INTRODUCTION

The Mughal ruling class was primarily concerned with the expansion of the empire and consolidation of the gains of conquest during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - the days of relative political and military stability. The landed aristocracy, or as it was known, the zamindars in spite of persisting contradictions with the higher echelons of the Mughal ruling class, had rendered valuable service to the empire during the period. Some scholars have examined the position and working of the institution of zamindari during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - the period that witnessed the empire at the zenith of territorial expansion - in some detail. These studies have, however, been confined to the broad features of the institution and, in view of nature and scope of the works, inter-regional and intra-regional variations have not been examined in adequate details. The vastness of the empire with all the local variations require a closer examination of the position and role of zamindars at regional level.

In contrast to their role during the days of 'cohesion' and 'stability' the question as to what kind of role did the zamind-

da.rs play during the ensuing period of 'instability and 'co-
 nflict' though interesting subject of study, has so far not been
 studied in adequate detail. In his work, The Land Revenue Admin-
 istration Under The Mughals. 1700-1750, N.A. Siddiqi has dis-
 cussed their role during the said period but only as part of
 Mughal revenue administrative machinery. The study has also
 'excluded from its purview' the 'provincial and regional varia-
 tions'. The author, moreover, has not made any deliberate at-
 tempt to correlate the changes in the position of zamindars with
 the over all changes taking place at various levels during the
 period of study.

 The present work, essentially a preliminary attempt in the
direction, seeks to trace the pattern, process and drift of
possible changes in the position and role of the zamindars during
the first half of the eighteenth century. The study proceeds with
the task of identifying variously designated constituents of the
class, delineating each section or category, and tracing the
sources and mode of variations between them. Attempt has also
been made to ascertain the elements of continuity and change vis
a vis the Mughal State, the peasantry and the zamindars them-
selves. It has also been attempted to answer the question: could
the state enforce and retain uniform pattern of relationship with
the zamindars? Did it make any tangible efforts to arrest the
process of declining imperial hold over them? and did the zamin-
dars play such a role which had bearing on the fortunes of the
Mughals in the subah? The study also proposes to ascertain the
nature, extent and magnitude of imperial control and, incidental-
ly, clarify if the imperial control over the zamindars was only
superficial, or else the state could erode their power base and

1. N.A. Siddiqi, op.cit. p 2
weaken them at the grass-root level. Finally, the study may also incidentally suggest whether the process of change and, or its impact, strengthened or else eroded the Mughal's authority. Above all, the study may indicate the final outcome of the possible changes in the position and role of zamindars. The discussion, it may be seen, is mainly focussed on the changes in the state-zamindar relationship and incidentally on their relationship among themselves, a limitation imposed by the nature of available evidence.

It is a well known fact that the zamindari right represented a range of variously designated superior claims. The 'generic' term 'zamindar' which, as Irfan Habib notes, gained currency during the Mughal period, in essence implied a superior right in land or its usufruct.¹ In spite of the fact that the zamindars were designated as malik (owner) and their possessions as milkiyat the zamindari right does not signify an absolute proprietary right over land in the modern sense of the term: the right co-existed with other rights and claims on the produce of the soil.² The right represented a range of variously designated superior claims, the one "other than and standing above the peasantry" in land or its usufruct.³ The right was basically associated with land and its holder enjoyed a share in the produce even without

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directly engaging in the actual process of economic production.\(^1\)

Since the term 'zamindar' implies a range of superior claims, modern scholars have sought to delineate clearly the levels which constitute the class of zamindars.\(^2\) Irfan Habib categorized them into the 'chieftains' and the zamindars under direct administration whom he also terms 'ordinary zamindars'.\(^3\) In BR Grover's categorization, Irfan Habib's zamindars under direct administration are termed 'petty zamindars' the other ones have been designated the same way.\(^4\) Although NA Siddiqi also regards the nature of state-zamindar relations as the criterion of differentiation he prefers to designate the 'chieftains' as the *peshkashi* and the other ones as the 'land revenue paying' zamindars.\(^5\) These scholars have either wholly excluded the holders of intermediary positions, such as chaudharis, muqaddams etc, or counted them in the category of revenue officials treating them merely as the leading members of the village community.

\(^1\) For a detailed exposition of the views, see *Ibid*, pp 141, 144-7, 154-7; NA Siddiqi; *Land Revenue Administration*, pp 21-2 30-2, BR Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India' pp 1-23.

\(^2\) Earlier, "the generally accepted view" observes Irfan Habib, seems to have been 'that the zamindar in Mughal times really meant a vassal chief and could not exist in the directly administered territories'. *Agrarian System*, p 136; For an exposition of the earlier view, WH Moreland, *Agrarian System of Moslim India*, Allahabad, 1929, pp 122, 279; P Saran, The Provincial government of the Mughals (1526-1658), Allahabad (reprint) p 111 & n.

\(^3\) Irfan Habib *Agrarian System* pp 182-3.


\(^5\) NA Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration*, pp 21-2, 28,38,139, 151.
On the other hand, Professor S. Nurul Hasan takes the forms of zamindari rights as the main basis of differentiation and neatly divides the class into three categories, viz, Chieftains, Intermediary and the Primary zamindars. In view of its comprehensiveness we propose to follow S. Nurul Hasan’s categorization, though with some qualifications.

The use of the term 'Chieftain' has been avoided. This term connotes an autonomous native ruler who followed the rule of primogeniture in the matter of succession under the suzerainty of the Mughal empire. Their position as autonomous ruler of their patrimony was accepted by the Mughal Emperors and as such had 'legal' sanction. But we come across a considerable number of zamindars (Chapter 1 (1) and (2) below) who hardly enjoyed autonomy or enjoyed it in a limited sense of the term, did not follow rule of primogeniture, were not rulers of any standing and a large number of them happened to be ordinary members of a dismembered ruling family, still enjoying a status distinctly superior to the members of the other categories. Secondly, during the period there emerged a number of zamindars who were autonomous rulers but had no legal sanction behind their position as zamindars. During this period, such zamindaris were carved out of the Mughal empire rather than incorporated into it as was the case with native rulers who were absorbed into the empire at the time of conquest. In order to avoid any ambiguity and in view of certain features peculiar to the zamindars of Gujarat the use of the term 'Chieftain' has been avoided and the 'Superior zamindar' is used instead.

1. S. Nurul Hasan, "Zamindars Under the Mughals" pp. 17-31
Though we shall be using the term 'Primary zamindar' we propose to exclude the 'peasant-proprietors' from the category, though Professor Nurul Hasan's term includes them. The right of a peasant-proprietor may not be equated with that of a Primary zamindar, the latter's right being the one other than, distinct from and superior to that of the former. No doubt, the peasants like the zamindars were 'often designated as malik. But all right over land designated as mlkityat were not zamindari rights. The two rights i.e. zamindari and the peasant's could exist, as they did, independently of each other and be enjoyed by different persons over the same piece of land; still the two rights were not necessarily exclusive of each other and could simultaneously be possessed by the same person.

The position of the above mentioned three categories constituting the class of zamindars vis a vis provincial authorities & between the zamindars themselves is sought to be determined on the basis of their sources of power, extent and location of their territorial possessions, productivity and manageability, identity of the boundaries of zamindari with the administrative unit (village/pargana/sarkar), position of zamindar in the ruling hierarchy i.e. whether the zamindar enjoyed a mansab or any administrative position, the degree of autonomy enjoyed in the internal affairs as against the nature, magnitude and continuity of administrative pressure exerted, or sought to be exerted by the authorities, mode and method of calculating and levying imperial share and proportion thereof, nature of service obligation, rule of inheritance and other relevant things which the evidence may suggest. Their role vis a vis the Mughal state has

1. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp 113-4, 140-1, 175.
2. *Ibid*; please see also Chapter V below.
been examined on the basis of the extent of their actual performance of their obligations. These factors are also given weightage for ascertaining continuity and change in the position of zamindars vis-à-vis Mughal state, the peasantry and each other.

Since we propose to trace the possible changes in the position and role of zamindars during the period of political turmoil and administrative instability which is to be discussed a little later, it seems pertinent to determine the position and examine their role for the period when the state machinery operated at the peak of efficiency. Its necessity arises more because of the fact that the studies so far conducted are more a survey for the whole of empire rather than a detailed study of the class with particular reference to the regional and intra-regional variations in adequate depth. More so these studies so far the zamindars of Mughal subah of Gujarat are concerned, are based almost exclusively on the well known Persian chronicles. We have, therefore, also sought to determine the position and analyse their role during the seventeenth century. It may also be seen that some of changes which occurredparticularly during the later half of the century acquired momentum and unmanageable dimensions during the period of present study.

1. A R Khan (Chieftains in the Mughal empire during the reign of Akbar) has discussed at length the political relations between the empire and the chieftains, as established or sought to be established under Akbar. But the author does not cast sufficient light on the administrative aspects and the actual working of the arrangements, as also on the varying positions held by various chiefs. Moreover, the part of his work which relates to the zamindars of Gujarat, is based exclusively on the Persian chronicles and has not been enriched by utilising other sources of information. Also the author's identification of the Chieftains is not free of defects. See Chapter I (1) & (2) below.
In view of above, each category of the zamindars is discussed in two different Chapters, viz, every Chapter discussing their position and role during the first half of the eighteenth century is preceded by a Chapter wherein the given category's position and role are discussed during the preceding period.

In the first (Chapters I (1&2), III and V) of each of the two Chapters devoted to each category, we have examined the position of Superior (Chapter I (1) & (2)), Intermediary (Chapter III) and the Primary zamindars (Chapter V) vis a vis Mughal state, peasantry and the zamindars themselves as it finally emerged during the seventeenth century. Simultaneously, effort has been made to bring into focus the levels of stratification that existed between the zamindars, inter-category as well as intra-category. Particular attempt has been made to highlight the fluctuations and changes in the zamindars' position emerging in consequence of the interaction between two forces working in diametrically opposite directions, viz, the state attempting to acquire greater controlling position over the zamindaris and enter into direct communications with the riaya, and the zamindars' endeavours to resist it and throw away, or at least minimize the degree of imperial hold already acquired over them. The study takes due note of the emerging pattern and its direction alongwith the sub-regional variations. Despite all this, it represents relatively harmonious relationship between the zamindars and the state, recognized and on the whole arduously maintained by the latter during the heyday of the Mughal rule in the subah. The keynote of the relationship was the careful and vigilant control exercised by the centre over the province and by the provincial authorities over the zamindars.

The next three Chapters (II, IV & VI) which come in succession to the above-mentioned ones, open with the onset of the
eighteenth century. In these Chapters we have analyzed the position of the Superior (Chapter II), Intermediary (Chapter IV) and the Primary zamindars (Chapter VI) as it emerged during the first half of the eighteenth century. In these Chapters we seek to study the emerging pattern of relationship between the provincial authorities and the zamindars during the period of turmoil. What was from the point of view of the empire a deteriorating state of affair between the two, constitutes the focus of discussion in these Chapters. As far as evidence helps us to do, light is also thrown upon the inter-zamindar relations beside highlighting the emerging pattern of state-zamindar-riaya relationship. The state of affair was marked by the loosening grip of the empire reflected in the increasing disregard for administrative

1. First few years of the eighteenth century constitute an important phase in the history of Mughal Gujarat. Shujat Khan, the subedar (1685-1701), died in office in 1701. In the wake of his death leading zamindars of the subah withdrew their troops (1701) and ceased to serve for good. Other zamindars followed in their footsteps. (For details please see Chapter II below.) The next subedar Prince Mohammad Azam who had only reluctantly accepted the office (1701) observed laxity. He not only failed to take remedial steps but also did not undertake the military expeditions into the subah as was required of a nazim as a matter of routine administrative norm. He preferred to stay at the provincial capital instead. Ali Mohammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, I (Persian text), Baroda 1928, pp 345-6; and Chapter II below. The prince was allowed to leave the subah (November 1704), long before the arrival of the next incumbent. (*Mirat-i Ahmadi*) I p 360). His withdrawal was followed by Maratha attack inflicting a crushing defeat on the Mughal forces. As a result Mughal officials were demoralised and the zamindars stood in revolt (March 1705). The Marathas attacked the subah again in the wake of Aurangzeb’s death (1707). The attack demoralised the Mughals further. Such a state of affairs followed by the provincial authorities’ submission before the Marathas further weakened the administrative pressure, making the empire more vincible. The damage done to imperial interest in 1701-7 could not be repaired in the subsequent years. (For details please see discussion below.) These events left their imprint on the subsequent developments.
norms, rising degree of recalcitrance and successful defiance of authority on the part of zamindars. Playing an active role in the ongoing process of the downward devolution of power, the zamindars replaced the state authority at village level. In these Chapters we have emphasized the new position and role that the zamindars were assuming vis-à-vis the Mughal administrative authority and the other constituents of the agrarian community.

The last Chapter (No. VII) deals with the changing composition of the class of zamindars. In the Chapter, we examine the changing modes of the emergence of zamindaris during the period. The zamindaris were carved out of the Mughal empire by the use of force and manoeuvre instead of being created in accordance with the established rule. We have not attempted to discuss the emergence of all the zamindaris, instead a few of them i.e. Palanpur, Junagadh, Radhanpur, Idar, Surat, Bharuch and Khambat have been examined, each a typical case of one mode of the emergence of a zamindari.

Sources of Study: --The present work is based mainly on original Persian works. In addition to the well known Persian sources we have also consulted a large number of documents which were either authored, prepared or compiled in the Subah.

The sources whether authored at the imperial centre or in the region itself, are of great value. A slight difference lies in the fact that some of the (imperial) terms like 'zamindar' and (the regional one like) giras and girasia find a more definitive and unambiguous usage in the regional works in contrast to their 'generic' and ambiguous usage as found in the works which happened to be authored at the centre.

Beside the chronicles, we have also consulted the farmans, hasb-ul-hukms, nishans, parwanas, chaknamas, khasra-i mazruat papers, Yad-dashts of various description, tamassuks, destur-ul
amals, ragbabandi documents, mawazna-i dehsala mawazna-i dehat, nuskha-i zamindaran, nuskha-i peshkash, some documents about jama-o kharj and jagirs and many other documents of different description of the empire, subah-sarkar-parganas - village and jagir level throwing light on the composition, inter-relation of and differentiation between the zamindars and actual working of the institution of zamindari, particularly in its relationship with the Mughal state.

In order to identify the zamindars and trace the changes, along with the pattern, in the position and role during the seventeenth century it is found necessary to make a study of the well known works written during the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century. The relevant evidence contained in these sources has been utilized and correlated with the other contemporary and near-contemporary works.

Evidence contained in the Mirat-i Sikandri, a useful regional source of information about the period of Gujarati sultans, has also been utilized.

'Chronologically exact' description of events in Mirat-i Ahmadi and statistical account based on the revenue records of the diwan office in the Supplement by Ali Muhammad Khan, the last diwan of the subah, so far known the best work on Gujarat constitutes our one of the most important sources of study. The Mirat-i Ahmadi which for its richness has been compared to the Ain-i Akbari of Abul Fazl needs no introduction. However, its author who looks at the historical events mainly from the seat of provincial power, has also made casual comments and at times does not bother to give relevant details to substantiate the comments. Indeed by comparison with the details given elsewhere in the

1. J.N. Sarkar, 'Introduction to the Mirat-i Ahmadi, (Tr) Baroda, 1927,
Mirat itself a few of his general comments stand contradicted. It may also be kept in mind that Ali Muhammad Khan attributes the origin of every major development affecting the Mughal's position adversely in the subah to the post - Aurangzeb period, particularly to the year of the emperor's death (1707), though it was not invariably the case. We have, therefore, tried to check the statements against the quantitative data contained in the same and other works of the period.

No less important is the Diwan's Book of Account, a treasure of valuable information about the revenues and related matters in respect of zamindars and other constituents of revenue paying society of Mughal Gujarat. The work contains important details about the (Superior) 'zamindaran' who have been duly identified, listed and categorized. The document furnishes information about the various form of zamindaris, obligations and rights of zamindars and details of land-survey on different points of time; the hasil and peshkash figures are also provided along with the dasturs, norms, provisions and working of the administration. Its comments on the emerging change are of great value.

The work referred to above is entered as diwanu khatanu pustak (MS No 227) in the Apparao Bholanath collection, Ahmadabad. It is neither entitled nor carries the name of its author. But in all probability the work was compiled by Ali Muhammad Khan, the last diwan and author of the Mirat. The Mirat mentions one Mithal Kayasth, a hereditary subah-nawis who had 'aided and assisted' Ali Muhammad Khan in obtaining information from the villages, cities and parganas and 'compiled together in the form of a book all the documents in one volume'. Ali Muhammad Khan had made use of this information in the preparation of the Supplement.
to the *Mirat-i Ahmadi*. On a closer view of the two works it becomes evident that the *Supplement* contains the summarised version of the informations available in the *Book of Account*. Secondly, Ali Muhammad Bahadur was favoured with the issuance of a *farman* (dt. 10th Shoban, 1167 AH) on the coronation of Alamgir II. The addressee who refers to himself as *fidwi* (the devoted servant) gave effect to its contents after seeking permission of the then Maratha Governor, Sripatrao, details of which are given in the *Mirat-i Ahmadi*. The *Book of Account* cites the same *farman* as addressed to the same person (Ali Muhammad Khan Bahadur). The addressee then, seeks Sripatrao's permission stating that a *farman* has been issued in his name (*banam-i fidwi*) and he wanted to give effect to its contents. The addressee - recipient of the *farman* is Ali Muhammad Khan who, in both the works, refers to himself as *fidwi*, an expression used by one for himself. Evidently the two works were authored by the same person, i.e. Ali Muhammad Khan.

Mention may also be made of the Pune documents which though lying unindexed are categorised as *Farsi Daftar*. These documents which seem to have been collected by Maratha Sardars from various parts of the empire are available in the form of loose sheets, bundled together in *Roomals*, 71 in all. The documents relating to Mughal Gujarat are spread in various *Roomals* in a haphazard manner. The *Roomals* contain documents for the entire Mughal-period of administration in Gujarat from the level of the *subah* down to that of villages on the matters and persons related with the

1. *Mirat-i Ahmadi* I p. 9
3. (Ali Muhammad Khan Bahadur) MS No 227 *Divanu Khatantu Pustak*, Apparao Bholanath collection (hereafter *Account*) f 103b read with *Mirat-i Ahamadi*, II pp 435-6
revenues. These documents cited as Pune preceded by the Roomal number (R N), constitute a rich source of information and have, therefore, been extensively utilized in the present study.

In addition to consulting the various kind of documents preserved at the district record offices of Surat (fort), Palanpur, Junagadh, Bhaonagar and Bharuch and Baroda and Rajkot archives we have also been able to utilize various sources preserved by a number of individuals and private establishments. Thus M/S S H Desai, last secretary of the extinct Junagadh state, Sardar Salimid Haider Inamdar, a descendent of emperor Jahangir's physical Hakim Nooruddin Bharuchi, the present Jadeja descendent of the ex-ruling house of Bhuj (Rao of Kutch), Kale Khan Pathan, a personal friend of the present descendent of the ex-ruling family of Radhanpur; the Imam of Jama Masjid (Shehr qazi) Palanpur, Jama Masjid Bombay Library, Pir Muhammad Shah Library (Ahmadabad), Cama Oriental Institute and Forbes institute of Bombay and some other individual and private or semi-private agencies are in possession of good deal of sources relevant to our study. The same have been utilized with due care.

During his extensive tour of Gujarat, the present researcher could also procure some documents in original. Most of these were purchased at a nominal cost from a junk trader (Sidhpur) who had purchased the same by way of junk from the ex ruling houses of Palanpur and Radhanpur. These documents which are quite identical to those of Pune, are referred to as Personal collection (P.C) in the present study. These two sets of documents coupled with the Diwan's Account are of immense value as they provide us with an insight into the process and pattern of change concerning some important aspects of the institution of zamindari in Gujarat.

In addition to above, some published sources, the farmans, chithis and kharitas etc. reproduced in the modern works and the
Bikaner collection of akhbarat have also been used in the course of the study.

The three works of local history Tarikh-i Soreth (Junagadh Manuscript), Mirat-i Mustafabad and Tarikh-i Palanpur need a word of explanation. The two former works were written by two diwans of the nawabs of Junagadh during the early nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Since the author of the Mirat-i Mustafabad, Sheikh Ghulam Muhammad, did not hold Diwan Ranchhodji, the author of Tarikh-i Soreth in high esteem, he looked at the work with skepticism and also tried to contest the authenticity of Ranchhodji's statements. The description of the events in the three works is, among other, based on the family records of the Babi and Jalori families and the documents and farmans available in the diwani offices. As such the works in spite of being of much later date bear considerable significance. Likewise some British works have also been used. However, these works have not been used to yield primary information.

The Milieu of Study

The first half of the eighteenth century constitutes an important landmark in the history of Mughal Gujarat. Having passed through an era of relative peace and stability for more than a century, the subah entered into a phase which was marked with administrative instability and political chaos. As the imperial Mughal control began to recede in the first half of the eighteenth century, a new scenario of local level tensions and subsequent realignment of authority and power began to emerge. With the recession of Mughal imperial control over Gujarat, authority devolved downward at all levels and the devolution seems to have stopped at the level of zamindar. The loss of Ahmadabad to the Marathas in 1753 merely signified the culmina-
tion of a process which had increasingly excluded Gujarat from amongst imperial concern.

At the outset of our period, the subah of Gujarat occupied a significant space in the imperial scheme. The region formed a bridge between the empire's northern and southern territorial units. Political developments in the bordering provinces of the Deccan and Ajmer had their direct impact on Gujarat. That the subah of Gujarat comprised an important link in the commercial life of Mughal India, is too well known to be discussed in any detail.

Administratively the subah was regarded as a sensitive region, a problem province. The author of the Mirat who surveyed the landscape from the viewpoint of a revenue official, found the subah 'a mine of mischievous persons', 'abode of disturbing


3. Emperor Aurangzeb described Gujarat as a 'refractory' region (Gujarat... zortalab ast). S.M. Azizuddin Husain, (ed) Kalimat-i Tafiybat by Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, Delhi, 1982 p 114; please see also Ibid pp 84-5. In one of his letters addressed to prince Mohammad Azam, then subedar of Gujarat (1701-4), the emperor advised him to follow the foot prints of Shujat Khan (noted for his continual and effective administrative control), "otherwise this is the province of Gujarat, may God forbid, there will be disorder and confusion". J H Billimoria (ed), Ruqat-i Alamgiri, Delhi, 1872, letter no XIX, pp 24-6.
rebels' who were forever possessed by the 'wind of revolt and passion of rebellion'\textsuperscript{1}. The \textit{Mirat} further points out that the Rajputs and Kolis (i.e. the zamindars) 'always created disturbance when they noticed a slight weakness in the control of nazims'.\textsuperscript{2} Also, the mischief mongers attacked and plundered many places finding the place without a faujdar or a thanedar i.e as and when an office was not occupied.\textsuperscript{3} The restiveness and quick response to a favourable situation is evident from the fact that the time between the arrival and the departure of the incoming and outgoing nazims and dependent officials transferred with them, was capitalized by the Rajputs and Kolis much to their advantage.\textsuperscript{4}

The above mentioned factors seem to have compelled the authorities to make necessary administrative arrangements. Thus, only a mansabdhar who enjoyed high rank was appointed subedar of Gujarat.\textsuperscript{5} He was also assisted by 900 mansabdars with a total

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Mirat-i Ahmadi}, I pp 174, 178, 210-11, 255-6. For the identification of zamindars with the Kolis and Rajputs, please see Chapters I & V below.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Ibid.} I pp 173-4

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid} l pp 273-4, 307, 345.

\textsuperscript{4} Thus, subedar Shahabuddin Ahmad Khan "had established nearly 80 (additional) thanas. The moment his men (faujdars and thanedars) left the thanas" (after the subedar had been recalled) the Rajputs and Kolis "laid most of the fortresses (the thanas and faujdars' strongholds) waste and raised head in revolt". \textit{Ibid} l pp 143-4. Further, any untoward development in and around the subah significant enough to detract provincial authorities' attention was, likewise, followed by disturbances and revolts. For instance, please see \textit{Ibid} I pp 245, 251-2, 255-6, 294-5, 357-61, 370, 394.

sawar rank of 26030 posted permanently in the subah. Then, there was established a thana in the centre of few villages, but in locales where the populace was perceived to be more turbulent, there was a thana in each village. In its efforts to intensify administrative pressure, or else meet the challenge of increasing recalcitrance, the Mughal state raised the strength of major and minor stations (makans) of faujdars and the thanas from 252 under Akbar to 414 by the close of the seventeenth century. According to the Mirat these were the real nerve centre through which the Nazims succeeded in exercising effective administrative control over the subah. The Nazim was assisted by the faujdars and the thanedars who, at the time of need, had to furnish half of the troops maintained by them against their conditional (mashrut) and unconditional mansabs for serving directly under the Nazim's command. Finally, the troops furnished by the zamindars also served under the command of the Nazims and the faujdars in addition to policing the areas of their respective possessions.

2. Account, ff 78a-9b, 425a-7a, Mirat-i Ahmadi, Supplement; pp 168-223, pargana haveli Ahmadabad which consisted of 193 villages, was divided into 12 groups, called taraf. Each taraf had a head village and a faujdar/Thanedar who was subordinate to the faujdar-i gird (faujdar of the environ) of the capital. Ibid, pp 169-83;.
5. Account of 76a; Mirat-i Ahmadi I p 26; Ibid, Supplement, p 169.
6. For details, please see Chapters I (1), (2) and V below.
In order to maintain continual administrative pressure the empire took preventive steps to keep the office always occupied. It was provided that the outgoing subedar should leave the office after the arrival of the next incumbent. 1 Emperor Aurangzeb also ordered that the incoming and outgoing nazims, and implicitly, the officials associated with them, must perform the ceremony of arrival and departure in a single meeting on the same place, instead of separately as it was done previously. 2

With a view to bringing to bear extra administrative pressure and ensure effectiveness of the existing one, preventive military expeditions were undertaken into the region, special task force was deputed from the centre, incapable officials were replaced by more competent ones, new fortresses erected and thanas were established, or the strength of the existing one was raised on the trouble-spots, complaints of the riaya were entertained and necessary redress was provided to remove the immediate cause of discontent. 3

The provincial administration was divided into two mutually independent halves - the nizamat and the diwani 4 each being answerable to the sovereign. The purpose of the "ingenious administrative device was to create a most potent and reliable

2. Ibid I p 372. In case of an official's death in office, the establishment of the deceased was retained until the alternative arrangement had been made. Ibid I pp 302, 306-7, 326, 345-6, 389.
4. For details, please see, P Saran, op cit pp 157-164, 169-80, 193, 196-97;
check on the highest officials of the province.\textsuperscript{1} The administrative system of 'checks and balances' and division of functions designed as a safeguard against the abuse of power and authority, had generally "narrowed down the opportunity of revolts" by officers.\textsuperscript{2} Its keynote was the 'careful and vigilant control exercised by the imperial centre' Just how much respect the 'centre could enforce for the system of checks and balances, depended on its strength'.\textsuperscript{3} Obviously it was liable to be upset by severe struggle for power at the centre and disaffection in the nobility. Such a struggle and disaffection emerged at the centre during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, gradually breaking down the administrative arrangements which had been so meticulously evolved and enforced with relative tenacity during the preceding century.

\textit{CHANGING MILIEU:}

\textit{The Imperial scene}

There seems to have started a downward process of devolution of power from, if not earlier than, the reign of Bahadur Shah. To begin with, the Mughal emperors lost their commanding position over the state apparatus, particularly the nobility. The power and authority of the emperor came to be grabbed by one or the other group of nobles that exercised it for subserving the factional interests and regardless of the emperor's authority. The imperial power and authority virtually came to be vested with

\begin{itemize}
\item 1. \textit{Ibid, pp 180-1.}
\item 2. H K Naqvi, "Incidents of Rebellion during the reign of Akbar", \textit{Medieval India, A Miscellany}, 11 1952, p 155.
\item 3. Satish Chandra, \textit{Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court - 1707-1740}, N Delhi, 3rd edn; pp 1iii-1iv.
\end{itemize}
the dominant faction of nobles at the court.\(^1\)

Despite the fact that the nobles successfully grabbed the emperor's authority and made him dependent upon them, they failed to provide effective leadership to the empire.\(^2\) Scramble for fertile and easily manageable jagirs and the conflict and concentration for wizarat widened the rift between sections of the nobility. The recurrent strife of rival factions tore the ruling class apart. The power shifted repeatedly hence no single noble (or group of nobles) could enjoy the power continuously. Also in order to retain and acquire power, the group of nobles had to enter into bargains and make compromises which affected cohesion and effectiveness adversely. Consequently, the nobility and, for that matter, the imperial centre lacked cohesion and uniformity, much less consistency in approach. So everything there was in confusion.\(^3\) In the process the strength of the centre declined consistently; thus it found increasingly beyond its capacity to enforce respect for the administrative norms which were thrown to the winds. Continued friction disorganized and even paralyzed administration at all levels.\(^4\)

**The Provincial Scene:**

The kind of struggle that had started at the imperial cen-

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tre, had its direct bearing on the affairs of the province of Gujarat. The process of devolution of power and authority seems to have gone further downward. The nazims gradually grabbed the authority of imperial centre and, due to erosion of the imperial vigil, the power and position of such others who were directly and exclusively dependent upon it. In their turn, the Nazims too could not retain control over their subordinates and develop a power base in the face of opposition of the locally strong nobles, the zamindars and the Mrathas. The process of downward devolution of power went on and seems to have stopped at the level of zamindar.

The Nazims:

A definite change in the position and role of Nazims is discernable from the available evidence.

Appointments of Nazims came to be made not so much in recognition of efficiency, merit or loyalty as much for narrow and immediate factional considerations.1 Ghazi-ud-din Khan Ferozjang who was considered unfit to render any useful service in battle was, at the instance of Khan-i Dawran Momin Khan, appointed Governor of Gujarat (September 1708) where military operations were the call of the hour.2 Similarly Saiyid brothers managed appointment of Daood Khan Panni (1713) for 'some state reasons', even though he was 'a poor and careless' administrator.3 Mahara-ja Ajeet Singh (1715), a 'careless' administrator who was not even trusted by the emperor, was likewise granted subedari on

1. For earlier period, P Saran op cit, pp 159, 167.
2. Satish Chandra op cit pp 33-4; Zahiruddin Malik; op cit p 27; Mirat-i Ahmadi I pp 382-3, 385, 388.
3. Mirat-i Ahmadi I pp 401, 403, 412; The tenure of his predecessor, Shahamat Khan, lasted only three months. Satish Chandra, op cit, p 100.
extra-administrative considerations i.e. the Saiyid brothers had entered into a secret understanding to which the king was not a party. The next incumbent, Muiz-ud-dawla Haider Quli Khan got the subedari in recognition of the effective role he had played in the fall of Saiyids. Nizam-ul-mulk's claim for the subedari was, for the emperor, too difficult to resist. Similarly, Mubarakz-ul-mulk Sarbuland Khan whose record of service in Kabul had been 'most unsatisfactory', and Maharaja Abhay Singh got the office on extra-administrative considerations.

The strong nobles desire to procure administrative positions in the province and not to move away from the court, gave rise to the practice of governing the subah through naibs, gradually extended to the province of Gujarat. Thus, Asaf Khan acquired the subedari of Gujarat (March 1712), decided to stay at

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1. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II p 3, Satish Chandra, op cit pp 92, 102, 110 and n. The Maharaja got a second tenure (1719) in recognition of the valued support he had provided to the Saiyid brothers against emperor Farrukhsiyar even though his first governorship had evoked numerous complaints. Ibid p 179; Mirat-i Ahmadi II pp 11-21.


5. The 'practice of plurality' (i.e. one person holding several appointments simultaneously) also arose as the strongmen at the court came to hold other administrative arrangement in the province Reign of Muhammad Shah, 12,15,18, 21, 33, 206-7; Satish Chandra, op cit pp 24, 40, 80, 120-1, 206-7. Please see also discussion in the following pages.
the court and govern the subah through deputies. Similarly, Khan-i dawran (1717-19), Maharaja Ajit Singh (second tenure - 1719-21) and Maharaja Bakht Singh (1744) did not even visit the subah. Impact of running the subah with the help of deputies, presumably enjoying low ranks and the indifferent administrators, is not difficult to perceive.

Effective performance of the assigned duties could hardly be expected from the subedars who were appointed on extra-administrative considerations. Thus Daood Khan Panni (1713-5) did not look after the Governor's establishment well. He did not bother to ensure enforcement of imperial orders concerning transfer of faujdar, take the required sureties from the rebellious element whose raids became a 'regular' feature from the period of his

1. Mirat-i Ahmadi, I, pp 396-7. During his tenure which lasted little less than an year, the subedar appointed Mohd Beg Khan, Iftekhob Khan and Sarbuland Khan in succession as deputies. The last of them appointed as the naib's naib and left the province soon after Jahandar Shah's dethronement. Ibid, I p. 397.

2. Ibid II p 12-3, 21, 25-6, 26, 31, 34, 36, 48; Balmukand Mehta, Balmukand Nama, ed., Satish Chandra, Asia, 1972, pp 11-2, 36-7, 49-50. Similarly Nizam-ul-mulk governed the subah through a deputy. Mirat-i Ahmadi II pp 34, 36, 48. Moreover, Haider Quli Khan (April 1721 - October 1722) took more than an year to reach (June, 1722) the subah only under great pressure Reign of Muhammad Shah pp 172-3). Sarbuland Khan too (May 1724-Oct 1730) reached the subah (December, 1725) after more than a year of his appointment. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II pp 54, 79-80. On the other hand some of the subedars left the subah without seeking prior approval and long before the arrival and appointment of the next incumbent. Ibid II pp. 11, 20-1.

3. During the years 1700-43 the centre appointed 15 subedars. The nazims ruled the subah in person for 27 years. During the remaining period it was governed by deputies, interim-governors, or naib-i subah whose number comes to 26. Then no subedar was appointed during September 1707 to September 1708 and November 1710 to March 1712. Please see the Appendix.
administration. From the time of his subedar, the Governors virtually abandoned the policy of defending the subah against the Marathas on the frontier, leaving the officials to fight against them single handed. Also the local officials who indulged in infighting were not brought to book.

The subedars committed illegalities which had damaging effects on the administrative arrangement itself. Thus Ferozjang (1708-10) extorted Rs. one lakh out of the revenues of jagirs of some eminent nobles, occupied mahals of khalsa and paibaqi and appropriated revenues for himself. Shahamat Khan (1711-2) followed in his footsteps. Muizaddawla (1721-2) occupied khalsa and paibaqi lands, and the jagirs of the mansabbars posted in and outside the subah. He defied the centre with boldness and raised the banner of absolute authority. Muizuddawla's innovation remained as his memento and a deed of boldness on the

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2. For details, please see discussion in the following pages.
4. Ibid, I pp 401-2, 408-9. The court compensated the mansab­
dars by paying them out of the provincial treasury. At the death of Firozjang in office, his naib resisted by force auditing and escheat of his master's property. Ibid, I pp 292-3, 401-2, 408-9.
5. Ibid, I pp 401-2, 408-9. At this time Shahamat Khan held the subah independently as no governor was appointed. Likewise Asad Khan's naib (1712) and later on Shahamat Khan (1713) appropriated revenues which were disportionate to their claims. Again, the provincial treasury had to bear the burden. Ibid I pp 401-2, 409.
6. Ibid II p 40.
part of other Nazims*. 1

Nizam-ul mulk's naib Hamid Khan also occupied the Khalsa, paibaqi and jagir lands and ceased office records, relieved diwani officials of their duties, leaving the diwan with no duties to discharge. 2 His successors retained the diwani establishment under their control. 3 Hamid Khan and his successors also occupied sair mahals, bait-ul mal and the mint, thus allowing the diwan to exist but in name. 4 As such the provision of 'checks and balancers' as done away with. The Nazim thus emerged as the sole authority at the level of province. 5 In consequence of the seizure of jagirs the mansabdars posted in the subah lost their means of livelihood and 'spent their lives in starvation.' 6 The development rendered the office of the provincial bakhshi meaningless and deprived the nazims of their own base of power in the province.

Behaving almost as sovereigns the Nazims from the time of Firozjung levied illegal exactions, particularly from the relatively vulnerable section of populace.

Firozjung imposed a 'slight duty' on the items of trade which were brought from the rural areas to the markets in Ahmadabad 7. Maharaja Ajit Singh's naibs 'extorted many taxes' from the

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1. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II p 45.
5. The Mirat particularly mentions that the matter was brought to the notice of imperial centre. But the centre could not make even an enquiry. Ibid, I p 8.
6. Ibid II pp 64, 78, 99-100, 118; Account f 16a.
populace of *pargana haveli* Ahmadabad during both the tenures of his governorship\(^1\). Since the *nagar seth*, Kapur Chand, resisted levying of illegal taxes, the *naib-subedar* had him done away with\(^2\). Similarly, other *subedars* levied illegal exactions from the populace of Ahmadabad and came into clash with the *nagar seths* as also faced the ire of the people on different occasions\(^3\).

Likewise, Hamid Khan "extorted a fixed amount with force from all sections of people" of Ahmadabad by way of *bewra*, a tax which the author of the *Mirat* had not even heard of earlier\(^4\). Subsequently all the *Nazims*, without exception, imposed the unpleasant tax and other cesses on various pretexts.\(^5\) The *naib* of Maharaja Abhay Singh mixed copper with silver and gold coins as a result of which the Ahmadabad mint lost its credibility.\(^6\)

Daood Khan Panni imposed a new levy, called *chhattaman* (release) from the holders of the *madad-i ma'sh lands*\(^7\). Similarly, Maharaja Abhay Singh's *naib* levied a separate cess on them.

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1. *Ibid* II p 34.  
3. For instance, please see *Mirat-i Ahmadi* II pp 36 136-9, 170-2. Sarbaland Khan imprisoned the *seth* but the one during Maharaja Abhay Singh's *subedari* fled the town. *Ibid* II pp 136-9, 170-2.
and appointed separate amils and tehsildars for the purpose.\(^1\)

As such the Subedars from the time of emperor Bahadur Shah onward encroached upon all the sources of revenue and levied new taxes and revived the prohibited ones. The Governors thus encroached upon the emperor's prerogatives, jagirdars' rights, and the provincial departments which had virtually been rendered ineffective and defunct.

The nazims seem to have, particularly from 1722, refused to share revenues with the imperial centre. Prior to 1722 the Mirat mentions the remittance of revenues to the emperors and the imperial court.\(^2\) But during the post 1722 years the only reference appears in 1734 when the court commanded then naib-subedar Ratan Singh Bhandari to remit the revenues. The naib remitted Rs. 1,23,000 out of which Rs 75000/- were contributed by the mutasaddi of Khanbat only.\(^3\) The remaining claim on jagirs (i.e. of the mansabdars posted at the imperial centre) was "never complied with".\(^4\) At a later date (1747) the emperor ordered the subedar and the port officer of Bharuch, each to remit a meagre sum of Rs 10,000 but neither of the two obeyed.\(^5\)

It has already been discussed that every subedar from Ibrahim Khan (1705) onward resorted to such activities as under normal circumstances would have invited imperial wrath leading to punishment of varying magnitude. But now the only sword of pun-

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1. \(ibid\) II pp 141-2; for similar references, \(ibid\) I p 364; \(ibid\) II pp 40, 45, 64, 78, 99-100, 118, 136-7, 256-7.

2. \(ibid\) II pp 385-6, 401-2; \(ibid\), II pp 4, 19, 24, 27, 30-3, 37-8.

3. \(ibid\) II pp 162, 167.

4. \(ibid\) II p 167.

5. \(ibid\) II pp 380-1.
ishment the imperial centre wielded was dismissal and even the burden of ousting him from office came to lay with the noble appointed to replace him.

Some of the subedars, during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, left the subah without having been served with the transfer orders. Ibrahim Khan (1705 - Sept 1707) left the subah after resigning the post on his own accord 'for leading retired life' without prior permission. ¹ Sarbuland Khan, the naib of subedar (wazir) Asad Khan, (May 1712-13), nominated his naib and left (Feb, 1713) 'due to exigency of time', ² which seems to be the fall of wazir with the rise of Farrukhsiyar to power in January 1713. ³ Likewise Shahamat Khan (May 1713-July 1713), Daoood Khan Panni (Aug. 1713-July 1717) and Shams ud-dawla Khan-i dawaran's (May 1717-18) naib Haider Quli Khan appointed their respective naibs on their own accord and entrusting the charge to them left the subah well before the transfer orders were served on them. ⁴ It was in violation of the long established norm govern-

1. Ibid, I p 381. It seems that the Khan found it inconvenient to serve under the new regime. The Reign of Muhammad Shah, p. 5.


4. Mirat-i Ahmadi, I pp 401, 413, , Ibid, II p. 20. It may be pointed out that Shahamat Khan (as naib) was transferred for accommodating Mohammad Beg Khan, an old associate of Asad Khan who enjoyed supreme position at the court. Ibid, I p 395. As subedar he was transferred at Kokaltash's instance (Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics p 32, 70n). Daoood Khan Panni and Shamsuddawlah were transferred to accommodate Maharaja Ajit Singh for subserving factional interests. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II pp 11, 21 Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics pp. 97, 101-2, 145, 147 The Reign of Muhammadshah, pp 11-3, 19, 20.
 transfers\(^1\) and standing imperial orders specifically meant for the subedars of Gujarat as mentioned earlier.

Maharaja Ajit Singh (1715-1717) appears to be the only subedar whose oppressive acts finally led to his dismissal\(^2\).

Shamsuddaulah Khan-i Dawran, the next incumbent, managed his ouster secretly through Abdul Hamid Khan (ex. diwan) who bore enmity towards the Raja.\(^3\) During his second tenure (1719-21) the Maharaja's naib had been disobeying imperial authority, maladministering the affairs and oppressing the people; his dismissal, however, came in the wake of the Saiyid's fall for the Raja had always been their staunch ally.\(^4\) Haider Qull Khan, the next incumbent managed Naib Subedar Anup Singh Bhandari's expulsion with the help of Mehar Ali Khan a leading local noble (ex-diwan)

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1. The farmans of appointment or transfer were sent through a sazawal whose duty it was to announce the news to the Nazim and escort him to his new charge asking the outgoing incumbent to make over charge to the new arrival. P Saran Provincial Government, pp 163-64.

2. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II p. 11; Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics, pp. 137n, 179; The charge of oppression on Ajit seems to have been of old standing. On August 22, Sept., 5, and 27, 1715 there were complaints that the Rajputs of Ajit Singh were laying their hands on the royal mahals and the jagirs of the royal mansabdars. The mutasaddis and the jagirdars dared not say anything as the news writers were in collusion with the Raja. The Rajput sources attributed the cause of dismissal to his friendship with Saiyids. Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics, p 137.

3. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II p 11-2. At the time the news was received, the Maharaja was away in Dwarka. Abdul Hamid Khan occupied the capital in his absence and placed it in the state of preparedness. The Raja was further dissuaded from his design of war by Nahir Khan. Ibid.

with whom he had come into confrontation.¹

Haider Quli Khan who had turned a rebel from the beginning of his stay in the subah (July 1722-Feb 1723) was, likewise, determined to resist his transfer. But when he "reviewed his companions" he found them "not powerful enough" to fight Nizam-ul mulk who headed a 'large army and heavy artillery'.²

Nizam-ul mulk was transferred after he had been declared a rebel.³ His naib, Hamid Khan was ousted by Shujat Khan, the deputy Governor under Sarbuland Khan (1724-30).⁴ With the assistance of the Marathas, Hamid Khan reoccupied Ahmadabad defeating and killing the leading imperialist in action.⁵

Sarbuland Khan could succeed in expelling Hamid Khan with the active support of the local officials who were promised positions and promotions.⁶ In his turn, Sarbuland Khan turned a rebel (December 1725 - October 1730)⁷. Even though he had resigned (1728) but he was transferred (1730) only after he fell in disfavour with Amir-ul umra Shamsuddawlah. The dismissed subedar put up armed resistance but failed to resist Maharaja Abhay Singh who was assisted, among others, by the leading officials of the

1. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II, ppp 37-40. Bhandari had to jump out of window of the fort to save his skin from the furious populace of Ahmadabad. Ibid, II p 40.


3. The Reign of Muhammad Shah, pp 89-90, 93.


Likewise Maharaja Abhay Singh and his naib, Ratan Singh Bhandari, defied the imperial authority and oppressed the people from the very beginning of their administration. His transfer was contemplated only after he fell in disfavour with his patron, Amir-ul umra, and the latter found in Momin Khan (mutasaddi of Khambat and enemy of the naib-subedar) a candidate who could, as desired, oust the Bhandari who had already annoyed the leading local nobles. Thus Momin Khan, a candidate picked up from the region itself, succeeded, unassisted by the centre, in ousting the naib after a fight of one year with the assistance of local officials and the Marathas. The formal farman appointing him Subedar was issued only after he had occupied Ahmadabad.

None of the three subedars appointed subsequently could assume charge in the face of opposition put up by a local noble, Jawanmard Khan Babi who had occupied the capital during the crisis that followed Momin Khan's death (Feb. 1743).

1. Ibid., II pp 118-28, 129-30.
2. Ibid II pp 133-41, 157, 162, 164-5, 170-72
5. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II. pp 242-3; The Reign of Muhammad Shah p 124 M.S. Commissariat, op. cit. II p 476
6. Mirat-i Ahmadi; II pp 277-8, 302-3, 312, 314-5, 321-2, 326-31, 374-5. At the time Jawanmard Khan Babi occupied Ahmadabad, the town folk were happy to see that the man of the region had come to power: Sakna-i baldah umuman b' tasawwur-o-khayal een k'al hal Nazim hum-watni shude khushiha namude.Ibid, II p 312.
The centre as such failed to field a suitable candidate strong enough to oust Jawanmard Khan Babi, a faujdar from the region itself who had thus risen to the highest seat of provincial power in his own right and continued to hold it until (1753) the surrender of Ahmadabad to the Marathas.

Thus, in the downward process of devolution of imperial authority and power the noble's dominant faction at the court was replaced, at the provincial level, by the Governor(s) whose authority was finally grabbed by subordinate official (faujdari) who, obviously, commanded power in the region in his own right.

Despite their successful moves to acquire hold over all the provincial departments and the determination, particularly from Muizuddawla onward, to retain the subah, none of the duly appointed subedar could succeed. The cause appears to be worth probing into the available evidence suggests that the Nazims could not pool required resources even to regularly pay salary to their soldiers, much less develop a strong financial base. From the time of Sarbuland Khan each Nazim was confronted with the same difficulty. In the year 1750-51 the entire income of the subedar from all sources, according to the Mirat, stood at a meagre sum of Rs four lakh only - the amount was not even equal to the income from the haveli Ahmadabad of the opening years of the century. It was despite the fact that the Nazims had encroached upon all the legitimate sources of income and levied illegal exactions whenever and wherever they could so.

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Among the factors which led to a sharp decline in revenues the one appears to be the Maratha occupation of lands in Gujarat. But the income also declined even from those areas which were still under Mughal control. It would also appear from the available evidence that the fall in revenues was also caused by frequent transfers (in early years) of officials and internal strifes. More particularly may be mentioned the fact that some Mughal officials failed to effect assessment and collection of revenues whereas the more competent and strong ones refused to share their resources with the Nazims. Moreover, the Nazims own capacity to effect collection of revenues suffered set backs in the face of increasing opposition put up by the zamindars who were emerging as the real authority at village level.

The Faujdars:

The faujdars seem to have followed in the foot prints and stepped into the shoes of Nazims at sarkar/pargana level. They too tried to corner all administrative powers. But only a few of them who could stand in their own right, could succeed.

To begin with, the criterion of selection of faujdars as it came to be influenced by extraneous considerations, underwent a change. Thus Kunwar Abhay Singh and later on Kunwar Bakht Singh, were appointed faujdars of sarkar Saurath and sarkar Pattan.

1. For references see discussion in the following pages.
3. Ibid I pp 403-5, Ibid II 241; For further references on the officials' incapacity, Chapter IV below. For the process and outcome of the officials' refusal to share income with the Nazims see discussion in the following pages and Chapter VII below.
4. For details, see Chapters II, IV and VI.
during the period of Maharaja Ajit Singh and Maharaja Abhay Singh's subedar. Both of them governed the affairs through their deputies. Likewise Bakhshi-ul mamalik Qamar-ud din acquired port-officership of Surat, and Amir-ul umra Shamsuddawla's father-in law got the faujdari of Saurath. Such appointees discharged their administrative responsibilities through deputies. Moreover, the principle of heredity became a common, if not universal practice as the administrative positions came to be usually granted to son after father. But, so far as our knowledge goes, the naibs as were deputed from the centre failed to retain the position once a noble commanding influence locally stood up in arms against them.

The practice of cornering more than one official positions in one person acquired momentum during the first half of the eighteenth century. The administrative practice of granting

1. Mirat-i Ahmadi, I p 401, Ibid, II pp 41-2, 196-7. Kunwar Abhay Singh's men resorted to plundering traders and caravans. His naib also resisted his transfer under the Maharaja's instigation Ibid II pp 8-9. For similar instance of politically motivated appointment and its consequence, Ibid I pp 347, 374. It may be recalled that Aurangzeb preferred to appoint faujdars who "enjoyed respect" in and "communicated with the inhabitants of" the concerned area. Ruqat, letter nos. XIX, XXXVI-VII, pp 24-6, 38-41 addressed to the Governor of Gujarat


6. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II pp. 9-11, 166-7, 196-7, 246-7. For the governance directly by the appointees and then their continuity in possession, see Chapter VII, below.
faujdari rights to the jagirdars crept into the eighteenth century.¹ But the practice in the subah came to an abrupt end with the confiscation of all jagirs by the Nazims.²

In violation of the well established norm of keeping the revenue matters independent of the executive during the closing years of his reign, Aurangzeb appointed (1699) one Mir Muhammad Beg as faujdar and amin of Dholqa.³ From Bahadurshah's reign (1707-11), the revenue positions (i.e. amil, amin, mutasaddi) came to be frequently associated with the executive (i.e. faujdar, Kotwal) officials as a matter of routine administrative practice.⁴ The faujdars aggrandised their positions further by contracting ijara rights.⁵ As such the faujdars followed in Nazims' footprints at sarkar/pargana level. The system of 'checks and balances' so far as it was based on the principle of 'division of power' was thus rendered meaningless at pargana and sarkar level also.

More so as the faujdars thus vested with extra authority over revenue matters, also came to enjoy immunity from administrative actions. There is evidence to show that the imperial

2. For references see discussion in the preceding pages.
3. *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, p 342. Emperor Aurangzeb, according to the *Mirat*, had sanctioned the faujdar of Vijapur to Safdar Khan Babi (1703 A.D)* as he had no relation with Diwani.* (*Ibid*, p p 355). It may be inferred that the faujdars were not desired even to be remotely linked with the financial affairs.
5. Please see Chapter, IV.
authority during its heyday took action, such as dismissal from service, reduction in mansab, imposition of fines, confiscation of property, imprisonment etc, against the erring officials.\(^1\)

But during his closing years, Emperor Aurangzeb showed leniency in taking actions against such officials.\(^2\) Subsequently, the Mughal officials who indulged in infighting, embezzled state revenues, refused to settle accounts and resisted audits and transfers continued to hold positions and hardly faced punitive action.\(^3\) Some of them who had indulged in the acts of gross indiscipline were, on the contrary, favoured with promotions and other administrative assignments because of the patronage extended by a strong noble at the imperial court.\(^4\)

With the passing of the entire administrative authority of the subah into Nazims' hands as discussed above, the Imperial as well as the Governor's authority and power came to be gradually devolved upon the faujdars.

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4. See for instance, Muhammad Beg Khan (ex-naib subedar) resisted auditing but was favoured with the position of mutasaddi and then subedar because of Asad Khan, wakil with whom he had "old relation." *ibid*, I pp. 392-4; also see *ibid*, II pp 41, 47-8.
The prevailing political situation—internal strifes and Maratha invasion—placed the local officials in general and locally influential nobles in particular, in a highly bargainable position which they endeavoured to utilize for attaining and retaining administrative and other positions.

Since each subedar-designate particularly from the time of Nizam-ul-mulk's subedar was called upon to oust the subedar-in-power, the former (for want of effective imperial assistance) had to enlist support of the locally influential and well informed nobles. Thus, for instance, Salabat Muhammad Khan and Jawanmard Khan Babi agreed to assist Subedar Mubarak-ul-Mulk against Hamid Khan only after they extorted a promise for the grant of faujdaris of Viramgaon (Biramganm) and Pattan. Later on Jawanmard Babi and Muhammad Babi procured through Maharaja Abhay Singh, under a similar situation, watan-ari(?) of Badnagar (Vadnagar) and naib faujdar of another pargana. Likewise Momin Khan "induced and persuaded" Jawanmard Khan Babi (junior) "to assume charge of pargana Pattan" on 'condition of confederation with the former against the Subedar-in-office.' In addition to their procurement of offices by extending valued support to the subedars, some of the local nobles success-

1. Thus, the Babis' assistance was sought because they were "well informed and in accord with the people" of Gujarat Mirat-i Ahmadi, II p 86. For details about the Babis M.S. Commissariat, History of Gujarat, II pp 169-70, 405, 435. Please see also Chapter VII below.

2. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II p. 86. The two nobles had been close associates of Hamid Khan and now were pursued to change side, Ibid, II pp 69, 73, 78.

3. Ibid, II pp 133, 145; also Ibid II pp 119-20, 132.

fully captured offices fraudently and by applying their military might. The power of purse was also put to effective use for acquiring hold over administrative apparatus, as in Surat, and for procuring orders of appointment as in Palanpur, Bharuch, Cambay etc. Some of them also contracted ijara rights and acquired administrative position on 'bilmuqte' basis and stronger amongst them, tried to retain the position even after the expiry of the period of contract.

As regards the consistency in their attitude towards the Governors, the nobles in the Subah may, broadly, be categorized into three groups: There were the nobles like Muhammad Iraj (Faujdar-amin of Dholqa under Mubariz-ul Mulk) Himmat Dil Khan, Zanbil Khan (Faujdar-i gird and amin) and other who consistently stood by and assisted the subedar-in-office. These officials emulated and even surpassed the Governors, their patrons, in assessing the land revenue arbitrarily, levying cesses under various pretexts and imposing fines etc. Under the Nazims pa-

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1. For details, Chapter VII below; also Mirat-i Ahmadi, II pp 82-3.

2. For details, see discussion under the Nawabis of Surat, Bharuch, Cambay and Palanpur, Chapter VII below.

3. For details, Ijarahdars, Chapter IV below.


troungage these officials enjoyed immunity from punishment.\(^1\) As these officials continued to assist the Nazim even when the latter resisted his ouster from office, their tenure depended on his pleasure and ended with that of the Nazim.\(^2\)

But then, the officials like Abdullah Beg (naib-mutasaddi) of Bharuch under Mutassadi-subedar Mubariz-ul mulk continued to hold the office even after the subedar’s expulsion. Once the subedar was placed under transfer, the naib-mutasaddi withdrew his support and did not participate in the battle of resistance fought by Mubariz-ul mulk. To ensure his continuity against the imperial desire and counteract the new subedar Maharaja Abhay Singh’s design, the Beg obtained a sanad of deputyship from Nizam-ul Mulk Asaf Jah whom thus he chose as his new master.\(^3\)

In the third category may be counted the Babis and their ilk who also assisted the Subedar in power but with a difference. After making due bargains they threw in their lot invariably with the subedar-designate and actively assisted in his efforts to oust the dismissed subedar from office.\(^4\) Unassisted by the imperial centre the subedar had to lean heavily on their support for assuming charge and running the administration

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1. Our sources do not speak of such actions as having been taken on the basis of their oppressive acts against any of them. Instead they are continuously noticed in office until the Nazim himself was dismissed. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II, pp 94-5, 105-6, 164-65, 250, 260.

2. Ibid, II pp. 94-5, 105-6, 164-65.


4. For references see discussion under Nawabi of Radhanpur, Chapter VII below.

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of the subah.\textsuperscript{1}

From the time of Maharaja Abhay Singh's period of subedari, the position of local officials vis-à-vis the Governor underwent a further change. The Maharaja's naib alienated and annoyed most of them who, in turn, refused to serve him.\textsuperscript{2} Henceforth the leading amongst them like Muhammad Ashraf Khan Ghorni (faujdar of Barasinwara), Jawanmard Khan Babi (faujdar of Pattan and Viramgaon) Zorawar Khan Babi (faujdar and wattadar of Vadnagar) agreed to serve only after they had "settled expenses" with the subedars "by way of daily expenses" for their soldiers and thus tended to turn mercenaries, aligning the same way with the Marathas as and when it served their purpose.\textsuperscript{3}

The alienation of the nobles that commanded respect and power in the region by Naib-subedar Ratan Singh Bhandari, cost the Maharaja his subedari. Momin Khan (faujdar of Khambat) who bore ill-will towards the Bhandari, rallied round him other annoyed officials and with their help expelled the naib out of office.\textsuperscript{4} Subsequently the centre appointed three subedars, one after another, but none of them succeeded in assuming charge of the subah, as Jawanmard Khan Babi, strongest of the local nobles,\textsuperscript{5} had captured power after Momin Khan's death (1743) and

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1. For subedars' keenness for registering their support, \textit{Ibid}, II, pp 119, 196.
5. Thus Fakhruddawlah, the subedar-designate, had sent sanad-i nayabat without naming anyone with the condition "that anyone of the provincial mansabdar... able to discharge responsibility" could be appointed naib. As "there was none who could hold the office", Jawanmard Khan wrote down his own name as naib. \textit{Ibid}, II p. 322.
proved too strong to be ousted by the imperial nominees. As such the actual power of whatever had remained of it with the imperialists, passed into and came to stay with the locally influential section of provincial officials.

The developments discussed above must have, cumulatively, disturbed the administrative arrangements, disrupted continuity and consistency of administrative control and eroded its intensity.

Struggle For Power

The Marathas:

The Maratha penetration into Gujarat that had started during Shivaji's times, became a common feature with the opening of the eighteenth century and culminated in the conquest of the provincial capital, Ahmadabad in 1753. But well before the fall of Ahmadabad, the province had, as discussed above, ceased to be an administrative concern of the imperial centre as its authority had come to be devolved practically upon its own officials. Acting as a catalyst, the Maratha presence accelerated the process of deterioration which had already set in and hastened the extinction of Mughal power from the subah.

The Maratha conquest of the subah was the consequence of their endeavours spread over more than four decades. The phased conquest may broadly be divided into three stages as discussed below:

During the first phase (C. 1701-1724) the Marathas seem to have, by and large, remained confined to south Gujarat which

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2. For references and details, Chapter VII below.
included sarkars of Ramnagar, Nadot and Surat. The Marathas did make some headway during the period but it is quite important from other angle also.

In the first place the imperial defence strategy for the province seems to have undergone a vital change. During the years 1701-12 the reigning emperors endeavoured to deny the Marathas an entry into the Subah by fighting them on the frontiers, ensuring availability of necessary resources for taking preventive steps by the Governors and other officials who were specifically directed to do so.

During the years 1713-24 the mutasaddis of Surat, and not the subedars, are mentioned as fighting defensive battles against the Marathas well inside the Surat sarkar, instead of on the frontiers of the subah. It seems the imperial authorities had virtually abandoned the policy of defending the subah on the border after 1712. Secondly the set-backs which the Mughals suffered at Marathas' hands affected the provincial administrative control and the imperial credibility adversely. The Maratha forces inflicted a crushing defeat, imprisoning a number of


4. During this period our sources do not mention the reigning emperors issuing instruction as for the preceding years. Instead, the mutasaddi and gilded of Surat are shown as indulging in in-fighting and going un-punished. Mirat-i Ahmadi, I, pp 402-3, 410; Akhbarat, No. 2099, dt ? Jamadi I, 4th Ry Farrukhsiyar.
officials, **mansabdars**, including the commander of the Mughal army, the **naib-subedar** at Baba piyara pass near Surat in 1705.\(^1\)

The battle not only exposed the deplorable state of Mughal **mansabdars** but also shattered their morale.\(^2\) The defeat, moreover, caused 'a great commotion and vast relaxation in the administrative control leading to 'disorder and anarchy'.\(^3\) The Kolis, in general raised disturbance and plundered Baroda.\(^4\) The zamindars of Rajpipla and Jagat rose in rebellion.\(^5\) A similar situation prevailed in the **subah** following Maratha attack of 1707 that was made soon after emperor Aurangzeb's death.\(^6\)

Further, **Naib-mutasaddi** of Surat Sheikh-ul-Islam's defeat (1718-19) opened the flood gates of Maratha's "repeated annual incursions" into **Sarkar** of Surat.\(^7\) Pilaji Gaikwad fixed upon the hilly country in the neighbourhood of Songadh, befriended the zamindar of Rajpipla and secured his consent to erect small forts between Nadot (Nandot) and Sonpara (Sagpara), attached to his cause the Bhils and Kolis of the neighbourhood and finally (1719)

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2. Many of the **mansabdars**, had not even the horses to ride' and could gather 2000 troops as against the required strength of 25000 *Ibid* I p 361. The **mansabdars** were "so seized with horror that they are unable to perform duties as **faujdars**" noted the *Mirat*. *Ibid*, I, p. 367.


secured from the Bhils the hill fort of Songadh. With the defeat of Momin Khan, the Port officer of Surat in 1723-24, the Maratha ascendancy in sarkar Surat increased further.

The second stage begins with the year 1724. In this year the Marathas entered other parts of Gujarat and their incursions may be said to have continued henceforth from year to year without a break till they secured mastery over the subah. More particularly Hamid Khan, deputy of Nizam-ul-mulk, in the wake of his master's dismissal and his expulsion, allied himself with the Marathas for recapturing the subah and surrendered to them the chauth and sardesmukhi thus inflicting a severe blow on imperial authority in the province. Subsequently none of the subedars could resist the Maratha claims to chauth and sardesmukhi successfully. The imperial court, however, did not (technical-
ly) approve of the Nazims act of surrendering the chauth for quite sometime as will be pointed out a little later.

As regards the defence mechanism, the imperial authority continued to rely, almost exclusively, upon the subedars who were left to cope with the situation as best as they could.¹ Lacking resources and determination, the subedars entered into agreement with the Marathas, fighting them only when they were hit directly.² The subedars did not come to the rescue even of such pargana/sarkar level officials as were attacked by the Marathas for levying mal-i amani (also called khandni, meaning security-money) or chauth or for capturing the area itself.³ The centre thus left the subedars to cope with the situation single handed who in turn passed on the responsibility to local officials. Every official thus chose his own course of action independently of others.⁴

Having successfully enforced their claims to chauth and sardesmukhi, the Marathas endeavoured to make outright annexations. In addition to their territorial acquisitions in South Gujarat they made prized acquisitions in central, eastern and northern parts of the subah.⁵ Thus during the second phase the

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2. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II pp. 92-3, 150, 160-61, 164-5, 186-7; Reign of Muhammad Shah, pp. 48-51,


4. Mirat-i Ahmadi, II, pp. 52-3, 55, 58-9, 62, 64-6, 68-9, 74-81, 89-90; English Documents, pp 8-9; M.S. Commissariat. History of Gujarat, II, pp. 417-8, 426, 447, 451, 453, 474; See also Chapter VII below.

Mutghal defence mechanism had broken down and the Marathas had become a power that had to be reckoned with in the affairs of the region.\(^1\)

The third stage begins with Momin Khan's agreeing to share with the Marathas as equal partners the income from the entire subah and the administration of the provincial capital in 1736.\(^2\) The development was facilitated by the half hearted decision, as also inability of the imperial court to oust the then Subedar in Office.\(^3\) Not strong enough to undertake the task, Momin Khan allied himself with the Marathas to fulfill the pre-condition for obtaining the Subedari.\(^4\) Thus there began the joint Mughal-Maratha rule (1737). With the issue of the farman, the Marathas gained formal imperial recognition of their new position though the Maratha - Momin agreement carried tacit approval of the court from the very beginning.\(^5\) The same arrangement, it may be mentioned, continued till after the close of the period of the present study.

In the light this discussion, it may be suggested that the process of Maratha conquest was gradual, spreading over a little less than half a century. The process seems to have been rendered easy and its speed accelerated by the prevailing factionalism,

\(^1\) Please see particularly the imperial advice (1737) asking Mominod Khan to behave well with the Marathas. *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II. pp. 195-6.


\(^3\) *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II. pp 195-6, 198-212.


Internal dissensions and strife among the Mughal nobles. Also the role played by the zamindars of the province in the struggle for supremacy does not appear to be insignificant.

The Zamindars

In the ongoing multi-cornered struggle for power in general and the Mughal-Maratha struggle for supremacy in particular, the role of zamindars seems to have been detrimental to the imperial interest.

In the year 1707, the Mirat, for the last time, notices the Rajputs and Kolls to have turned up to serve the Mughals against the Marathas. In another instance desai of Viramgaon is also mentioned espousing the imperial cause when the place was attacked by the Marathas.

On the other hand, there are more instances to show the zamindars serving the Maratha interest. When the Mughal forces pressed the Marathas hard (1725-26) the Kolls of Kaparbanj provided them with shelter. A little later they were sheltered in the zamindari land of Ali Mohan. The zamindars of Rajpipla, Sonpara and Sadarbisal allowed the Marathas to erect fortresses. Moreover, the muqaddam of Padra, desai of Viramgaon, Kolls of Thasra and Kaparbanj rendered valuable help to the Marathas for occupying Baroda, Viramgaon and Kaparbanj. Likewise the zamindar

1. Mirat-i Ahmadi, I, p 378. Leading ones among them had ceased to serve from the year 1701 itself. Please see Chapter 11 below.

2. Please see desais, Chapter IV below.


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, II, pp. 27, 52-3.

of Lunawara helped Marathas plunder Birpur town.\(^1\) The administrator of the affairs of the zamindars of Jhabua is noticed in the Maratha camp against Mughals in 1724-25.\(^2\) It may also be mentioned that the Kolis and Rajputs are sometimes noticed as ravaging and occupying Mughal lands, and particularly after the Mughals suffered setbacks.\(^3\)

Even though the instances showing the zamindars espousing Maratha cause are not many, however the very fact that they ceased to serve the empire\(^4\) is worthy of consideration. Here it seems important to point out that from the point of view of the zamindars the emerging conditions were quite favourable: The Marathas' very presence in and around the subah must have meant that the Mughals would be much less able to concentrate on the front opened by the zamindars; then the imperial administrative control was declining and its consistency being disrupted. The shrinking Mughal authority was not simultaneously being replaced by the Marathas. The situation thus being propitious for advancing their own cause, the zamindars grasped and endeavoured to capitalize it.\(^5\)

In their endeavour to do so the zamindars seem to have emerged as the ones who exercised state authority and power at the level of village, the lowest point where the power had thus come to be devolved.

4. For details, Chapters II & VI below.
5. For details Chapter II IV VI and VII below.
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<th>Subedar's period of actual stay in subah</th>
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