



# A Study of the Mughal Emperor's Military Organisation and How it Played a Major Role in the Consolidation of the Empire

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**Abstract:** *Three distinct categories comprised the Mughals' effective military structure: the regular standing army, the provincial army, and regional or local forces. Provincial forces comprised subordinate zamindar contingents that were mobilised for military objectives in times of conflict, whereas high-ranking officials were required to adhere to specific principles. Regional forces consisted of infantry, cavalry, and other armaments designated as mandates for the Mahals and Sarkars in Ain-i-Akbari. Cavalry, which held a distinct position in Europe by virtue of their swiftness and mobility, was the most spectacular element of the Mughal military apparatus. The Mansabdari system was a model cavalry organisation in Europe, distinguished by the horse-riding army's position. During the Mughal period, the substandard quality of the Indian horse breed necessitated the importation of horses from Kabul, Khuran, and Iran, which demonstrated the most exceptional standard among Indian horses. Their speciality was Mughal artillery, which Babur introduced to India first and improved periodically thereafter. A multitude of artillery installations were constructed, including the Sherdahad and Fatehlaskar, which were purposefully engineered as waggons to optimise both usability and convenience. A multitude of scholars, such as Lieutenant Colonel Gautam Sharma, Captain B.N. Maliwal, Major Shaimlal, and Major R.C. Kulshreshtha, have collectively recognised that the Mughal Empire, with the exception of Turkey, possessed artillery capabilities that were unparalleled. The Mughal Empire maintained a naval contingent under the command of Amir-ul-Bahr, or Admiral. This individual was tasked with various responsibilities, including ensuring the availability of elephant-carrying vessels, appointing skilled seamen with the ability to forecast sea temperatures, guarding rivers, and overseeing the imposition, execution, and remission of duties and equipment. From seafaring lineages, mariners were enlisted, and naval batteries were constructed. Shipbuilding received considerable emphasis in the regions of Allahabad, Lahore, Kashmir, Bengal, and Thatta, all of which were located on the banks of the Indus, throughout the Great Mughal Empire.*

**Keywords:** *Military Organization, Mughal Empire, Cavalry, Mughal Navy.*

## Content

The Mughals possessed an effective military structure. As a result, three distinct categories of forces were sustained. To commence, there were certain tenets that all high-ranking officials, whether Hindu or Muslim, were obligated to uphold in accordance with their respective ranks. This was a component of the Mughal Empire's regular standing army, which was maintained for the security and defence of the realm as a whole. Additionally, the provincial army, comprised of subordinate zamindar contingents mobilised for military purposes during times of conflict, was the second component. The third category of regional or local forces comprised cavalry, infantry, and other armaments specified in Ain-i-Akbari as quotas allocated to the Mahals and Sarkars. These forces were subordinate to petty Faujdars and Faujdars. In strategic locations including Attock, Lahore, Sialkot, Muttan, Jammu, Nagarkot, Man, Jaswan, Kahlur, Auler, Mankot, Jasrota, and Lakhanpur, cantonments were established. Military jagirs were bestowed upon the Mansabdars in all regions of the province, and they provided contingents during periods of conflict. Having been of considerable assistance to the Mughal emperors, these jagirdars eventually rose to the rank of petty chief. In addition to the Jagirdar, the forts were staffed with Faujdars tasked with upholding law and order, preventing theft and vandalism from the roadways, and ensuring compliance with imperial regulations. They supervised a small force tasked with carrying out police duties, quelling minor uprisings, dispersing or apprehending bandit bands, investigating all violent crimes, and resorting to force demonstrations in order to subdue opposition from the revenue authorities, the criminal judge, or the censor.

Banduqchis (gunmen), Darbans (porters), Shamsherbaz (swordmen), Khidmatyas (environmental guardians of the imperial palace), Pehalwans (wrestlers), and Kahars (doli-bearers) comprised the infantry. The emperor served as the principal commander and supervised a number of commanders known as sipahsalar. Matchlockmen and archers comprised the actual infantry. Twelve thousand matchlockmen were under Akbar's maintenance at the court. A department comprising a registrar, a treasurer, and a superintendent constituted their administration. In contrast, the compensation of the four classes of minar officers ranged between 260 and 300 dams. Each of the fifteen grade levels comprised a combatant, with three grades constituting a class. One hundred ten dams to two hundred fifty dams comprised the range of their wages. Such an opportunity arose for extensive promotion. Due to the continued ineffectiveness of the matchlocks, the archers were occasionally more effective than the matchlockmen in combat. They became overheated following firing and required an interval of cooling prior to being reloaded. Mansabdars were also provided with infantry in the form of dakhill soldiers. Matchlockmen comprised one-fourth of these contingents; archers comprised the remainder.

The most magnificent component of the Mughal military apparatus was the cavalry. The Mansabdari system constituted an exemplary cavalry organisation. The horse-riding army occupied a unique position in Europe, and Mughal emperors similarly staged exhibitions featuring cavalry. As a result of their swiftness and mobility, the cavalry was regarded as the most effective unit for achieving victory in the conflict. Babar prevailed over Panipat with the assistance of twelve thousand cavalry. The inferior quality of the Indian horse breed during the Mughal period was a consequence of unfavourable atmospheric conditions; consequently, horses were imported from Kabul,

Khuran, and Iran. With respect to activity level, these horses exhibited the highest level among Indian horses. As a result of their horses' galloping pace of at least sixty miles per day, the Mughals were able to attack and retreat from India with relative ease, whereas the Rajputs were unable to do the same. Administrative officers ordinarily engaged in civil activity, the Mansabdars (rank-holders) were required to provide the quantity of troops for which they possessed the Mansab. Consequently, the Mansabdari System necessitated that civil officers immediately provide military service when the need arose. Although the official count listed sixty-six grades of Mansabdars was thirty-three, the practical implementation was significantly lower. The initial three grades, which spanned from 7,000 to 10,000, were exclusively designated for individuals hailing from the imperial family. Exceptions to this rule were occasionally granted, and individuals who demonstrated exceptional merit were promoted to the rank of 7,000. For example, Quilch Khan, Rajah Todar Mal, Rajah Man Singh, and Mirza Shah Rukh each possessed a mansab worth 7,000. In addition to receiving remuneration from the state treasury, the Mansabdars were obligated to furnish their portion of the expenses for horses, elephants, animals of burden, and carriages. The authority to determine their appointments, promotions, subordinates, and terminations resided with the Emperor, who rigorously enforced his regulations pertaining to the Mansabdari System. On account of personal aptitude and military merits, the Mansab was bestowed. It was not a hereditary trait. Sons of the Mansabdars were required to begin a fresh existence, separate from the services and social standing of their fathers. Regarding the Mansabdari System, two significant terms, namely *zat* and *swar*, have confounded the efforts of academicians in determining their distinction. According to Dr. Ishwari Prasad, the statement "The *Zat* was the personal rank of Mansabdar; to this, an officer was permitted to draw an additional allowance; this was referred to as his *Sawar* rank," is only an approximation of the truth. In addition to the Mansabdars, there were additional foot soldiers called *Dakhilis* and *Ahadis*. The former commanded the Mansabdars with a fixed number of soldiers. They were funded through state funding. The latter individuals formed an independent class. They were gentleman soldiers who had been personally conscripted by the Emperor for his service.

In his work *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazal discusses the remuneration of troopers. Individuals originating from Central Asia or Iran were remunerated at a greater rate, which likely encouraged their migration to the subcontinent. For their own defence, the Muslim empires of this region have always encouraged migration from Muslim nations. The expatriates received a monthly stipend of twenty-five rupees, while Indians employed in military capacities received twenty rupees. A five percent deduction was applicable to these salaries, which the mansabdars were authorised to deduct as administrative commission for ancillary expenses. An additional monthly salary deduction was made annually to cover the expenses associated with the state-provided horse and other equipment until the debt was fully repaid. The state maintained a fifty percent profit margin on the horse's purchase price; however, the trooper was considered to have paid an equitable price due to the government's advantageous equine procurement practices.

Mughal artillery was their area of expertise. Babur was the first to employ artillery in India. He periodically implemented improvements to his artillery. They established numerous artillery facilities. According to legend, Humayun possessed 750 cannons, and Akbar regarded cannons as the most vital weaponry for state defence. Akbar

developed formidable cannons such as the Sherdahad and Fatehlaskar with great success. In order to enhance convenience and functionality, the artillery were designed in the form of waggons. Diverse academics, including Lieutenant Colonel Gautam Sharma, Captain B.N. Maliwal, Major Shaimlal, and Major R.C. Kulshreshtha, have widely acknowledged that the Mughal Empire possessed superior artillery capabilities than any other nation, except for Turkey. Transporting one of the enormous cannons demanded the assistance of several camels and a thousand cattle. The Mughal artillery experienced enhancements due to interactions with both the Deccan and Europeans. At the Battle of Qanauj, Humayun possessed twenty-one pieces; at this juncture, Sher Shah possessed the upper hand in artillery. The Deccan had achieved more substantial artillery progress compared to the northern region due to its interactions with the Persians and Turks. It was acknowledged that the most proficient artillerymen were the Europeans, who had established themselves along the western coast by this time. Adu-Fadl acknowledges the criticality of artillery. The firearms were "spread throughout the entirety of the empire with great care, ensuring that each province received an appropriate assortment of pieces." It was believed that artillery was essential for "capturing fortifications and naval engagements."

A naval contingent was maintained by the Mughal Empire. To defend against the Portuguese from Mundalgarh and the Mughals of Arakan, the great Akbar maintained a meticulously organised fleet along the coast. Amir-ul-Bahr, or Admiral, was the officer in charge of the naval departments. His fourfold responsibilities included ensuring the provision of elephant-carrying vessels, appointing proficient seamen capable of predicting the sea's temperature, guarding the rivers, and supervising the imposition, execution, and remission of duties and equipment. From the seafaring clans, mariners were recruited and naval batteries were established. During the Great Mughal Empire, significant attention was devoted to shipbuilding in Allahabad, Lahore, Kashmir, Bengal, and Thatta, situated on the bank of the Indus! In addition to the aforementioned components, the imperial army also comprised an elephant corps. An exceptionally high level of efficacy was maintained. Halqas, or circles, were the common names given to the ten, twenty, or thirty elephants that constituted the organisation. Their primary functions were to breach the fort's ramparts, instill fear in the adversary, and engage in combat on the battlefield.

Much like the Rajputs, the Mughals prioritised the development of fortifications as a means to fortify the empire's defences. They built numerous forts in strategic locations. The Red Forts of Agra and Delhi continue to be renowned for their strength, grandeur, and security. The Mughals intelligently implemented the principles of military architecture when they erected forts in strategic locations. Benefit was consistently derived from a beneficial natural attribute; in regions such as the plains of the Northern Provinces, where such attributes were uncommon, they were occasionally man-made. Fortifications were typically situated in close proximity to water sources, with river bends serving as advantageous features. The fort was elevated, and in the event that no natural fortification was available, an artificial one was constructed by accumulating soil; the excavation site yielded an additional defensive feature in the form of a lake or estuary. Forts were typically enclosed by moats; in order to impede the approach of an adversary, dense bamboo jungles, thorny shrubs, or trees were occasionally erected beyond the moats. If the weather conditions were unfavorable, an extensive forest of stone blocks was cultivated as a means to obstruct the cavalry. The

fortification's entrances were substantial and secured with wooden or iron beams; at times, multiple concentric walls were present; regardless, the ascent to the citadel was arduous and protracted. Machicolation was used to construct the walls, which were also adorned with parapets. The forts were formidable and able to withstand protracted sieges.

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