tughlaq, whose orders regarding the troops applied equally to both classes, to “the nobles to whom he gave iqtās and wilāyāts.”

The chronicles indicate no other possible distinction between Wālī and Muqti, and the fact that we occasionally read of the Muqti of a Wilāyat suggests that the terms were, at least practically, synonymous. The possibility is not excluded that there were minor differences in position, for instance, in regard to the accounts procedure of the Revenue Ministry, but these would not be significant from the point of view of agrarian administration. In my opinion, then, we are justified in rejecting absolutely the view that the kingdom of Delhi contained any element to which the terminology of the feudal system can properly be applied. Apart from the regions directly under the Revenue Ministry, the entire kingdom was divided into provinces administered by bureaucratic Governors; possibly there may have been differences in the relations between these Governors and the Ministry, but, so far as concerns the agrarian administration of a province, it is safe to treat Wālī and Muqti as practically, if not absolutely, synonymous.

It may be added that the latter term did not survive for long. In the Tārīkh-i Mubārakshāhī, written about the middle of the fifteenth century, the title is preserved in summaries of earlier chronicles, but in dealing with his own times the writer consistently uses the term Amīr. This term had already been used by Ibn Batūta a century earlier; he speaks of Indian Governors sometimes as Wālī, sometimes as Amīr, but never, so far as I can find, as Muqti; and possibly Amīr was already coming into popular use in his time. Nizāmuddīn Ahmad, writing under Akbar, usually substituted Hākim, as is apparent from a comparison of his language with that of Barni, whom he summarised; Fīrishta occasionally reproduced the word Muqti, but more commonly used Hākim, Sipahsālī, or some other modern equivalent; and Muqti was clearly an archaisms in the time of Akbar.

---

2 For instance, T. Nāṣir: Muqti of the Wilāyat of Awadh (246, 247); Muqti of the Wilāyat of Sarsuti (p. 256). As has been said above, Barnī (96) describes the duties of a Muqti by the term Wilāyatdārī.
Appendix C.

SOME FOURTEENTH-CENTURY PASSAGES

Some of the most important passages bearing on the agrarian system of the fourteenth century are difficult to follow, and extant translations, where any exist, are not always exact. The renderings of these passages offered below are meant to be strictly literal, any departure from the original being indicated by brackets; the technical expressions are discussed in the notes which follow the translations. The clauses are set out, punctuated, and numbered for convenience of reference; the texts are continuous, and as a rule are not punctuated.

I. ALĀŪDĪN’S REVENUE DECREE.

(Text, Barni, 287. Translations, Elliot, iii. 182, and J.A.S.B. vol. xxxix. p. 382, the last with Blochmann’s notes).

1. Sultan Alāūdīn demanded from learned men rules and regulations, so that the Hindu (1) should be ground down,

2. and property and possessions, which are the cause of disaffection and rebellion, should not remain in his house;

3. and in the payment of the Demand one rule should be made for all alike from Chief to sweeper (2);

4. and the Demand on the strong should not fall on the weak;

5. and so much should not remain to the Hindu (1) that they should ride on horseback, and carry weapons, and wear fine clothes, and enjoy themselves;

6. and to make two regulations (3) in pursuance of the aforesaid object, which is the chief of all objects of government.

7. The first [regulation],—that those who cultivate, whether small or great, shall cultivate according to the rule of measurement and the biswa-yield (4),

8. and shall pay half without any deduction;

9. and in this paying there should be no distinction between Chiefs and sweepers (2);

10. and not a jot should be left to the Chiefs by way of Chiefs’ perquisites (5).

(The text goes on to the second regulation, imposing a tax on grazing.)

APPENDIX C

Notes.

(1) “Hindu.” As explained in Chapter II, Barni uses this word in a narrow sense, to denote the classes above the ordinary peasants, so that in fact it is almost a synonym for Chiefs and headmen in this context.

(2) “From Chief to sweeper.” As kūṭha va balāh. Balāh is not a Persian word, and it is quite safe to follow Blochmann in identifying it with the common Hindi name for a low-caste menial, employed in the village as a general drudge. In the Upper Doth, which was Barni’s country, the balāh is almost always a sweeper by caste, and, since the word is obviously used to denote the lowest rank of the rural population, the rendering “sweeper” probably gives what was in the writer’s mind; there is no exact English equivalent.

The word transliterated provisionally as kūṭha has not been found elsewhere in the literature, and has to be interpreted from the parallel passages, which are fairly numerous in Barni. It appears indifferently as kūṭha and kūṭha, and these cannot be distinguished. The antithesis to balāh indicates that the kūṭha must be looked for among the rural aristocracy, and all the passages confirm this. Kūṭha is commonly coupled with the headman or muqaddam (e.g. 288, 291, 324, 349, 479, 554), while in two passages (288) he is linked with the chaudhīr, or pargana headman, as well as with the muqaddam; and his perquisites were on the same footing (430) as those of the muqaddam.

Barni does not use the word zamindār for a Chief (subject to the King) until nearly the end of his book (559), and it never appears in his discussions of agrarian policy; we find kūṭha wherever we should expect to find zamindār, and the only reasonable interpretation is that the latter word was coming into use during his lifetime, and gradually superseding kūṭha, so that the two are in fact synonymous. If we read zamindār in every passage where kūṭha occurs, we get perfectly good sense; if they are not synonyms, then we must hold that the important class of kūṭha, as known to Barni, had become absolutely extinct when the next chronicler wrote, and that the equally important class of zamindars had mysteriously come into existence, a hypothesis as unreasonable as unnecessary.

The identity of the word kūṭha is doubtful. Blochmann took it as the rare Arabic word, rendered by Stengass as “a limber twig; a corpulent man, yet handsome and active,” but did not indicate how such a word could be used to denote a Chief. The MSS. I have seen do not show the vowels, and it is possible that the pronunciation was different, and that we are dealing with a word formed independently in India; but, whatever be the origin of the word, its meaning in Barni is clearly that of Chief. Blochmann arrived at this conclusion at the correct result, that the phrase indicates the extremes of rural society, but the rendering “landowners and tenants” which he endorsed involves both a logical non-sequitur and an historical anachronism.

The suggestion has been made that the word under discussion is really Indian in origin, being identical with the Marāṭhī word khōt, which is familiar in the Konkān; but the fact that Barni wrote the word with two Arabic letters (kh and t) makes its derivation from any sanskritic language highly improbable. The word khōt has not been traced further back than

1 For the balāh’s position, see Rev. Sel., ii. 97.
the sixteenth century kingdom of Bijapur, and a possible explanation of it is that the Arabic khát passed into the Deccan at the time of Alauddin’s conquest, and became naturalised there as khot. That there were khots in Gujarát also, before the Mogul conquest, appears from a document published by Professor Hodvala (Studies in Parsi History, p. 204), but its position is not explained; it is possible that the Arabic word, which quickly became obsolete in the North, survived in Gujarát, as in the Konkân, in an Indianised form, but more documentary evidence is necessary on this point.

(3) This clause is ungrammatical as it stands. It would be easy to read àwârdand for àwârdan, putting a full stop at the end of clause 5. The translation would then be: "And two regulations were made in pursuance of the aforesaid object," which makes grammar and sense. Barní’s grammar, however, is not immaculate, and the text may show what he actually said.

(4) "The rule of Measurement and the biswa-yield," hyaem-i masâhât us wâfâ-i biswâ. Barní mentions two "hukms" or rules for assessment, Masâhât and Häsl, i.e. "measurement" and "produce"; he does not describe the methods, but the passage which follows will make it clear that Masâhât involved allowances for crop-failure, which were not required in Hásl. Unless we take these two terms to denote methods which have become entirely forgotten, we must identify them with the two which I have called Measurement and Sharing, which, as we have seen, were equally familiar to Hindus and Moslems at this period, which reappear, though with different names, in the sixteenth century, and which persisted into the nineteenth. The word Masâhât gives place to jârb or paimâsh in the official records of the Mogul period, but it seems to have survived in local use, for as late as 1832 the "native measuring staff" was known as the "masahût establishment" (Rev. Sel., ii. 378). Hásl can be read quite naturally as denoting the process of Sharing the produce, and, so far as I can see, it can carry no other suggestion.

The phrase "wâfâ-i biswâ" does not occur except in Barní, and can be read here merely as a repetition or duplication of what precedes it, "reliance on the unit of area," "biswa" denoting the smaller unit, 1/20th of the bigha. Passages in the next two clauses, however, indicate that the word wâfâ had acquired the technical meaning of "yield of crops," and this is probably the meaning here; "biswa-yield" would then indicate the standard output per unit of area, which was a necessary datum for the method of Measurement. The decisive passage is in T. Mubârakshâhí (Or. 5338, f. 34r.), where, in a description of the oppression in the River Country under Muhammad Tughlãq, we read kisht-hâ mi-paimând wa wâfâ-hâ farmâni mi-bâstând; "they used to measure the fields and fix the yields by ordinance." Here it does not seem possible to take wâfâ-hâ in any other sense. The same sense is required in Aflî, 180, where the word occurs twice; and taking these examples into account, it is permissible to infer that Barní also was familiar with this technical use of the word. I have not found this use in the Mogul period, and presumably it became obsolete.

APPENDIX C

(5) "Chiefs’ perquisites": hâyâq-i khotâns. It can be inferred from the passage which follows that these perquisites consisted of exemption from revenue of a proportion of land, allowed to the Chiefs in return for the services they rendered; Ghiyâsuddin considered that they should be satisfied with this allowance, so its amount must have been substantial, but there is no record of the extent of land allowed. The same passage shows that the Chiefs were suspected of levying revenue for themselves from the peasants: this is probably the implication of clause 4, that the peasants were in fact paying revenue which ought to fall on the Chiefs or headmen.

II. GHIYÂSUDDIN’S AGRARIAN POLICY.

(Text, Barní, 429, checked by Or. 2039. Translation, J.A.S.B., vol. xi, p. 229. The translation in Elliot, iii. 230, is very incomplete.)

I applied to Mr. R. Paget Dewhurst for help with this exceedingly crabbed passage, and he generously furnished me with the following translation. The notes marked [D] are also his; the others are mine.

1. He fixed the revenue of the territories of the kingdom equitably according to the “rule of the produce” (1)

2. and relieved the peasants of the territories and the kingdom from innovations and apportionments based on crop-failure (2)

3. and with regard to the provinces and country of the kingdom he did not listen to the tales of spies and the speeches of enhancement-mongers (3) and the bids (literally, acceptances) of revenue-farmers.

4. He also ordered that spies and enhancement-mongers and revenue-farmers and land-wreckers should not be allowed to hang (literally, wander) round the office of the Ministry,

5. and he instructed the office of the Ministry not to make an increase of more than one-tenth or one-eleventh on the provinces and country on surmise and guess-work or on the reports of spies and the representations of enhancement-mongers,

6. and that efforts should be made that cultivation should increase every year and the revenue be enhanced very gradually.

7. and not in such a way that the country should be ruined all at once by heavy pressure and the path of increase closed.

8. Sultan Tughlak Shâh frequently remarked that the revenue should be taken from the country in such a way that the peasants of the country should extend cultivation,

9. and the established cultivation become settled, and every year a small increase should take place.
10. He used to say that you ought not to take all at once so much that neither the established cultivation should be maintained nor any extension be made in the future.

11. When kingdoms are obviously ruined (literally, are ruined and show themselves ruined) it is due to the oppressiveness of the revenue and the excessive royal demand,

12. and ruin proceeds from destructive Muqtis and officials.

13. Also with regard to the exaction of revenue from the peasants Sultān Tughlaq Shāh used to give instructions to all the Muqtis and governors of the territories of the kingdom,

14. that the Hindu should be kept in such a condition that he should not become blinded and rebellious and refractory from excessive affluence,

15. and that he should not be compelled by poverty and destitution to abandon cultivation and tillage.

16. The observing of the standards and principles mentioned in collecting the revenue can be carried out by typically eminent statesmen and experts,

17. and the essence of the art of statesmanship in regard to Hindus(4) is the fulfilment of the aforesaid instruction.

18. Further in regard to the collection of revenue it is related of Sultān Ghiyāsuddin Tughlaq Shāh, who was a very experienced, far-sighted, and prudent sovereign,

19. that he urged on the Muqtis and governors investigation and consistency in the collection of revenue,

20. so that Chiefs and headmen should not impose a separate assessment on the peasants apart from the king’s revenue;

21. and if their own cultivation and pasture be not brought under assessment, perhaps their perquisites as Chiefs and headmen, on the supposition that they pay nothing on this, may suffice them and they may make no additional demand.

22. It cannot be denied that abundant responsibilities rest on the neck of Chiefs and headmen, so that if they too contribute a share in the same way as the peasants, the advantage of being Chief or headman would disappear.

23. And as for those among the amirs and Malik (5) whom Sultān Ghiyāsuddin advanced, and to whom he gave iqṭās and provinces,

24. he used not to hold it permissible that they should be brought before the Ministry just like (ordinary) officials(6) and that the revenue should be demanded from them as from officials with rudeness and severity;

25. but he used to give instructions to them saying,

26. “If you wish to be exempt from the burden of being summoned before the office of the Ministry and that you should not be exposed to pressure and discourtesy,

27. and that your credit as an amir or Malik should not be changed to humiliation and discredit,

28. make slender demands on your iqṭās,

29. and reserve out of that slender demand something for your own agents,

30. and do not covet the smallest fraction of the pay of the troops.

31. Whether you give or do not give a little of your own to the troops rests with you to decide.

32. But if you expect a small portion of what is deducted in the name of the troops,

33. then the name of amir and Malik ought not to be employed by the tongue in respect of you,

34. and the amir who devours a portion of the pay of servants had better consume dust.

35. But if Malik and amirs expect from their own country and provinces a half-tenth or half-eleventh and the one-tenth or one-fifteenth of the revenue,

36. and take the perquisites of iqṭās-holding and governors,

37. no occasion has arisen to forbid this to them, and to demand it back and to exact it by pressure on the amirs would be altogether deplorable.

38. Similarly if the agents and deputies(7) of the country and provinces should appropriate a half or one per cent. in addition to their salary,

39. they ought not to be disgraced for this amount, and it ought not to be recovered from them by beating and torture and imprisonment and fetters.

40. But if they appropriate considerable sums(8) and write off deductions from the revenue demand, and carry off large sums by way of mutual sharing from the provinces and country,

41. such treacherous persons and thieves should be given disgrace and humiliation with beating and torture and imprisonment and fetters, and what they have abstracted should be taken from them together with their family stock.”
III. Fīrūz Shāh’s Second Regulation.

(Text, Barni, 574; no published translation has come to my notice. The chapter containing this Regulation, along with several others, is highly eulogistic and rhetorical, and too great weight must not be given to all the assertions which it contains, but there is no reason to distrust the account of the general policy adopted by Fīrūz).

1. Second regulation. It was ordered that the revenue-Demand and the poll-tax(1) shall be collected according to the “rule of the produce”;
2. and “apportionments,” and ”increase of demands,” and “crop-failures,” and ”large demands based on surmise,” were entirely removed from among the peasants(2);
3. and revenue-farmers and land-wreckers and enhancement-mongers(3) were not allowed to infest the provinces and the kingdom,
4. And a reduction was made in the māhsūl-i mu’malatī(4), so that the peasants may pay willingly without difficulty or severity;
5. and no roughness or violence was used towards the cultivators, who are the keepers of the treasury(5) of Moslems.

Notes.

(1) The reference to the poll-tax, jiziyā, is puzzling. According to Affī (383), this tax in Delhi was a fixed sum per head payable in cash.

It is possible that, in the case of peasants, it may have been assessed along with the revenue, and varied with it; but it is equally possible that the phrase is loose, “revenue and poll-tax” being used to describe the liabilities of non-Moslem subjects in general terms.

(2) This clause must be read as enumerating the familiar exactions on the peasants. Apportionments, gisāt, and crop-failures, nabādāh, occur in the preceding passage. Mu’laddhā is there taken as exactions of considerable amount, and the addition here of āsāsānī must mean that these exactions were arbitrary, “based on surmise.”

(3) This clause also is an echo of part of the previous passage, referring to the various pests that appeared naturally in connection with the revenue-assessment.

(4) Māhsūl-i mu’malatī. I have not found any parallel passage to indicate the meaning of this phrase. From the context, it appears to denote some impost on the peasants, different from the kharāj or revenue, but its nature is a matter for conjecture.

(5) Treasury, bāt-ul-māl. This is a precise phrase of Islamic law, denoting the receptacle for kharāj and other sources of income which were in theory for the benefit of Moslems in general, though by this time in India they were in fact part of the revenue of the State.)
IV. Firūz Shāh’s Assessment.

(Text, Afif, 94. I have found no translation; only one sentence is given in Elliot, iii. 288.)

1. The king . . . settled the Demand(1) of the kingdom afresh. And for the settlement of that Demand Khwāja Hisāmuddin Junīd was appointed.

2. The excellent Khwāja, having spent six years in the kingdom,

3. [and] having settled the Demand according to the “rule of inspection,”(2)

4. determined the “aggregate”(3) of the kingdom at 675 lakhs of tankas in accordance with the principle of sovereignty.

5. During forty years during the reign of Firūz Shāh the “aggregate” of Delhi was the same.

Notes.

(1) “Demand,” mahzul. Afif occasionally uses this word in the sense of revenue Demand, that is, as a synonym for kharāj, never, so far as I can find, in the other sense of “produce of the soil,” which occurs in some later writers.

(2) “Rule of inspection,” hulmi husbān, occurs, so far as I know, nowhere else in the literature. Barnl tells us in the preceding passage that Firūz, at his accession, adopted the “rule of the produce.” Afif’s account refers to the same period, for this appointment was made very soon after the King’s first arrival at Delhi; either then one of the writers made a mistake, or the two expressions mean the same thing. A mistake is improbable, for old bureaucrats like the writers do not misuse technical terms; on the other hand, Afif’s vocabulary differs from that of Barnl in several cases, such as “khūt” or “pargana,” so that verbal divergence need not suggest error. The general idea conveyed by husbān is “witnessing,” “observing”; and in order to reconcile the two statements, all that is necessary is to take this word as denoting Sharing-by-estimation, the reference being to the persons who observe or inspect the condition of the growing crop in order to estimate the yield. We may say then that, while Barnl tells us that Sharing was prescribed, Afif tells us that it was Sharing by Estimation, not actual Division. On this interpretation the disappearance of the term husbān can be readily understood, because the official literature of the Mogul period employs the Hindi name kahkūt to denote the process in question.

The revenue Demand under this system varied from season to season with the area sown and the produce reaped, so that the phrase “to settle,” bastan, must not be read in the sense of fixing beforehand the number of tankas to be paid; I take the meaning to be that the arrangements for assessment were reorganised after the confusion which had developed during the previous reign.

(3) “Aggregate,” jama, has in the later literature two well-defined senses, as has been explained in Appendix A. Used for jama-i māl, it denotes the aggregate revenue-Demand; used for jama-i wilaṭ (or parganāt), it means the Valuation on the basis of which assignements were allocated. In this passage it cannot bear the former sense, because the determination of the aggregate is stated as a separate process from the settlement of the revenue-Demand, while a Demand varying with the season is obviously incompatible with a Demand remaining unchanged for forty years. In the text we have jama-i mamlakat, which may fairly be read as a variant of the later phrase jama-i wilaṭ, and Valuation makes perfectly good sense. We have seen in Ch. II that a Valuation existed in the previous reign, and it is in fact a necessary feature of any system of Assignments; we have seen also that the existing Valuation had diverged widely from the facts. I read this passage as telling us that the Khwāja brought the assessment-system into order, and, on the basis of six years’ experience, framed a new Valuation, which remained in use throughout the reign.)