Fighting for a Living

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From the mamluks to the *mansabdars*  

A social history of military service in South Asia, c. 1500 to c. 1650

*Kaushik Roy*

**Introduction**

By the first decade of the sixteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526), the dominant power in north India, was breaking up. Several autonomous states emerged to challenge the political supremacy of the Delhi Sultanate in the Ganga-Jamuna doab (the fertile tract of land between the rivers Ganga and Jamuna in north India). Deccan (the region between the rivers Godavari and Krishna) and south India had become independent of the Delhi Sultanate's control earlier during the mid-fourteenth century. The invasion of India by the Turkish warlord Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur in 1526 resulted in the replacement of the Lodi dynasty ruling the Delhi Sultanate with the Mogul Empire. The Moguls (Mughals; the nineteenth-century British officials and historians called them Moghuls) referred to themselves as Chagatai Turks or Timurids even though their family links with the Chagatai branch of the Chingizids were weak. The Moguls claimed that from their father's side they descended from *Amir* Timur and from their mother's side from the Chagatai Mongol branch. The newly born Mogul Empire was overthrown in 1540 by the Afghan warlord from east India named Sher Shah Suri. Babur's son Humayun staged a comeback in 1555.

The “real” founder of the Mogul Empire was indeed Akbar (*Padshah*, i.e. emperor, from 1556 to 1605). Akbar put an end to the political chaos in north India by subduing the Afghans and the Rajputs. Further, he reorganized the administration. By the time of Akbar's death in 1605, the Mogul Empire had established a stable administrative machinery in north and central India and was in the process of moving slowly into Deccan. Until the fourteenth century, the dominant mode of military recruitment in India was the mamluk system. The mamluks were slave soldiers of the Muslim world. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, due to Akbari reorganization, a sort of quasi-mercenary-cum-quasi-professional military employment

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1 I am indebted to Suhrita and Prof. Erik-Jan Zürcher for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.
known as the mansabdari system became dominant. The beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed the gradual expansion of Mogul power into Deccan under Akbar’s son and grandson, named Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658) respectively. They continued to operate within the administrative fabric established by their illustrious predecessor. By the mid-seventeenth century, two contradictory processes were unfolding in the subcontinent. While the Mogul Empire under the dynamic leadership of Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was poised for expansion, simultaneously the administrative institutions established by Akbar were slowly becoming dysfunctional. This was partly because the Mogul economy was in the grip of what is known as the “agrarian crisis” and partly due to the new forms of warfare introduced by the Marathas and the Persians.

Research design

The focus in this chapter is on the combatants of the Mogul army. I will show how the mamluk system became dominant and explain the reasons which led to its demise in South Asia. The various factors that resulted in the transition to the mansabdari system and the existence of other mini-systems will be laid out. Since the Mogul army was not frozen in time but evolved over two centuries, the transition to different forms of military labour is portrayed chronologically. This chapter combines original research with a synthesis of the existing materials and has a comparative focus. I will compare the mamluk and mansabdari systems alongside other forms of military profession which were in vogue in the subcontinent between 1500 and 1650.

2 The agrarian crisis was an amalgam of structural and managerial factors. Long-term agricultural decline, price rises, etc. resulted in a decrease in income from jagirs (agricultural land assigned to the Mogul officials) from the late seventeenth century onwards. The deficit budget of the Mogul central government – due to continuous warfare in Deccan against the Marathas as well as to the rising cost of warfare – forced Aurangzeb to requisition jagirs from the Mogul nobles (officials), which were then transferred into the khalisa (land under direct crown management). In addition, newly conquered land was not assigned as jagirs among the nobility but put under khalisa. Aurangzeb hoped, through this measure, that the central government would be able to exercise greater financial control over the agrarian economy. A lack of jagirs for assignment to the Mogul nobles caused be-jagiri or a paibaqi crisis among the Mogul nobility. This scenario resulted in increasing factional fighting among the nobility trying to acquire the available jagirs in the Mogul Empire. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the powerful nobles, in a bid to get hold of the jagirs, became independent of the Mogul centre and carved out semi-autonomous principalities for themselves and their followers. In the long run this resulted in the dismemberment of the Mogul Empire. See Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India; and Chandra, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court.
This is necessary because both the mamluk and the mansabdari systems emerged in interaction with various local/regional forms of military labour service in medieval South Asia. Again the timeline is not rigid because, to explain the rise and fall of the various forms of military recruitment at different times, we have to consider the years both before 1500 and after 1650. In order to assess the uniqueness or lack thereof as regards the social history of South Asian military labourers, some comparisons will be made with the military systems that were operational in other parts of the world. Let us now explore the existing modern works on the subject.

**Historiography of military labour history of medieval South Asia**

Military history is neglected in the South Asian academic field due to the dominance of Marxism and, more recently, post-modernism. We have a few books on the military history of medieval India. The earliest modern work on the Mogul army is by the British historian of colonial India, William Irvine. He argues that Indian “racial inferiority” resulted in continuous treachery, infighting, and backbiting, and that this racial/cultural trait prevented the Moguls from constructing a bureaucratic professional standing army capable of waging decisive battles and sieges. The latest work on the Mogul army by a Dutch historian, Jos Gommans, asserts that the Mogul army was not geared for decisive confrontations aimed at destroying the enemy. Rather, the Mogul grand strategy was to absorb potential enemies within the loose structure of the Mogul Empire. The Mogul army functioned as an instrument to frighten, coerce, and deter enemies.

We have a crop of biographies of medieval warlords, rulers, and nobles, which deal with their administrative and military activities. The decline of the Delhi Sultanate started under Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq. R.C. Jauhri’s biography of Firoz is still useful. The best biography of Babur for political and military affairs remains that by the British historian Stanley Lane-Poole, who wrote in the last year of the nineteenth century. The most recent biography of Babur by Stephen F. Dale concentrates mostly on political culture. The standard biography of Akbar remains the one written by Vincent Smith,

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5 Jauhri, *Firoz Tughluq.*
6 Lane-Poole, *The Emperor Babar.*
a British civil servant in colonial India.\textsuperscript{8} The best biographer of Aurangzeb, the last great Mogul, is Jadunath Sarkar.\textsuperscript{9} On Sher Shah Suri, the founder of the short-lived Afghan Suri Sultanate, there are two good biographies.\textsuperscript{10} As regards the biographies of the warlords, one example is Radhey Shyam's biography of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate's slave-turned-warlord, Malik Ambar, who later fought against the Moguls.\textsuperscript{11} We have a good biography of Mir Jumla, the famous noble of Aurangzeb.\textsuperscript{12} Most of these biographies follow the “history-from-the-top-down” approach and give detailed narrative accounts of the “great men”. However, some data regarding the social aspects of military employments can be gathered from these biographies.

The principal debate in the field is about weak states and flower/ritual warfare\textsuperscript{13} versus strong states, standing armies, and decisive battles. Most modern non-Indian scholars (Dirk Kolff, Gommans, Andre Wink, Douglas Streusand, Burton Stein, Lorne Adamson, Stephen Peter Rosen, etc.) argue that the Mogul state was a shadowy structure. The imperial fabric comprised innumerable semi-autonomous principalities held together by the personality of the emperor and the pomp and splendour of the Mogul durbar (court). The emperor did not enjoy a monopoly of violence in the public sphere. The Moguls lacked a drilled and disciplined standing army for crushing opponents on the battlefields. Treachery, diplomacy, bribery, and a show of force resulted in the absorption and assimilation of enemies.\textsuperscript{14} What Irvine has categorized as Indian racial inferiority had been transformed as the unique culture of the “Orientals” in the paradigm of these modern scholars.

In contrast, John F. Richards\textsuperscript{15} and many of the Indian Muslim historians who are influenced by Marxism and belong to a group which can be labelled the Aligarh School, assert that the Mogul Empire was a centralized agrarian

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8} Smith, Akbar.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Sarkar wrote a five-volume biography of Aurangzeb, and an abridged version in one volume was later published (\textit{A Short History of Aurangzeb}).
\item \textsuperscript{10} Aquil, Sufism, Culture, and Politics; Matta, Sher Shah Suri.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Shyam, Life and Times of Malik Ambar.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Sarkar, The Life of Mir Jumla.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Flower/ritual warfare means indecisive skirmishing, pillaging, and plundering, etc. The objective of such warfare is not destruction of the enemy but to cause harm so that the defeated enemy, with its militia, could be co-opted into the victor's camp.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Richards, \textit{The Mughal Empire}, p. xv.
\end{itemize}
bureaucratic polity. The Aligarh School turns the limelight on the agrarian economy; focusing on the revenue documents, they argue that the Moguls’ ability to claim about 50 per cent of the gross produce from the land proves that they had a strong presence at the regional/local level. The sucking of economic surplus from the countryside was aided by the military supremacy of the Moguls, exemplified by the use of cavalry and gunpowder weapons.16 However, M. Athar Ali notes that, unlike the Tudor state, the Mogul state lacked the capability and the intention to legislate.17 Probably the nature of the Mogul state and Mogul warfare lies somewhere in between the two extreme viewpoints discussed above. Now, let us review the primary sources which are our raw materials for piecing together the social history of the various forms of military employment in Mogul South Asia.

Review of the primary sources

Most of the sources generated by the Mogul chroniclers are in Persian. Very few people in the world can read Persian calligraphy of the medieval manuscripts which are scattered in the various museums and libraries of the world. Luckily most of these works have been translated into English. Various regional courts in the Mogul Empire generated chronicles and poems in vernacular languages such as Hindi, Rajasthani, Marathi (modi script), Punjabi (Gurmukhi script), and Bengali (charjapada). These scripts vary from the present-day scripts, and not all the vernacular sources have been translated. For reconstructing the cultural ethos of the Rajputs, who fought the Islamic armies and at times also joined them, Prithvirajvijayamahakavya is of some help. This poem, composed by Jayanak, comprises 1,067 slokas (stanzas).18 Somadeva Bhatta’s collection of poems, known as Kathasaritsagara,19 composed around 500 CE, offers a glimpse of the warrior ethos of the Hindu mercenaries. In this regard, the various Sanskrit niti sastras (legal literature such as Arthasastra, Nitiprakasika, Sukraniti) are of some use.

One of the principal sources for our purposes is the memoir of the first Mogul emperor, Babur. Babur wrote his autobiography in Turkish with the title Tuzuk-i-Baburi, which was translated into Persian as Babur-Nama. A.S.

16 Habib, Akbar and His India; Ali, Mughal India; Hasan, Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India.
17 Ali, “Political Structures of the Islamic Orient in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, p. 95.
18 Subsequent translations are by the author.
19 All translations are by the author.
Beveridge translated it into English in two volumes. While the first volume deals with Babur’s adventures in Central Asia, the second volume narrates Babur’s activities in Hindustan (north India). Babur’s great-grandson Jahan-gir (r. 1605-1628) also wrote an autobiography. An intimate biographical account of Babur’s son Humayun is available in a narrative written by the latter’s domestic attendant, Jouher. The Maathir-ul-Umara, a collective biography of 730 Mogul nobles by Nawab Samsam-ud-Daulah Shah Nawaz Khan and written between 1768 and 1780, is an important source. This work has been translated by H. Beveridge into English into two volumes. Shah Nawaz Khan’s objective is to give “an account, in alphabetical order, of the lives of the great amirs and exalted nobles – some of whom had, at the time of their glory, by dint of fortune and good conduct, been the authors of great deeds […] while others had, by the wind of their arrogance and presumption, heaped up final ruin for themselves.” In Akbar’s reign, the highest rank to which an amir (noble) could aspire was that of 5,000 sawars, meaning that he was supposed to maintain 5,000 cavalry. However, a few people attained the rank of 7,000 sawars. These higher ranks were held mostly by the royal princes. Under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, mansabdars of 3,000 possessed their own drums and flags. A noble holding the rank of 500 was of considerable importance. Hence, Shah Nawaz Khan writes, he has included the biographies of nobles who held the mansab of the rank of 500 and upwards. For details of Akbar’s reign, the best source is Akbar-Nama by Akbar’s courtier Abul Fazl. Abul Fazl’s Ain-i-Akbari is a statistical and ethnographic study of the Mogul Empire. For Shah Jahan’s reign, we have Inayat Khan’s Shah Jahan Nama. For abridged translations of the various medieval Persian works dealing with India, the eight volumes of H.M. Elliot and John Dawson’s History of India remain useful.

The problem with the Persian sources is that they were written by the elites for the elites, i.e. mostly the relatives of mansabdars for the mansab-
The court chroniclers and the nobles who wrote while enjoying the patronage of the rulers concentrated mostly on the doings of the *durbar* and not on those lower placed. Hence, we can recreate the picture about the officer corps (especially the senior ranks) of the Mogul army but we know very little about the rank and file. And the common soldiers have left us with no written materials. Let us now look at the forms of military employment which were in vogue in the subcontinent when the Moguls arrived.

**The rise and fall of the mamluk system, c. 1200-1399**

The Delhi Sultanate depended on irregular troops (mercenaries and retainers of the tributary chieftains) and regular soldiers (*ghulams*, i.e., slaves plus soldiers raised and maintained by the *iqtadars*). The irregular troops were assembled during campaigns and other emergencies (civil wars, invasion by foreign powers, etc.) and the regular troops were maintained throughout the year as a sort of standing army.

The early rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, such as Muhammad Ghori, Qutub-ud-din Aibak and Ilutmish (or Altamash, sultan from 1211 to 1236), were influenced by the *ghulam*/mamluk system which was prevalent in the Middle East. For inspiration and a model to follow, these three sultans looked at the political and military system prevalent in the Caliphate and in the other Muslim polities of the Middle East. The mamluk institution first came into existence during the first half of the ninth century, under the Abbasid Caliphate. Peter Jackson writes that by the eleventh century Turkish slave regiments were prevalent in the polities of Transoxiana, Turkestan, Persia (Iran), and the Near East. The shock troops and the core of the Delhi Sultanate’s army comprised mounted Turkish ghulams. Many of the sultans, such as Aibak, Ilutmish, Balban (r. 1266-1287), and so forth, started their careers as *ghulams*. Firoz Shah Tughluq (r. 1351-1388) maintained 180,000 slaves, of whom 40,000 served in the army. Some slaves

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29 Abul Fazl himself was a *mansabdar* holding the rank of 4,000: *The History of India*, Elliot and Dawson, VI, *Akbar-Nama* of Abul Fazl, p. 2.
30 An *iqtadar* was the holder of an *iqta* (a piece of land). The revenue of the *iqta* went to support the cavalry force of the *iqtadar*.
32 Jackson, "Turkish Slaves on Islam's Indian Frontier", pp. 64-65.
specialized in archery, others in swordsmanship, and so on. The slaves were occasionally paid in cash, but usually through *jagirs*.33

Next in importance were the contingents of the *iqtadars*. The nobles were granted land, i.e., *iqtas* (the equivalent of *jagirs*), for maintaining cavalry troopers. The *iqtadar* (holder of *iqtas*) paid the soldiers under their command out of the revenues collected from their *iqtas*.34 Initially, the *iqtas* were granted not to the Hindu chieftains but to the Turkish nobles. The *iqtadars* and their soldiers (who were their kinsmen)35 joined military service for material gain. However, it would be wrong to categorize them as mercenaries, because their military employment depended on the political fortunes of the sultan. If a particular sultan was overthrown, his favourite *iqtadars* were replaced by nobles who supported the cause of the victor. The *iqtadari* system was not professional because the *iqtas* were given for life; when the regular soldiers grew old, they remained in the ranks, and after their death their male relations inherited their posts.36 The *iqta* system was a technique of rewarding the free-born Turkish nobles who constituted the support base of the Delhi sultans. In the absence of a bureaucracy, the nobles were installed as *iqtadars* directly into the countryside, where their function was to collect any agricultural surplus. With the passage of time, especially under the Khaljis and the Lodis, *iqtas* were granted to the non-Turkish Muslims for broadening the support base of the Delhi Sultanate. To an extent, the *iqtas* were somewhat equivalent to *timars* and the *iqtadari* cavaliers were somewhat similar to timariots (*sipahis*) of the Ottoman Army.37

However, shifts in the international balance of power, as well as the enormous demographic resources of the subcontinent, encouraged the Delhi Sultanate to change the ethnic composition of the *ghulams* and to depend on the free-floating armed mercenaries of Hindustan. Initially, the Delhi Sultanate relied on Turkish slaves to fill the *ghulam* units. The Mongol invasions of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran resulted in the Delhi Sultanate being completely cut off from the manpower supplies of the extra-Indian Islamic world. The cessation of the flow of Turkish and Afghan manpower forced the Delhi sultans to enslave Hindu boys and convert them to Islam; they were then inducted into the ranks of *ghulams*. This process was somewhat similar to the Ottoman practice of capturing young Christian boys in the Balkans

34 Jauhri, *Firoz Tughluq*, pp. 86, 118.
36 Jauhri, *Firoz Tughluq*, p. 120.
who were, after their forcible conversion into Islam, inducted as janissaries. The Delhi Sultanate was faced simultaneously with Mongol challenges in Sind and Punjab; within South Asia, the Rajput chieftains started to nibble away at the internal frontiers of the Sultanate. One way to maintain and expand the size of the army was to hire indigenous mercenaries as well as to utilize the forces of the defeated chiefs. The free-floating mercenaries had their own horses, armour, and equipment. They were paid in cash and they also had a right to the loot taken from the defeated enemies. Unlike the ghulams and the iqtadari soldiers, the mercenaries were employed either for a single season only or during emergencies.

In 1353, when Firoz Tughluq marched from Delhi towards Bengal with 70,000 soldiers, many Hindu chieftains who had stopped paying tribute joined him with their war bands. These chieftains with their warriors (who belonged to the same religion and mobilized through the territorial clan network) were forced to join the sultanate's expeditionary armies and were not remunerated in any way. It was a sort of begari (forced unpaid labour) and could be categorized as a case of an ethnic tributary form of military employment.

During the 1365 Thatta (Sind) campaign, Firoz, as well as depending on the ghulams and iqtadari troops, also recruited the free-floating mercenaries. They were paid 40 per cent of their salaries in advance. After Firoz was repulsed in Sind, he prepared another army for a second campaign against Sind during 1366-1367. In addition to mobilizing the soldiers of the iqtadars, Firoz hired mercenaries. The mercenaries were paid three-fifths of their salaries in advance so that they could equip themselves. The personnel of the standing army during this campaign also received payment in cash. This was possible as there were various types of gold and silver coins in circulation in Firoz’s time. In fact, the whole revenue of Gujarat, which amounted to 20 million tankas (coins) was used in paying the army. To prevent desertion of the troops during the second Sind campaign, sentinels were appointed. Deserters were disgraced publicly if caught. Timur’s invasion of India during 1398-1399 with 84,000 cavalry dealt a deathblow to the Delhi Sultanate. Further, it encouraged many other Central Asian adventurers such as Babur to invade the weakening Delhi Sultanate.

38 Jackson, “The Mongols and the Delhi Sultanate in the Reign of Muhammad Tughluq”.
39 Habibullah, The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India.
40 Jauhri, Firoz Tughluq, pp. 46-47.
41 Ibid., pp. 81, 84-85, 118, 131.
42 The Akbar-Nama, 1, p. 244.
The armies of the early Moguls and their opponents, 1494-1556

In 1494, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur inherited the Kingdom of Ferghana from his father Omar Shaikh, son of Abu Shaikh, the great-grandson of Timur. Babur relied on different types of military labour. During the Battle of Sar-i-Pul, fought in 1501 with the Uzbek chief Shaibani Khan, Babur deployed household troops. Virginia Aksan writes that the Ottoman sultan's court was organized as a household and that the state was regarded as patrimony. The household comprised the sultan's army and his military headquarters. The household troops constituted the core group of Babur's army. They provided the "braves", the crack soldiers who carried out daredevil manoeuvres on the battlefield. They joined Babur's side due to family and clan connections. And, being attached to Babur by personal relations, unlike the tribal mercenaries, they did not change sides in accordance with the fluctuating political circumstances. By profession, they were warriors and fought bravely for Babur, like a band of brothers. And they got the best rewards after a successful campaign. In 1497, Babur occupied Samarkhand. In 1498-1499, Babur commanded some 2,000 Mongol soldiers from one tribe. He said that these soldiers had come to him from his mother's side. Babur's mother was the daughter of Yunus Khan, who was a distant descendant of the Mongol leader Chingiz Khan. The Mongol horse archers carried out flank attacks (known as taulqama charges), which required special skills. They played an important role in routing the Lodi forces at the First Battle of Panipat (21 April 1526).

Babur mentions that the Mongol settlers in Central Asia were organized in various tribes. Many Mongol tribes who had no blood relation to Babur joined him. Each Mongol tribe at that time comprised 3,000-4,000 families. Most of these tribes were mobile but some had a particular territorial designation. In 1504-1505, Rusta-Hazara, a Mongol tribe from Badakshan, joined Babur. At different times, several tribal leaders with their retainers joined Babur in search of loot and plunder. Babur had not defeated these tribal chieftains and forced them to join his army with their retainers; instead, the

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43 Lane-Poole, *The Emperor Babar*, p. 17.
44 *Babur-Nama*, I, pp. 138-139.
45 Aksan, "Ottoman War and Warfare", p. 150.
46 Abul Fazl uses the term *diwanian* to designate the household troops who were considered the most loyal and courageous: *The Akbar-Nama*, I, pp. 263-264.
47 *Babur-Nama*, I, pp. 19, 21, 105, 164. Beveridge uses the term "Mughals" to designate the descendants of Chingiz Khan who were settled in Central Asia.
soldiers belonging to a particular tribe fought under their tribal leader, who acknowledged the supremacy of Babur. The tribal chiefs changed sides in accordance with the fortunes of war. They joined a successful charismatic warlord who provided them with loot and plunder. For example, in 1504, after the defeat of Wali (a brother of Khusrau Shah) by Shaibani Khan, the former joined Babur with his Mongol kinsmen.\textsuperscript{49} It was a case of an ethnic (reciprocal) mercenary sort of military employment. However, at certain junctures, the Mongol tribes proved unreliable. Their loyalty to Babur was conditional and pragmatic. In general, the Mongol tribes were more willing to serve a Chingizid prince rather than a Timurid mirza (royal prince) such as Babur.\textsuperscript{50} While wandering in Central Asia, Babur mentioned that some rulers maintained ghulams,\textsuperscript{51} though he himself never utilized them. The army of about 10,000-12,000 men with which Babur attacked the Delhi Sultanate comprised household troops, various Mongol and Turkish tribes, and a few Ottoman mercenaries. Abul Fazl uses the terms “Turks” and “Tajiks” to describe the ethnic composition of Babur’s force.\textsuperscript{52}

Babur’s opponent at the First Battle of Panipat, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (r. 1517-1526) depended on the indigenous mercenaries. Ibrahim Lodi, being an Afghan, preferred Afghan soldiers. Abul Fazl deliberately inflates the size of Ibrahim’s army to highlight the courage of the Mogul soldiers and the leadership ability of Babur. Fazl claimed that Ibrahim commanded 100,000 cavalry and 1,000 elephants. When Timur invaded India, the Delhi Sultanate commanded a bigger region than the area controlled by Ibrahim. However, the Sultanate could only scrape up 10,000 cavalry and 120 elephants to oppose Timur.\textsuperscript{53} After being victorious at First Panipat, many Afghan chieftains in India (who were either semi-autonomous or in Lodi service) joined Babur as tributaries with their retainers (some of the bands numbering up to 3,000-4,000 men each).\textsuperscript{54} In many cases, they were forced to join Babur after being defeated in battle. Again, many important chieftains who submitted to Babur were rewarded with land grants. Fath Khan Sherwani was one of Ibrahim Lodi’s nobles. When Fath Khan submitted to Babur, the former was given 1 crore 6 lakhs (1 lakh is 100,000; 1 crore is 100 lakhs or 10 million) as a

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., I, pp. 188-189, 192, 196. 253.

\textsuperscript{50} Dale, \textit{The Garden of the Eight Paradises}, pp. 187-246.

\textsuperscript{51} Babur-Nama, I, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{52} The Akbar-Nama, I, p. 240.

\textsuperscript{53} Hasan, “Aspects of State and Religion in Medieval India”, p. 68; The Akbar-Nama, I, pp. 241, 243-245.

\textsuperscript{54} Lane-Poole, \textit{The Emperor Babar}, p. 172.
reward, and his son Mahmud Khan was taken in the Mogul army.\footnote{The Akbar-Nama, I, pp. 256-257.} Shaikh Guhran entered Babur’s service with 3,000 bowmen from the Ganga-Jamuna doab. Firuz Khan, an Afghan noble of the Lodis who submitted to Babur, received a \textit{jagir} worth one crore \textit{tankas} in Jaunpur, and Mahmud Khan received a \textit{jagir} worth 90 lakhs in Ghazipur.\footnote{Ibid., I, pp. 253.}

However, not all the Afghan chiefs submitted to Babur. Many of them allied with Rajput chieftain Rana Sangram Singh (also known as Rana Sangha), the ruler of Chitor (Udaipur) and confronted the Moguls at the Battle of Khanwa (16 March 1527). The combined Rajput-Afghan force, writes Abul Fazl, numbered 201,000 cavalry.\footnote{Ibid., I, pp. 260-261. Fazl no doubt gives an exaggerated figure of the enemy force, as maintaining such a large force was logistically impossible.} Superior firepower and horse archery again gave victory to the Moguls.

After the death of Babur (26 December 1530), his eldest son Humayun ascended the Mogul throne. Gujarat and east India were the two trouble spots for Humayun. In 1533, Bahadur Shah, the sultan of Gujarat, depended on 6,000 Abyssinian volunteers. Some of Bahadur Shah’s infantry were mercenaries from the Bhil and Koli tribes.\footnote{The Tezkereh al Vakiat, p. 7; The Akbar-Nama, I, p. 309.} Bahadur Shah provided 20 crore of Gujarati coins to one of his nobles, Tatar Khan, who with this money hired 40,000 Afghan mercenary cavalry.\footnote{The History of India, Elliot and Dawson, VI, Akbar-Nama, pp. 11-12.} Some Muslims of Gujarat also joined his artillery branch as mercenaries. Bahadur Shah also relied on some tributary Rajput chieftains who joined his standard with their cavalry retainers.\footnote{Ibid., p. 14.} Humayun moved into Gujarat with 30,000 cavalry. By 1535, Gujarat was conquered.\footnote{The Akbar-Nama, I, pp. 306-307.} In 1531, Humayun moved into east India and defeated several Afghan chieftains. They were ordered to join the Mogul service with their retainers.\footnote{The Tezkereh al Vakiat, p. 3.} However, such tributary soldiers proved disloyal, deserting and joining Farid (who became Sher Khan and then Sher Shah) who challenged Humayun.

Sher Shah was from the Afghan tribe of Sur. His grandfather was a horse merchant in Agra.\footnote{The Akbar-Nama, I, pp. 326-327.} Sher recruited Afghans from Bihar, and many Rajput chieftains with their clansmen also joined his banner. While the Rajputs in his army were mercenaries, the Afghans were mobilized through tribal/clan networks. Sher called the Afghan \textit{qaum} (community) to mobilize against
the alien Moguls. Before fighting Humayun, Sher conscripted the Afghans of Bihar to join his army. This was a rare case of conscription in Indian history. For the Afghans in Sher's army, it was a case of ethnic conscription. Some of Sher's officers were ghulams but they were in a minority. By 1540, Sher commanded 150,000 cavalry and 25,000 foot soldiers.

According to one estimate, in 1540, Humayun mobilized 90,000 cavalry against Sher Shah. When Humayun fought Sher in the two battles of Chausa (27 June 1539) and Kanauj (17 May 1540), the household troops of Babur did not prove loyal to Humayun. Many household troops joined Humayun's half-brothers, Kamran in particular. Kamran provided only 3,000 of his 20,000 cavalry to Humayun. Babur's nobles were also divided as regards their loyalty to Humayun. After being defeated by Sher, Humayun reached Persia through Sind, which was under the Safavid Dynasty. During 1544, with the help of 14,000 Persian cavalry, Humayun was able to capture Kandahar, which was then handed over to a Persian garrison. In 1545, Humayun recaptured Kandahar from the Persians in a surprise attack with the aid of mercenary Afghan soldiers. In 1551, Humayun captured Kabul from his brother Mirza Kamran. In 1553, Humayun moved towards Peshawar. At that time, several Uzbek chiefs joined his standard. There is no evidence of any Uzbek tribes joining Babur. Some of the Uzbeks served Humayun's son Akbar. Sher Shah died on 23 May 1545 and was succeeded by his son Islam Shah. On his death in 1553, the Suri Empire broke up into four parts. In 1554, Humayun invaded India and defeated the Afghan ruler of Punjab Sikander Suri at Sirhind. The prospect of plunder attracted many mercenaries from Central Asia to Humayun's standard. They were employed as temporary volunteers. Jouher writes:

About this time nearly 500 Moghul soldiers came from beyond the river Oxus to seek for employment; but as very few of them were armed, the general consulted me what he should do with them; I said,
“give each of them a bow and a quiver of arrows, and advance them a small sum of money to support them for a month, by which time the business with the Afghans will be settled’. He took my advice, and having advanced the money to the Moghuls, they joined the army as volunteers.73

When Humayun recaptured the Mogul throne, Persian Shias began joining the Mogul service in large numbers.74

After Humayun’s death on 21 January 1556, Akbar ascended the Mogul throne at Kalanaur in Punjab.75 A Hindu general of the Suri dynasty named Hemu declared his independence and captured Delhi. Abul Fazl notes that Hemu’s tribe, the Dhusar, was engaged in making and selling saltpetre in Gurgaon district.76 Hemu’s army numbered 50,000 cavalry, comprising Afghans, Rajputs, and some Brahman mercenaries. Some of the Rajputs were from the Jhansi district of north India. Most of the senior officers of Hemu’s army were his relatives from the Brahman caste. Hemu won over the Afghan chiefs by distributing land grants and treasure.77 At Panipat, Hemu deployed 30,000 cavalry. The Mogul army, 10,000 strong, under the nominal leadership of Akbar but actually under the noble Bairam Khan (a Turk), advanced from Kalanaur in Punjab to confront Hemu, again at the historical field of Panipat.78

The emergence of the mansabdari system, 1556-1650

After achieving victory in the Second Battle of Panipat (5 November 1556), Akbar faced challenges from some of the Muslim nobles of Humayun as well as from the Afghans of east India. Unlike Babur, under Akbar the base of the Mogul Empire was no longer Afghanistan, but north India proper. So, unlike Babur and Humayun, Akbar could not tap the Turkish tribes settled around the Oxus River. Moreover, by this time, the Uzbek Khanate, the sworn enemy of the Mogul Empire, had been resurrected in Central Asia. Akbar realized that he needed to broaden the basis of his rule by integrating the Hindu chieftains within his regime, and one way to ensure loyalty among the various

73 The Tezkereh al Vakiat, p. 118. Here “Moghul” refers to Mongols.
74 Khan, “Akbar’s Personality Traits and World Outlook”, p. 82.
75 The Tezkereh al Vakiat, pp. 120-121.
76 The Akbar-Nama, I, p. 617.
77 Ibid., II, pp. 47-48, 59; Bhargava, Hemu and His Times; see esp. pp. 13, 90, 100. Richards claims that Hemu was of the Vaisya (trader) caste: Mughal Empire, p. 13.
groups of Muslim nobles and Hindu chieftains was to establish a personalized and semi-bureaucratic relationship with them. Such a relationship, reasoned Akbar, would generate a more cohesive and loyal force than would dependence on the tribal retainers. By trial and error, Akbar evolved the mansabdari system. The mansabdars of Akbar comprised Persians, Turanis, Muslims born in India, and the Rajput chieftains. Many Turani and Afghan chieftains realized that the institution of the mansabdari system was an attempt to curb their independence, so they revolted. However, Akbar was able to quash the rebellions with the aid of his loyal mansabdars. One example will suffice. In 1572, the mirzas in collusion with the Afghan chieftains revolted against Akbar. The forces under the mirzas comprised Abyssinians, and men from Badakshan and Transoxiana. The rebellion was crushed in 1573.

Mansab technically meant rank, and the holder of the mansab was known as mansabdar (an imperial official) and was granted a jagir. The lowest-ranking mansabdar commanded 10 cavalry and the highest-ranking mansabdar 10,000. In Akbar’s time, most of the mansabdars above the rank of 5,000 were his sons. Under Akbar’s successor, a mansabdar held two ranks: zat and sawar ranks. The zat rank denoted the personal rank of the Mogul noble in the mansabdari system while the sawar rank denoted the number of cavalry which the mansabdar had to maintain for imperial service. In a contingent of a mansabdar of 10,000, other mansabdars as high as hazaris (commanders of 1,000) served. In the contingent of a mansabdar of 8,000, mansabdars who were commanders of 800 sawar served; for a mansabdar of 7,000, mansabdars up to the rank of 700 served. Abdul Kadir Badauni (a chronicler who lived in Akbar’s time) had written that the contingent of a mansabdar comprised khas-khailan (his personal dependants which included friends, relatives, and clan members, etc.) as well as bargirs who were mercenaries. To borrow John Lynn’s army style model, the Mogul army, mainly centred around the mansabdari system, was not a state commission army but an agglomeration of quasi-bureaucratic units.
J.S. Grewal says that the \textit{mansabdari} system represented a suzerain/vassal relationship.\textsuperscript{86} The \textit{mansabdari} system was also partly a case of the tributary form of military employment. After being defeated, the chieftains belonging to different principalities were encouraged and at times coerced to serve in the Mogul army and in return were rewarded with \textit{jagirs}. When Akbar established himself at Agra, a large number of principalities were under the control of autonomous and semi-autonomous hereditary chieftains. The latter were known as rajas, ranas, rawats, or rais. They were also known as Rajputs, and the Mogul chroniclers called them zamindars. Some of the Rajput chieftains maintained large numbers of cavalry. Those who joined the Mogul service were granted \textit{mansabs}.\textsuperscript{87} During Shah Jahan's reign, large numbers of \textit{mansabs} were granted to the Muslim nobles of the Deccani sultanates in order to win them over to Mogul service.\textsuperscript{88}

Throughout the territories under their control, the Moguls collected taxes from the peasants through the zamindars who were allowed a certain commission for discharging this duty.\textsuperscript{89} The military retainers of the zamindars, claims Douglas E. Streusand, comprised a nucleus of retainers from their own caste supplemented by the peasants.\textsuperscript{90} Many zamindars who were loyal to the Mogul Empire and were in the good books of the Mogul provincial governors (\textit{subadars}) were inducted in the \textit{mansabdari} service. By joining the \textit{mansabdari} service they received additional land grants which enabled them to maintain larger number of cavalry with which they could defeat local opposition to their rule. One example will suffice. In the thirtieth regnal year of Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658), Salabat Khan, the governor of the 
\textit{suba} (province) of Allahabad, introduced Anup Singh, the zamindar of Bandhu in the \textit{durbar}. Shah Jahan awarded Anup Singh a \textit{mansab} of 3,000 and granted him a \textit{jagir} for maintaining the troopers in accordance with the number stipulated in his \textit{mansab}.\textsuperscript{91}

Many Persian and Turani adventurers who came to India in search of employment were also appointed as \textit{mansabdars}. In 1595, there were 279 \textit{mansabdars}, of whom 47 were Rajputs (Hindus) and 75 were Persians (Shias).\textsuperscript{92} Many Indian Muslims were also given \textit{mansab} ranks. For instance,

\textsuperscript{87} Khan, “Akbar’s Initial Encounters with the Chiefs”, pp. 1, 6.
\textsuperscript{88} Moosvi, “The Mughal Empire and Deccan”, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{89} Hasan, “Zamindars under the Mughals”, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{90} Streusand, \textit{The Formation of the Mughal Empire}, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{91} Shah Jahan \textit{Nama} of Inayat Khan, ed. by Begley and Desai, pp. 529-530.
\textsuperscript{92} Ali, “Sulh-i Kul and the Religious Ideas of Akbar”, p. 165. Ali does not consider here the \textit{mansabdars} whose ranks were below 200.
one shaikhzada from Lucknow was granted a mansab of 700 by Akbar. In the eleventh year of Shah Jahan’s reign, the son of Nazar Muhammad, the ruler of Balkh came to India and joined Mogul service. He was granted ranks of 1,500 zat and 800 sawar and given a jagir in Bihar.93

The mansabdari system was a quasi-professional and partly bureaucratic system as there were thirty-three to sixty-six grades. On the basis of their performance, the mansabdars were either promoted to higher ranks or demoted to lower ones. Besides possessing a hierarchy, the mansabdars were also transferred to different regions in their service life and were occasionally suspended from service. Athar Ali asserts that the mansabdars in general were transferred every two to three years.94 Generally, mansabdars were given lifelong employment by the Mogul durbar. Unlike the mercenaries, the mansabdars’ freedom in leaving the service was limited. Khwaja Abdullah, a mansabdar in 1611 under Jahangir’s reign, was ordered to move into Deccan. However, he left Deccan without imperial permission and, in retaliation, his jagir was sequestered by the imperial government. For some time, he was imprisoned in the fort of Asir. When Shah Jahan ascended the throne, Abdullah was reinstated in service and given ranks of 5,000 zat and 5,000 sawar. Again Raja Pratap of Ujjain, a Hindu chieftain of Bihar, who held ranks of 1,500 zat and 1,000 sawar, withdrew from service in the tenth year of Shah Jahan’s reign. An army was sent against him and, after being defeated in battle, he was executed. In the twentieth year of Shah Jahan’s reign, Abdul Haji Khwaja held the zat rank of 900 and sawar rank of 600. In the next year, he was promoted to the zat rank of 1,500 and sawar rank of 800. In the twenty-third year of Shah Jahan’s reign, his sawar rank was increased to 1,000. During the fourth year of Shah Jahan’s reign, Khwaja was deployed in Deccan and then in Malwa. In the twenty-sixth year of Shah Jahan’s reign, Khwaja was sent with Prince Dara Shikoh (Shah Jahan’s eldest son) to Kandahar to fight the Safavids. At that time, his sawar rank remained 1,000, but his zat rank was raised from 1,500 to 2,000. In the twenty-seventh year of Shah Jahan’s reign, Khwaja was given the honour of possessing a flag.95

Again, Akbar introduced the descriptive roll system and the issue of pay was dependent on the inspection of these rolls by the imperial inspectors. To prevent borrowing of horses between the mansabdars, Akbar made the system of branding horses compulsory.96 The punishment in the Mogul

army for looting civilians was physical mutilation, cutting off the nose of the offender.\(^{97}\)

The *mansabdari* system was quasi-professional because there was no training academy for the *mansabdars*. Unlike the European monarchs and princes, the Mogul emperors did not set up any institution for teaching military arts to the nobles. For instance, in 1606, an academy was founded at Sedan by the duc de Bouillon, brother-in-law of Prince Maurice of Orange. Between 1608 and 1610, the Venetian Republic established four academies (at Padua, Treviso, Udine, and Verona) to train skilled cavalrymen. Similar institutions were opened by Landgrave Maurice of Hesse-Cassel (1618), by Denmark’s Christian IV at Soro in 1623, and by the military entrepreneur Count Albrecht von Wallenstein at Gitschin in 1624. Don Gaspar de Guzman Olivares (1587–1645, count-duke and chief minister of Philip IV of Spain) pushed for the opening of the Colegio Imperial (a military academy for the nobles) at Madrid in 1625.\(^{98}\) The Delhi Sultanate held periodic *furusiya* exercises for training mounted archers. In addition, the cavaliers were trained in playing *chaugan* (polo) and swordsmanship.\(^{99}\) We are not sure whether these practices continued in Mogul India or not. Probably, most of the *mansabdars* and their contingents got on-the-job training on the battlefield. However, hunting as military training continued under the Moguls. The *mansabdari* system was not hereditary. Nevertheless, *mansabdars* who displayed bravery and loyalty in imperial service had their male heirs’ and relatives’ cases assessed favourably by the *durbar*. When a son was allowed to succeed his father, his *mansab* was generally lower than that of his father. The son had to prove himself to achieve a rank similar to or higher than his father’s. To give an example, Mir Kamal-ud-Din came to India and served Akbar. Kamal-ud-Din’s son Mirak Husain served Jahangir and Husain’s son Muin-ud-Din served Shah Jahan. Under Aurangzeb, Muin-ud-Din became the *diwan* (officer in charge of finance) of Lahore, Multan, Kabul, and Kashmir. When Abdul Hadi Khwaja, the *mansabdar* of Shah Jahan and holding *zat* rank of 2,000 and *sawar* rank of 1,000 died in 1656, his son, Khawaja Jah, was given the *zat* rank of 1,000 and *sawar* rank of 400. For the *mansabdars*, there was no clear separation of civilian and military posts. Khwaja Abdul Majid, who came from Central Asia, joined Humayun and became a *diwan*. In Akbar’s reign, he became the governor of Delhi and held

\(^{97}\) Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, II, 1754–71, p. 18.
a *mansab* of 3,000, and in his time most of the higher-ranking *mansabdars* were governors of *subas*.

**Technical skills and foreign mercenaries**

For manufacturing and manning gunpowder weapons, Mogul dependence on foreign professionals continued from Babur to Akbar. During the First Battle of Panipat, Ustad Ali Quli Khan was in charge of positioning the matchlock men behind the chained baggage carts and the field guns deployed in the centre of Babur’s army at Panipat. In addition, Ustad Quli Khan was also in charge of manufacturing stone-throwing mortars of various sizes required for deployment on the battlefield as well as for taking the forts. He was present in the Battle of Chaldiran, fought in 1514 between the Ottomans and the Persians, where the Ottomans deployed chained baggage carts behind which they placed their field guns and matchlock men. Another *Rumi* (Ottoman) mercenary of Babur was Mustafa, who commanded the culverins in the Battle of Khanwa and was in charge of arranging the chained carts in the *Rumi* way during the battle. In this battle, Ustad Quli deployed the matchlock men behind mobile wooden tripods. The technical skill of the Ottoman mercenaries in manufacturing and manning gunpowder weapons made Ustad Quli Khan and Mustafa valuable for Babur. They could be categorized as professional mercenaries.

Babur’s son Humayun continued to depend on them; some of these mercenaries were actually deserters who joined the Mogul service probably due to the greater prospect of loot and plunder. Some of the technical/professional mercenaries’ children also followed the profession of their fathers. Ustad Ali Quli’s son, M.K. Rumi, was in charge of the Mogul gun carriages and mortars during the Battle of Kanauj. Rumi Khan, the commandant of the Gujarat Sultanate’s artillery department, deserted Sultan Bahadur Shah and joined Humayun in 1533. Rumi Khan was a military engineer and was considered an expert in siege warfare. In 1537, he advised Humayun in conducting the siege of Chunar Fort held by Sher Shah. Mining, sapping, and the construction of batteries were done under

103 Lane-Poole, *The Emperor Babar*, p. 162.
the advice of Rumi Khan. Under Humayun, Rumi Khan became *Mir Atish* (director-general of artillery). In 1555, Ustad Aziz Sistani from Aleppo was taken into the Mogul army for his expertise in pyrotechnics. In 1591, while campaigning in Sind, the siege operation against Unarpur Fort was directed by Ustad Yar Muhammad Khan. He was considered an expert in the Ottoman technique of raising mounds of sand on which the Mogul batteries were placed during the siege. Yar Muhammad Khan had come from Persia. Certain Ottoman military techniques had seeped into Iran due to Ottoman-Safavid military confrontations. So, we could speculate that he was adept at Ottoman techniques of siege warfare.

Besides the Moguls, the other Islamic polities in South Asia also depended on foreign mercenaries for harnessing gunpowder technology. The largest bronze cannon at Bijapur, Malik Maidan, was cast by a Turkish engineer named Muhammad bin Hasan Rumi in 1548. In addition to the Turks, the subcontinent’s rulers also hired West Europeans in the artillery department. Bahadur Shah of Gujarat had many Portuguese gunners in his army. From the second half of the seventeenth century, the Mogul artillery was manned by Portuguese, British, Dutch, German, and French mercenaries. These foreigners were deserters from European ships and entered Mogul dominion through Goa for higher pay. They were paid Rs 200 per month.

**Regional levies**

The Moguls, like the Delhi Sultanate, also depended on the indigenous regional levies. For foot musketeers, who were especially important during siege operations, the Mogul Empire hired Hindu mercenaries through the zamindars. Jahangir noted in his autobiography that in 1609: “I ordered the nephew of Bihari Chand, the *qanungo* [magistrate] of the Agra sarkar, to muster a thousand foot soldiers from the zamindars of Agra, fix a monthly stipend for them, and take them to Pervez in the Deccan.” Most of the foot

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106 *The Tezkereh al Vakiat*, pp. 4-5, 9-10.
111 Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 10.
112 *The History of India*, Elliot and Dawson, VI, Appendix, p. 469.
113 *The Jahangirnama*, p. 104.
soldiers came from Allahabad, Buxar, and Bhojpur in the Shahabad District, south of Ganga and west of the Son River. These people belonged to the Ujjayina branch of Rajputs. Another locality which provided the foot soldiers was Baiswara in Awadh which was inhabited by Baiswara Rajputs. The Unao and Rae Bareilly districts, which covered about 2,000 square miles, were inhabited by Baiswara Rajputs. Incidentally, these groups joined the infantry of Sher Shah and Hemu. And after the Moguls, the Rajputs of Bihar served in the infantry of Maratha Confederacy and the East India Company during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. The Ain-i-Akbari notes some regions where matchlock men were available in large numbers, Bhograi and Kasijora mahals (districts) in Jaleswar Sarkar (division, which means a collection of districts) of Orissa. The Moguls probably also tapped these sources. The musketeers of the Mogul army also came from Bundelkhand and Karnatak. The Karnatakis served in the army of the Bijapur Sultanate as well. In addition to musketeers, the Mogul army hired men equipped with bans (rockets). The Afghans of Bengal were considered experts in this branch of warfare.

Miscellaneous mini-systems

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, in the regions outside the Mogul Empire, various other forms of military employment were operational. In the Ahmadnagar Sultanate in western Deccan, Abyssinian military slaves and Abyssinian mercenaries played an important role. The Abyssinians (also known as Habshis in India) were African Muslims from Ethiopia who either came to India as free-born adventurers or were imported as slaves. Most of the slaves originated in the Kambata region of southern Ethiopia. The Deccani sultanates exported cotton textiles and ivory, and imported Abyssinian slaves plus Arabian war horses. According to one estimate,
during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, about 10,000-12,000 slaves were exported annually from Ethiopia for the Deccani sultanates.\footnote{121}

One of the most famous Habshi slaves was Malik Ambar. Malik Ambar was born at Harare in Ethiopia in 1548-1549. His parents sold him in the slave market of Baghdad where he was bought by the slave merchant Mir Qasim. Then, he was sold to Changiz Khan, who had 1,000 slaves and was an important noble of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate. When Changiz Khan died, Malik Ambar enrolled himself as an ordinary soldier in the Ahmadnagar army. We do not know whether Malik Ambar was ever manumitted or not. His rise to power started when he was made a commander of 150 horsemen of Ahmadnagar.\footnote{122} This time, Ambar’s status was that of a military entrepreneur. Within a few years, Malik Ambar became the “sultan maker” and principal noble of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate until his death in 1626. During the eighteenth century, the Abyssinian (also referred to as Arab) mercenaries continued in the service of the Maratha Confederacy.

In addition to the Abyssinian mercenaries and the slaves, the Ahmadnagar Sultanate also depended upon the semi-autonomous Koli chiefs who provided cavalry and infantry and occasionally changed sides in accordance with the shifting political circumstances. The Kolis joined the Maratha warlord Shivaji’s infantry during the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1625, to fight the Portuguese, who fielded mainly infantry equipped with handguns, Malik Ambar requisitioned foot soldiers (known as hasham) from the karkuns (district officials) of Chaul in western Maharashtra. They were experts in the use of firearms, like the Rajputs of Awadh and Bihar who joined the Mogul infantry.\footnote{123} The employment of musketeers spread in response to the firepower-heavy infantry of the Portuguese. As the Mogul Empire spread into Deccan during the second half of the seventeenth century, the mansabdari system more or less eclipsed the other mini-systems of military employment.

Demography, economy, and military labourers

At the end of the sixteenth century, the population of England was 4 million, Spain’s was 7 million, and France’s was 14 million.\footnote{124} Between 1450

\begin{footnotes}
\item 121  Ibid., pp. 109-111.
\item 122  Shyam, The Life and Times of Malik Ambar, pp. 34-37.
\item 123  Ibid., pp. 22, 147.
\end{footnotes}
and 1700, the population of Europe rose from 50 million to 120 million.\textsuperscript{125} During the eighteenth century, while Iran’s population was 9 million, the population of the Ottoman Empire was 30 million.\textsuperscript{126} In 1601, the population of the subcontinent (3.2 million km\textsuperscript{2}) was 145 million.\textsuperscript{127} In the seventeenth century, the rate of increase of population was roughly 0.21 per cent per annum.\textsuperscript{128} The vast demographic resources of South Asia resulted in the absence of conscription in the subcontinent.

The very existence of an extensive potential military labour pool did not encourage the Mogul emperors to maintain a select standing army comprising drilled and disciplined infantry and cavalry troopers. Since supply exceeded demand, there was no point in maintaining a big standing army year after year. Rather, during emergencies, infantry and cavalry were raised at short notice and sent to the trouble spots. And after the crisis was over, the soldiers hired from the zamindars for a particular campaign were disbanded. Abul Fazl tells us that in Akbar’s empire (which excluded Deccan and south India), the zamindars were able to furnish 4 million and 4 lakh armed men.\textsuperscript{129} The \textit{Ain-i-Akbari} further informs us that the forces under the zamindars of Bengal \textit{Suba} comprised 23,330 cavalry and 801,150 infantry.\textsuperscript{130}

Politics and the culture of military remuneration, and not the economy of South Asia, payment of the military entrepreneurs and their retainers through land grants rather than cash. Instead of economic forces, the nature of politics determined the form of remuneration to the military labourers. The centralized Turkish state built by Sultan Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296-1316), who had a standing cavalry force paid in \textit{tankas}, had disintegrated by the time of the establishment of the Lodi dynasty under Bahlul (r. 1451-1489). John F. Richards writes that there was no shortage of precious metal in north India, and trade and commerce were flourishing in the first half of the sixteenth century there. However, due to the decentralized tribal nature of Lodi polity, Bahlul was forced to assign land grants permanently to the various Afghan tribal chiefs (Lodi, Lohani, Farmuli, and Sharwani clans, all of which belonged to the Ghilzai tribe) who maintained troopers from the revenues extracted from the grants. Bahlul had no control over the revenues of these grants. These tribal chiefs were semi-autonomous. Bahlul had to depend on clan ties and blood relationships with the Afghan chiefs while

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\textsuperscript{125} Ali, “The Passing of the Empire”, p. 339.  \\
\textsuperscript{126} Axworthy, \textit{The Sword of Persia}, p. 29.  \\
\textsuperscript{127} Richards, \textit{The Mughal Empire}, p. 1.  \\
\textsuperscript{128} Moosvi, “The Indian Economic Experience 1600-1900”, pp. 4-5.  \\
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{The Ain-i-Akbari}, I, Book Second, p. 241.  \\
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}, II, p. 141.
\end{flushright}
mobilizing their forces. In fact, Bahlul lacked a standing army under his direct control. Bahlul’s successor, Sikander Lodi (r. 1489-1517), amassed loot by plundering the Rajput principalities. Ibrahim Lodi, son of Sikander, raised the mercenaries just before the battle from the bazaars (markets) of Delhi by distributing cash from the wealth stored by his predecessors. In Ibrahim’s reign, the monthly wage of a footman was 5 Sikandari tankas and that of a sawar varied between 20 and 30 Sikandari tankas.

Even the Rajput principalities maintained troops by granting jagirs to their chiefs. Abul Fazl writes that among the Rajputs the custom was that a jagirdar holding a jagir worth 100,000 maintained 100 horses, and a jagirdar holding a jagir worth one crore was able to maintain 10,000 horses.

Sher Shah acquired 900,000 silver tankas after defeating Sultan Ghiyasuddin Mahmud of Bengal in 1535. Between 1535 and 1537, Sher’s army increased from 6,000 to 70,000 horsemen and the latter’s salary bill came to about 12 crore tankas per month. Raziuddin Aquil asserts that Sher paid his soldiers a fixed sum every month in cash and that they were not allowed to engage in pillage and plundering while campaigning. Sher Shah issued coins from his mints at Shergarh in Rohtas and Hajipur near Patna. In 1537, Sher, controlling Bihar and Bengal, had an annual income of 16 crore tankas.

In October 1504, Babur occupied Kabul and Ghazni. Then, he distributed tuyuls (fiefs) to some of his begs (nobles with armed retainers) who had served him from the earliest times. They were probably the chiefs of his loyal household troops. Babur could afford to do this because by that time he was a territorial prince with a kingdom comprising Afghanistan. This was the first instance of regular payment in kind that Babur made to his military officers. After conquering Punjab, Babur bestowed various regions on his different commanders. For example, Dipalpur was given to Baqi Shaghawal.

In addition, Babur also depended on pillage and plunder to sustain and reward his troops after victories. To give an example, in 1519, Babur levied

131 Richards, “The Economic History of the Lodi Period”.
132 Babur-Nama, II, p. 470.
133 Roy, Niamatullah’s History of the Afghans, pp. 187-188; 20 Sikandari tankas are equal to 1 silver tanka.
134 The Akbar-Nama, I, p. 260. Abul Fazl does not specify whether the annual revenue was calculated in tankas or damms.
139 Babur-Nama, I, pp. 199, 227.
140 Ibid., II, p. 463.
400,000 shahrulkhis (20,000 pounds sterling) as protection money from Bhira on the left bank of Jhelum. After victory in the First Battle of Panipat, the Moguls captured Delhi and Agra and acquired a large amount of coined and non-coin treasure that had been accumulated by the Delhi Sultanate. Babur divided a portion of the spoils (jewels, gold and silver money) among his troops. The amirs got between 5 to 10 lakh tankas each and the soldiers got cash. Babur’s son Humayun also followed the policy of parcelling out his realm among his nobles so that the latter could maintain their contingents from the revenues of the tracts assigned to them. After a victory, Humayun would distribute the loot among his nobles and their retainers. For instance in 1533 after capturing Champanir, the capital of Gujarat, the treasure found in the fort was distributed among his army personnel.

The principal income of the Mogul Empire came from land tax, and agriculture was expanding in the Mogul Empire. For example, by c. 1600, the extensive forest in the western part of the Ganga-Jamuna doab was cleared and the region was intensely cultivated and densely populated. The peasants sold the grain to pay revenue in cash. Abul Fazl writes that the peasants in Bengal paid their taxes in mohurs (golden coins) and rupees. Sonargaon in Bengal produced world-famous muslin. India exported cotton textiles, indigo, and pepper to South-East Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East. Economically, Mogul India was in a favourable position vis-à-vis Persia. Silk from Bengal pushed silk manufactured in Persia out of the European markets, and Indian cotton was also imported into Persia. The balance of trade was therefore more favourable to India than to Persia.

Prasannan Parthasarathi claims that Indian calicoes and muslins captured the European markets. Due to a loss of bullion, the Europeans raised tariff barriers against the entry of Indian textiles. Parthasarathi and Richards write that the Mogul Empire was self-financing from its own resources. The emperors did not have to depend on loans from the private financiers. State finance depended on a robust monetary system, which in turn relied

141 The Akbar-Nama, I, pp. 238, 248.
142 Matta, Sher Shah Suri, pp. 92-93.
143 The Tezkereh al Vakiat, p. 6.
146 Ibid., II, p. 136.
148 Axworthy, The Sword of Persia, p. 28.
149 Parthasarati, Was There Capitalism in Early Modern India?”, p. 353.
upon the regular inflow of gold, silver, and copper. India produced inadequate quantities of these precious metals, but its export surplus enabled the country to import large amounts that had been produced in the New World and Japan. Akbar established a tripartite currency system based on gold, silver, and copper coins issued from the centrally administered imperial mints.\textsuperscript{150} The important mints of Mogul Empire were at Cambay, Lahore, Multan, Kabul, Patna, Rajmahal, and so forth.\textsuperscript{152} In Akbar’s reign, the mints at Ajmir, Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri, and Lahore produced silver coins. The two great cities of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were bigger than London and Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{154} The coins were used to pay the merchants who imported war horses from Central Asia and Persia.\textsuperscript{155} Shireen Moosvi speculates that from 1576 onwards the silver currency output of the Mogul Empire was 151.69 metric tonnes annually.\textsuperscript{154} Towards the end of Akbar’s period, the Mogul Empire retained an annual surplus of income over expenditure of between 3.9 million and 4.7 million silver rupees equivalent in cash.\textsuperscript{155} Streusand is wrong in saying that incomplete monetization of the economy, rudimentary banking institutions, and the difficulty of transporting large amounts of cash made the central collection of revenue and distribution of cash salaries impractical, and that therefore the Moguls used the \textit{jagir} system.\textsuperscript{156}

Despite the presence of a monetized economy in the subcontinent, the culture of remuneration was to pay the soldiers (especially the higher ranks, i.e., officers) by issuing land grants, and the ultimate objective of these officers was to establish themselves as landed aristocracy with territorial bases.\textsuperscript{157} Only the mercenaries were paid in cash. The pay of the matchlock men varied between 2.5 to 6.25 rupees (henceforth Rs) per month. The pay of a \textit{mirdaha} (non-commissioned officer of the matchlock men) varied between 6.5 and 7.5 Rs per month.\textsuperscript{158} During the first half of the sixteenth century, the level of monetization was low in Deccan. However, in the seventeenth century, west India experienced a high level of monetization

\textsuperscript{150} Richards, “The Seventeenth Century Crisis in South Asia”, pp. 628-629.
\textsuperscript{151} Moosvi, “The Silver Influx, Money Supply, Prices and Revenue-Extraction in Mughal India”, pp. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{152} Moosvi, “Urban Population in Pre-Colonial India”, pp. 130-131.
\textsuperscript{153} Haidar, “Disappearance of Coin Minting in the 1580s?”, pp. 57-58, 60.
\textsuperscript{154} Moosvi, “The Silver Influx, Money Supply, Prices and Revenue-Extraction in Mughal India”, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{155} Richards, “The Seventeenth Century Crisis in South Asia”, p. 627.
\textsuperscript{156} Streusand, \textit{The Formation of the Mughal Empire}, pp. 67-68.
\textsuperscript{157} Gordon, “Symbolic and Structural Constraints on the Adoption of European-Style Military Technologies”, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{The Ain-i-Akbari}, I, Book Second, Note by the translator, p. 258.
due to the export of cotton textiles from Surat. Still, the Maratha chieftains wanted to be paid through land grants (saranjams, non-hereditary land grants for military service, and imams, hereditary land grants for special service and merit).\(^{159}\)

The mansabdars were not paid in cash. For example, Abdullah Khan, one of the principal officers of Humayun, was granted the rank of 5,000 by Akbar during the seventh year of his reign and was granted Kalpi as a jagir.\(^{160}\) For conducting campaigns on behalf of the Moguls, the emperors gave jagirs to those Hindu chieftains who held mansabs. In an attempt to control these chieftains and also to prevent the expansion of their territorial bases, the imperial court granted jagirs in regions far away from their principalities.\(^{161}\) In case of disloyalty, these jagirs were sequestered by the imperial court. The *jama-dami* (estimated income from the jagir) was equivalent to the *talab* (salary) of the mansabdar.\(^{162}\) Moosvi asserts that the price rise in the seventeenth century was about 30 per cent. Between 1595 and 1700, the *jama* (assessed revenue) of the Mogul Empire (excluding Deccan) registered an increase of about 44 per cent.\(^{163}\) By the mid-seventeenth century, due to the onset of the agrarian crisis, the mansabdars holding ranks of 4,000 and 5,000 were able to extract only three to four months' pay in a year from their jagirs.\(^{164}\) This was the case during the first half of the sixteenth century for those mansabdars whose jagirs were assigned in Deccan.\(^{165}\) This was due to the gap between *jama* and *hal-i-hasil* (the amount which actually could be realized from the jagir). Continuous warfare in Deccan and the failure of the monsoon resulted in famine; these three causes led to the collapse of agriculture, which in turn triggered the agrarian crisis.\(^{166}\) The crisis in the mansabdari system was related to the agrarian crisis,\(^{167}\) an issue which is not relevant for my limited purpose in this chapter.

Most of the land in the Mogul Empire was granted as jagirs to the mansabdars. Only a small portion, known as khalisa (crown land), was administered directly by the emperor’s bureaucrats. The revenue from the

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\(^{160}\) *The Maathir-ul-Umara*, by Beveridge, I, p. 82.

\(^{161}\) Zaidi, “Akbar and the Rajput Principalities”, p. 16.

\(^{162}\) Ali, “Towards an Interpretation of the Mughal Empire”, p. 62.


\(^{164}\) *The Maathir-ul-Umara*, by Beveridge, I, p. 104.

\(^{165}\) Moosvi, “The Mughal Empire and the Deccan”, pp. 219-220.


\(^{167}\) The literature on the agrarian crisis and its adverse effect on the loyalty of the mansabdars and the efficiency of their contingents is vast. S. Nurul Hasan states that the crisis began in the first decade of the seventeenth century: Hasan, “The Theory of Nurjahan ‘Junta’”, p. 128.
khalisa was utilized for meeting the emperor’s personal expenses and those of his own small standing army, known as the ahadis.\textsuperscript{168} Around 1600, the Mogul nobility (mansabdars) absorbed about 82 per cent of the Mogul Empire’s total revenue.\textsuperscript{169} Abul Fazl tells us that the annual revenue of the Mogul Empire in 1594 amounted to 62 crores 97 lakhs 55,246 dams (Rs 90,743,881).\textsuperscript{170} In 1648, according to one estimate, the net revenue income of the Mogul Empire was 880 crore dams.\textsuperscript{171} Under Akbar, there were 1,600 mansabdars (1,350 mansabdars with ranks of 150 and below and 250 mansabdars with ranks higher than 150). In Shah Jahan’s time, there were 8,000 mansabdars.\textsuperscript{172} In contrast to the large number of retainers of the mansabdars, Akbar maintained only 12,000 cavalry and 12,000 matchlock men under his direct control. These 24,000 soldiers were known as ahadis. Under Shah Jahan, there were only 7,000 ahadis.\textsuperscript{173} As a point of comparison, in 1550, Ivan IV of Russia maintained a standing force of 3,000 select musketeers, each of whom was paid 4 rubles a year.\textsuperscript{174} In 1648, the force recruited and paid directly by the Mogul imperial establishment amounted to only 47,000 soldiers.\textsuperscript{175} 

Most of the Mogul army personnel were under the mansabdars. The theoretical potential strength of the forces under the Moguls in 1647 numbered 911,400 cavalry and infantry. The revenues of the Mogul Empire amounted to 12,071,876,840 dams (320 dams was equivalent to £1 sterling).\textsuperscript{176} Streusand interprets Abul Fazl’s figure by saying that the Mogul Empire supported 342,696 cavalry and 4,039,097 infantry. The total number of cavalry and infantry comprised roughly 10 per cent of the male population.\textsuperscript{177} According to another author, Shah Jahan maintained 200,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry (musketeers, artillerymen, rocket men, etc.). This was exclusive of the soldiers maintained by the faujdars (Mogul officials in charge of maintaining law and order in a district) and district officials concerned with the administration of revenue. The breakdown of the 200,000 cavalry was as follows: 185,000 troopers of the mansabdars, 8,000 mansabdars, and

\textsuperscript{168} The Ain-i-Akbari, I, Book Second, pp. 252, 259-260.
\textsuperscript{169} Trivedi, “The Share of the Mansabdars in State Revenue Resources”, p. 411.
\textsuperscript{170} The Ain-i-Akbari, II, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{171} Moosvi, “Expenditure on Buildings on under Shah Jahan”, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{172} The Ain-i-Akbari, I, Book Second, Note by the translator, pp. 257-258.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., I, Book Second, Note by the translator, p. 256; Akbar-Nama, I, p. 642.
\textsuperscript{174} Davies, “The Foundations of Muscovite Military Power”, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{175} Moosvi, “Expenditure on Buildings on under Shah Jahan”, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{176} Fraser, The History of Nadir Shah, pp. 27, 33.
\textsuperscript{177} Streusand, The Formation of the Mughal Empire, p. 41.
7,000 mounted *ahadis*. A Mogul field army at that time numbered about 50,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry.

**Culture and combat motivation**

Greed, asserts *Sukraniti*, motivated the mercenaries to join battle. The *Nitiprakasika* highlights the importance of regular pay in motivating the soldiers. Nevertheless, men do not fight for pecuniary rewards alone. Mentality is an important constituent of pre-combat and in-combat ethos. And at times military service defined the identity of various communities. Despite the rise and fall of polities due to fluctuations in politics and the changing nature of technologies, the culture of the various communities changes very slowly. So the Hindu texts generated during pre-Mogul era offer a window into the mentality of the Hindu warrior ethos.

The cultural ethos of the Rajputs (the landowning aristocracy also known as thakurs), who resisted the Turks and became an important segment of the Mogul army from Akbar onwards, needs to be evaluated. The term “Rajput” is derived from the word *rajaputra* meaning sons of the king. Military service, especially mounted service, was very popular among the Rajputs. The Rajputs’ military ethic was guided by *kshatradharma*, which had some parallel with chivalry of the medieval west European knights. Loyalty and bravery were the two core values of *kshatradharma*. The ideology of combat centred on duty to one’s master and the display of individual prowess in the battlefield. The Rajput concept of *namak halali* (loyalty to the salt-giver) means that they should remain loyal to the person whose salt they

178 *The Ain-i-Akbari*, I, Book Second, Note by the translator, p. 254.
179 This was the size of the army sent against Safavid Kandahar in 1650: *The History of India*, Elliott and Dawson, VII, *Shah Jahan Nama* of Inayat Khan, p. 99.
180 Oppert, *On the Weapons, Army Organization, and Political Maxims of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 139. *Sukraniti* and *Nitiprakasika* are political texts generated by the Hindus during the early medieval period. These normative texts deal with the duties of a just ruler, the concept of *dharmayuddha* (just war), the ethics of conducting warfare, the use of new weapons, and political guidance for just rulers.
183 Yadava, “Chivalry and Warfare”.
have eaten, in other words, to their employer.\textsuperscript{185} The Rajput heroic ballads emphasized that seva (duty and loyalty) to the lord was more important than duty and loyalty towards one’s family.\textsuperscript{186} The bravery of the Rajputs revolved around the concept of paurusha (manliness), which means sacrificing one’s life in the battlefield. The Prithvirajvijayamahakavya tells us that for the Chauhans (a Rajput clan) fighting was a way of life. The Rajputs considered themselves as Kshatriyas, and soldiering was regarded as their caste duty. They believed that tactical retreat in the battlefield was inglorious, and they considered that sacrificing their lives on the battlefield, rather than becoming prisoners-of-war, was the highest possible achievement.\textsuperscript{187} The medieval Hindu text Sukraniti emphasizes that it is a sin for a Kshatriya to die peacefully at home. Rather, the Kshatriya earns a noble death by dying in the battlefield while slaying enemies. Those Kshatriyas who die in the battlefield achieve viragati (they become heroes and ascend to heaven). Such a reward is acquired by the rishis (sages) only after long ascetic practices.\textsuperscript{188} The Arthasastra also notes that soldiering is the caste duty of the Kshatriyas.\textsuperscript{189} When the Islamic threat was absent, the various Rajput clans fought among themselves for glory.\textsuperscript{190} The contingents of the Rajput mansabdars maintained charans (bards) whose duty was to encourage the soldiers by playing martial music and reciting Rajput heroic ballads.\textsuperscript{191}

The Mogul military system also utilized caste and clan feelings to build up primary group solidarity and camaraderie. The mansabdars’ contingents were not mono-ethnic units. The contingents of Rajput mansabdars did not comprise solely Rajput troopers but also included Muslim sowars.\textsuperscript{192} Generally, the Rajput mansabdars had one-sixth of their contingents from the non-Rajput groups. However, Rajput troopers preferred to serve under Rajput chiefs. Several generations served simultaneously in a contingent of a mansabdar. For instance, fathers, sons, uncles, nephews, cousins, and brothers all served simultaneously in the contingent of a particular mansabdar.\textsuperscript{193} The clan members were led on the battlefield by the clan

\textsuperscript{186} Trivedi, “Images of Women from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century”, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{187} Prithvirajvijayamahakavya, Ditiya Adhyaya, Sastha Adhaya.
\textsuperscript{188} Oppert, On the Weapons, Army Organization, and Political Maxims of the Ancient Hindus, pp. 125-126.
\textsuperscript{189} The Kautilya Arthasastra, Part II, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{190} Prithvirajvijayamahakavya, Chaturtha Adhaya.
\textsuperscript{191} Zaidi, “Ordinary Kachawaha Troopers serving the Mughal Empire”, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., pp. 62-63.
leaders.\textsuperscript{194} The different Rajput clans who joined the Mogul service were the Rathors, Sisodias, Kachawahas, Haras, Bhatis, and others.\textsuperscript{195}

Stewart Gordon asserts that the process of the rise of the Marathas in medieval west India was somewhat similar to the emergence of Rajputs in north India. Through service in the army and subsequently acquiring rights over the land, and then consolidating such rights and following certain rituals and customs, many became hereditary warrior elites.\textsuperscript{196} Basically, the warrior ethos of the Rajputs and the Marathas emphasized winning glory and money and acquiring power. Social mobility was achieved by fighting on horseback. They had a disdain for those who practised agriculture.\textsuperscript{197}

Those families in west India who followed the profession of soldiering and acquired land were known as Marathas, in contrast to the lowly kunbis (ordinary cultivators and artisans). The Marathas served as mercenaries in the Muslim sultanates of pre-Mogul India. Gradually, the Maratha families established themselves in particular regions and became semi-autonomous. Thus, they could not be categorized as service elites.\textsuperscript{198}

The ethos of mercenary soldiering existed in pre-Mogul India. The Hindu mercenaries are known as bhrata balas (literally “hired soldiers”) in Sanskrit literature. Several of them belonged to families whose hereditary trade was soldiering.\textsuperscript{199} The Panchantantra says that the mercenaries should pursue the profession of soldiering without thinking about the reasons behind warfare.\textsuperscript{200} In the villages, akharas (gymsnasiums) existed in which the mercenaries engaged in wrestling to keep themselves physically fit.\textsuperscript{201}

Many of them were worshippers of the Hindu war gods Kartik and Vishnu.\textsuperscript{202} William Pinch writes that the armed ascetics, especially those who were worshippers of Lord Shiva (the Hindu god of destruction), known as Saivaites, played an important role in the military labour market of Hindustan. Pinch continues that the tradition of armed ascetics functioning as mercenaries went back to ancient times. Saiva asceticism did not preach world denial. The yogis (those who engage in yoga, i.e., in ascetic practices

\textsuperscript{194} Sharma, “The Military System of the Mewar (Udaipur) State”, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{196} Gordon, The Marathas: 1600-1818, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{197} Gordon, “Zones of Military Entrepreneurship in India”, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{198} Gordon, The Marathas: 1600-1818, pp. 15, 17.
\textsuperscript{199} Arthasastra, Part II, Kangle, p. 316.
\textsuperscript{200} Quoted in Oppert, On the Weapons, Army Organization, and Political Maxims of the Ancient Hindus, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., p. 85.
\textsuperscript{202} Kathasaritsagara, I, pp. 42, 156.
to gain spiritual power) did not aim to become saints in the conventional sense of the term. They were not noted for an intense love of God. Rather, they aspired to become a second Shiva on earth. One of the bonds that held the armed ascetic warrior bands together was the concept of *chela*, a faithful disciple. Most of the *chelas* were originally slave boys who were sold by their poor parents to the *yogis* in the *asrams* (Hindu religious institutions). The armed Hindu devotees of the god Vishnu were known as *bairagis*. They were led by *mahants* (heads of the religious order). The armed ascetics consumed *bhang*, opium, and other intoxicants before joining battle in order to increase their enthusiasm for fighting.

Finally, let us turn our focus to the motivation of the Muslim soldiery. If we believe Simon Digby, then the Turani soldiers of the Mogul army were devotees of the Sufi saints. The idea of Sufis being peace-loving saints engaged in building bridges between the two antagonistic communities, Hindus and Muslims, is now rightly discredited. Digby asserts that even the Afghan soldiers of Sher Shah believed that the Sufi pirs could make the difference between victory and defeat on the battlefield. Many of the Mogul troopers had Naqshbandi affiliations. The Sufi saints traveled to and fro between Transoxiana and Deccan. While some shaikhs functioned as traveling *pirs* catering to the spiritual needs of the soldiers, other *shaikhs* established *khanqas* at the capitals of the *subas*. Some of the *dervishes* were also expert bow-makers. The soldiers and their officers believed that the *pirs’* spiritual power would protect them against enemy arrows and shots. In return for spiritual support, many soldiers and their officers donated money for the construction of mosques. Abul Fazl notes that, when the Muslim troops loyal to the Mogul sovereign died while fighting rebellious Muslims, then the former achieved martyrdom. How far this assertion represented the actual combat ethos of the loyal Mogul soldiery remains an open question. In recent times, Rosalind O’Hanlon has asserted that Mogul manliness was shaped by a modified version of the Persian concept of *javanmardi*, which meant displaying courage and bravery in

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204 Orr, “*Armed Religious Ascetics in Northern India*”, pp. 189, 192, 197.
205 *Sufis and Soldiers in Aurangzeb’s Decca*, p. xxvii.
206 Kumar, “Politics, the Muslim Community and Hindu-Muslim Relations Reconsidered”.
207 Digby, “*Dreams and Reminiscences of Dattu Sarvani*”, pp. 53, 56.
208 *Sufis and Soldiers in Aurangzeb’s Deccan*, pp. 3-4.
imperial service. For the mounted musketeers, the skill of shooting from horseback constituted the concept of being a “true” mirza.\textsuperscript{212}

With the passage of time, we see a subtle change in the cultural motivations of both the Muslim and Rajput soldiery. The transformation of the cultural ethos was related to the changes in the power politics of the real world. Notwithstanding the many syncretic and inclusionist dimensions of medieval Islamic culture, asserts Rajat Datta, for the Islamic conquerors and their ideologues, Hindustan was a land of kufr or infidels.\textsuperscript{213} During the thirteenth century, the discourse among at least a powerful section of the Muslim intellectuals was that jihad on part of the righteous sultan was necessary. The jihad was directed towards despoiling the riches of the temples, killing the Brahmans, and theoretically giving the Hindus the option of death or Islam.\textsuperscript{214} And those ghazis (religious soldiers) who fell while conducting jihad became shahids (martyrs). When Babur fought the Rajputs at Khanwa, by giving the call of jihad, the former tried to rouse the combat spirit of his Muslim soldiery. However, when the multi-ethnic Mogul army comprising Muslim and Hindu (Rajput and Maratha) soldiery fought the Shia Muslim sultanates of Deccan (Bijapur and Golkunda), the policy was not to give the cry of jihad but to rouse the Muslim soldiery by utilizing the power of the Sufi shaikhs. Similarly, when the Rajputs fought the Muslims then the former relied on the concept of dharmayuddha, but when the Rajputs fought in the Mogul army they strengthened their combat ethos by harking back to their caste pride as soldiers. In such circumstances, the Mogul Padshah was equated with Ram, the Kshatriya hero of the epic Ramayana who waged dharmayuddha.\textsuperscript{215}

**Conclusion**

Due to the vast demographic resources of South Asia (if one wants, then one can use Dirk Kolff’s term “military labour market”), military conscription was neither necessary nor practised in Mogul times. Though the size of the Mogul army in the first half of the sixteenth century was quite big, if we take into account the vast population of the subcontinent, then the military participation ratio was quite small. Again, military service in South Asia during the Mogul and British eras, unlike in western Europe, remained a

\textsuperscript{212} O’Hanlon, “Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India”.
\textsuperscript{213} Datta, “Introduction”, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{214} Aquil, “On Islam and Kufr in the Delhi Sultanate”.
\textsuperscript{215} Datta, “Introduction”, p. 6.
honourable profession. Small farmers, marginal peasants, and share-croppers earned more by joining the army, and low castes acquired Kshatriya status. In certain cases, many small farmers became zamindars after a successful military career, and ambitious zamindars became rajas after participating in a successful campaign. So service in the army was a channel for upward mobility. The Mogul army was not a rigid structure frozen in time, but a multi-dimensional organization that evolved with age. However, certain fundamental characteristics of the Mogul army can be elaborated. The Mogul army was not a state commission force but a coalition of forces raised and maintained by the different mansabdars (Persian and Turani adventurers, Hindu chieftains, etc.) operating under the overall control of the emperor. The Mogul army was not a national or Indian (if such a term could be used at all) army. The army did not recruit just from the territories under its control. The Mogul army was a multi-ethnic and multi-faith entity which drew a considerable number of personnel from outside its territory. From the religious perspective, the Mogul army comprised Muslims, Hindus, and some Christians. As regards the Muslims, the Mogul nobility consisted of both Shias from Persia and Sunnis from Turan (Central Asia). Both Hindus (Rajputs from Rajasthan and north India under Akbar and the Marathas from west India from Shah Jahan’s reign onwards) and Muslims (mostly Afghans who settled in the subcontinent, i.e., Bihar during the Delhi Sultanate) from India were recruited in the army. Rather than the region’s level of monetization, it was politics and the cultural ethos that dominated payment of the soldiery (especially the higher ranks). Military service was regarded as a means of becoming a landholder or to expand one’s patrimony. Hence, payment in kind, i.e., land (except in the case of Sher Shah, an aberration in medieval India), remained dominant in the period under review.

However, foreign and indigenous mercenaries and especially footmen were paid in cash for most of the time. Even in the heyday of the mansabdari system, the professional mercenary form of military employment continued. The Mogul army from Babur to Aurangzeb was dependent on the foreign professional mercenaries for manufacturing and manning gunpowder weapons during both battles and sieges. From Babur to Akbar, the dependence was on the Ottomans and Persians, and under Aurangzeb the Moguls relied on west European Christians. The latter development was due to a global shift in the eighteenth century, when western Europe became most advanced in the production and deployment of cannons, howitzers, and mortars. In the eighteenth century, the mansabdari system was replaced by the regimental system, the latter being characterized by regular cash payment, written regulations, and strict discipline. That, however, is a different story.