The chapter aims to deal with the system of financial administration in the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's tenure as the king of Punjab is remarkable, among other things for instituting a well define and meticulous system of financial administration which included both revenue collection and State expenditure. The policies of financial administration form at the centre level were systematically implemented according to the peculiar economic conditions of various territories. However, the success of these financial administrative policies was largely owing to the Hindu financial administrators who were very wisely choosen by the Maharaja to implement them. These Hindus had great eligibility for their jobs as they were well versed and familiar with financial management because of their experience in the Mughal Courts and other institutions. Thus the chapter focus on both the policies of revenue collection and expenditure and their systematic and efficient implementation by several important Hindu financial administrators.

The financial system prevailing in the Punjab during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign was very simple. There were no elaborate budget estimates prepared in advance by his Government. Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself, as we know, was the centre of whole governmental system and was assisted by a Chief Minister, few Ministers and a number of Diwans, Thoshakhanias and Munshis who administered different departments of the State. The departments like Revenue and Central Secretariat were given by the Maharaja to those astute Hindus, whose family members had in the past occupied ministerial posts in the Muslim
Court of Delhi and under the Kabul Government also. The finances of the Sikh Kingdom were regulated on the principle of keeping the expenditure within the limits of revenue. If the revenue of the Kingdom declined owning to some unexpected circumstances, the expenses of the State were also curtailed proportionately. There was no practice of meeting deficit by means of loans. As earlier stated in chapter II, the accounts of his revenue receipts and the expenditure were at first maintained by Rama Nand Sahu, a banker of Amritsar who held the Octroi of Amritsar and farmed the salt mines of Pind Dadan Khan. He acted as head cashier while Basti Ram was responsible for day to day expenditure and local Income at Lahore. Later on Rama Nand’s Thoshakhana was called Thoshakhana Khas and the Lahore treasury as Thoshakhana Behla.

In 1805, Holker advised the Maharaja to constitute a regular treasury. The constitution of the Finance Department and the introduction of the system of maintaining official records goes to the credit of Diwan Bhawani Das. As has already been stated the Maharaja appointed him to the position of Bakshi and also Wazir-i-Mal. Diwan Bhawani Das established a regular treasury and organized different departments to deal with various items of income and expenditure. At that time the total Income of Lahore Darbar was approximately 30 lakhs of rupees. Diwan Bhawani Das divided the financial transactions into Daftars like Abwab-ul-Mal, Abwab-ul-tahwil, Taujihat, Roznamacha etc. 282

As the Government of the Sikhs was simple at that time, the system introduced by Diwan Bhawani Das seems to have been quite elaborate.

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282 For more details about Daftars see chapter-II.
Diwan Bhawani Das set up separate treasuries at important district headquarters such as Lahore, Amritsar, Jalandhar and Gujrat. These treasuries were required to maintain a regular account of all incomes and expenditures. Maharaja Ranjit Singh deserves the credit that belong to a reformer even at the time when he was not secure in his position in 1809 and the monarchy was being consolidated and strengthened by this most powerful Sikh Sardars. After the absence of a regular governance in the province for several years, the Maharaja re-established a departmental organization.

Ganesh Das Wadehra gives the names of a number of Hindu officials who worked under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the finance department. These were: Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Devi Das, Nanak Chand Chopra, Diwan Sawan Mal, Lala Karam Chand, Sohini, Shankar Das Duggal, Kirpa Ram Chopra, Hans Raj Qannugo, Maghar Mal Saini, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath, Lala Bhagat Ram, Amrik Rai.283 He also gives the names of Munshis i.e. Lala Ram Dayal Khawatia, Shiv Dayal (Moharwala), Rattan Chand Darhiwala, Rattan Chand Duggal, Sharda Ram, Sarab Dayal Laharia, Kahan Chand (Letter writer), Ram Chand Rabti, and treasurers were Misr Beli Ram, Misr Jassa Mal and Misr Ram Kishan while Misr Rallia Ram was head of customs.284

The revenue records of the Khalsa Darbar were written in Persian language. In the system of Persian accounts, the accounts are denoted by certain signs called raqums. In these raqums the highest figure is shown at the top, the next lower figure represents the smaller amount and so on.285 In 1815, the old division of major and minor heads of accounts was discontinued. The Exchequer Department was reorganized.

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284 Ibid.

The income accruing from sources other than land was consolidated under one general head of sairat and its sub-divisions of customs, excise and tributes. All of them constituted a sub-department of the Exchequer. This general reorganization of the departments added a new series of papers to the annual official records. The awarcha papers pertained to the debit and credit accounts whether receipts or expenditure. This was replaced by the simple word 'Jama Kharch'. These awarcha papers were, strictly speaking, a sort of ledger for each head and sub-head of accounts in which were posted the items credited to that head from time to time. This was done to check the Jama Kharch accounts of various departments of the Government. This new system was introduced in 1815, when Ganga Ram was employed in the Finance Department of the Lahore Darbar.\textsuperscript{286} He had great experience to his credit and hence he was responsible for these improvements. He became the head of the military office and keeper of the royal seal. Diwan Ganga Ram simplified the system of keeping records. After his death the charge of the royal seal was entrusted to Diwan Dina Nath who later become head of the civil and finance offices, following the death of Diwan Bhawani Das.

The heads of Departments sent their official papers to the office of the Diwan for scrutiny. His office was a record office where these papers were stored in a proper place. The accounts submitted by the heads of Departments were scrutinized there and in certain cases, an abstract of them was retained for reference. According to Sita Ram Kohli the papers\textsuperscript{287} that were sent to the Diwan’s office from the several departments were those relating to:-

1. Taaluqat- collection of land revenue from districts.

\textsuperscript{286} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{287} These papers were relating to 12 Daftars and other sub offices. Sita Ram Kohli, Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records, Vol. II, pp. 7-8.
2. **Sairat**- collection of revenue from customs.
3. **Wajuhat**- collection of revenue from excise, etc.
4. **Nazrana**- collection of the fixed annual tributes, fines and presents.
5. **Tahwildars**- Government funds and other State transactions.
6. **Ibtiya**- Purchases of things for general use.
7. **Kiraya**- Fare of conveyances hired for Government business.
8. **Zakhirajat**- Transactions regarding the purchase and consumption of military stores.
9. **Ratib**- Purchase and consumption of fodder, etc. for Government stables.
10. **Mawajib**- Payment of salaries made to various branches of the army and civil establishments or *amla*.
11. **Madid Kharch**- Payment of political pensions and the ladies apartments.
12. **Siah rojnameha**- Details of payments made from the treasury as well as the cheques or cash orders on the district treasuries or on *tahwildars* etc.
13. **Awarcha**- The *awarcha* papers of certain heads of expenditure whose *Jama Kharch* account is not found among papers in the above list. It may be that these heads were grouped in one department and the office incharge was responsible directly to the *Maharaja*. These were the following:-

1. **Inam** (rewards)
2. **Tahaif** (presents)
3. **Khilat** (robe of honour)
4. **Dharmarth** (charity)
5. **Itayat** (gifts)
6. **Muqarrariyat** (fixed annuities)
7. *Sarf-i-hazur* (Maharaja's personal expenditure)

8. *Ziyafat* (entertainment)

9. *Rukhastana* (some cash given at the time of departure)

10. *Jagirat* (grant of land, etc.)

11. *Musaidat* (advances of money)

12. *Iwaz musaidat* (recovery of advances).

The important Hindu finance Ministers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were Diwan Bhawani Das and after his death Diwan Dina Nath. They were holding the charge of all the departments of income and expenditure. The papers pertaining to all transactions and payments in all departments of the state were inspected on monthly basis by him.\(^{288}\) It is almost evident that under the Maharaja, the functions and duties of the officials were not clearly defined and the powers and influence of an officer depended on his personal ability, tact and judgement. In the *Darbar* of Ranjit Singh which was composed mostly of the representatives of military class, Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Ganga Ram and Diwan Dina Nath who were known to be learned, were in great favour of the sovereign. Everyday in the afternoon, the *Diwan* read out the reports of the department to the Maharaja and obtained orders from him. These orders were usually written on the margin and conveyed to the concerned officers. No order of the Government about appointments and grants usually bore the seal of the *Diwan*. As the custodian of all the official records, the *Diwan* controlled the whole of the administrative machinery. Due to this position and intimate knowledge of the financial matters, Diwan Dina Nath remained indispensable to the early British administrators also for some time after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

Every item of receipt or expenditure was recorded in the *Roznamcha* immediately after its receipt, sanction or actual payment. The writer of the *Roznamcha* (*Roznamacha navis*) sent his reports daily to the office of the *Diwan*.289 There the items were arranged and posted in the proper place in the *awarcha* or ledger. There was *awarcha* of each head and sub-heads of accounts. The *awarcha* of the receipts and expenditure were drawn in the name of the officer who was responsible for them. On the other hand, in the case of expenditure incurred on account of *inam*, *ziyaft* etc. the *awarchas* were prepared according to the heads of accounts.290 This system made easy the task of auditing and checking the statement of accounts presented by an officer. The *minifarda* portion of the statement could be compared with the *awarcha* in the office of the *Diwan* where the items were credited to his name. It was the main concern of the Government to ensure the accuracy of the amount credited to a peculiar officer or head of accounts. On the other hand, the office incharge was equally interested in the disposal of that amount in a satisfactory manner. It goes to the credit of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that he was the first Sikh ruler to organize the Finance Department. As merit was always the criterion for appointment on high posts of eminence, the appointments of experienced Finance Minister was an important political decision.

After 1834, when there was a considerable increase in the military budget, the ineffective nature of the *Kankut* system became apparent to Ranjit Singh. He started encouraging the practice of farming out revenues of large areas particularly of irrigable lands to the highest bidder for a period extending from three to six years. Under this system the cultivator or a big *Zamindar* or a big State official entered into a

contract with the State agreeing to pay the amount stated in the contract deed. The contractor was called *ijaradar*. Such contracts eliminated the farmer or the middle man and the cultivators in the village land were allowed the full advantage of reaping the fruit of their labour. With the object of getting a sure and fixed estimate of the annual income the *Maharaja* promoted the practice of farming out the large area of lands and even districts to contactors or *ijaradars* who agreed to make the payment of the State share regularly. Notably, according to James Douie, "the revenue system of Ranjit Singh was an organized system of pillage, for the country was farmed to contractors who were bound to pay a certain sum into the State treasury, and were permitted to collect as much more as possible for themselves."  

The Sikh *ijaradar* was no mere contractor. The amount of *ijara* was generally close to the revenue due to the Government, the margin enabling the *ijaradar* to meet the expense of collection and to save something as a profit. For example, the whole province of Kashmir was given in *ijara* to its *nazim* Diwan Chunni Lal for an amount of twenty seven lakh and fifty thousand rupees in 1824 and to Diwan Kirpa Ram for an amount of rupees twenty six lakh in 1826. Similarly, Shujabad in *suba* of Multan was given to Diwan Sawan Mal and as after two years the revenues of this *illaqa* increased by fifty percent and the *Maharaja* gave him Multan also in *ijara*. Besides the *nazim* *ijaradars*, an important *kardar, ijaradars* was Misr Rup Lal who was given the *ijara* of Jalandhar Doab.  

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amount to Rs. 4,00,000 and again in 1820 for Rs. 4,10,000. Similarly, in 1832 this Ilaka was given to Diwan Sawal Mal for an amount to Rs. 4,35,000. Diwan Devi Das, had taken the country of the Ramgarhias on a contract for Rs. 4 lakhs. The great seal (Muhar-i-Kalan) of the Maharaja remained in Ijara for a long time with Lala Devi Das for Rs. 1,80,000 till 1818 when it was given to Lala Devi Sahai for Rs. 2,25,000. On some occasions some competent high officials of the central offices of the State or some favourite or experienced chiefs like Diwan Bhawani Das would also be commissioned for the purpose. For example for the year 1817-18 Jammu was farmed out to Diwan Bhawani Das for one lakh of rupees. However in a given area, Ijara could alternate with direct collection. The proportion of revenue collected through Ijara appears to have been considerable.

The Ijardari system under the Sikhs was not confined to lands alone. Even sairat or taxes other than the land revenue were given in Ijara to important and responsible officials or citizens of the State. For example, Lala Sukh Dyal got the Ijara of the sairat for 13 lakh rupees and similarly, the sairat of Kashmir were given in Ijara in 1822. Generally the amount of the Ijara was close to the amount of revenue due to the Government. The Ijaradar was left with a small margin to meet the expenses incurred in connection with the collection and to get his share of profit. The mushakhasa or the assessed amount was generally

301 Amarnath, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, p. 80.
based on records of collections made in the past. If the revenue of a particular area increased, the amount of \textit{Ijara} was also raised. Before giving an area in \textit{Ijara} to a person the \textit{Maharaja} obtained the correct information regarding the income from the revenue of that area. Diwan Sawan Mal and General Ventura were commanded by the \textit{Maharaja} to prepare correct estimates of revenue accruing from Dera Ghazi Khan and Jhang before these areas were given in \textit{Ijara}\textsuperscript{303}. The \textit{Ijaradars} were required to submit a detailed statement of the produce of land under them and the amount collected. Before getting the charge of an \textit{Ijaradari} he was bound to give a deed of acceptance to the Government. The net amount of \textit{Ijara} was given in the deed along with the crop from which the contract took effect. The \textit{Ijaradar} gave an undertaking to report correctly about the amount collected from the peasants and also promised to keep the people content and the area under cultivation.\textsuperscript{304} Each \textit{Ijara} grant was made in writing and invariably contained a reference to the urgency of always keeping in mind the welfare of the cultivators and prosperity of the \textit{Ilaka}.

The majority of the \textit{Ijaradars} were connected with Government and administration in one way or another. Diwan Devi Das, Bhai Ram Singh, Fakir Nuruddin, Prince Naunihal Singh, Raja Bhupinder Pal of Basoli, Raja Dhian Singh, Raja Fazl Dad Khan, Diwan Sawan Mal, Sham Singh Peshawaria, Sardar Desa Singh Majithia, Sardar Jawand Singh Maukal were all connected with the Government and had been big \textit{Ijaradars}. The \textit{Zamindars} could lodge complaints against the \textit{Ijaradars} before the \textit{Maharaja} and also the \textit{Ijaradars} could complain against the high


\textsuperscript{304} Sita Ram Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh", p. 82.
handedness of the high-ups of the Government against them and their cultivators.305

Diwan Sawan Mal, Nazim of Multan introduced many innovative methods to increase the finance of the Lahore Darbar. He organised a fresh revenue system and fixed the taxes on the land actually under cultivation according to the nature of crops grown.306 Four methods of collection of revenue were employed 1. Jinsi or Batai - The standard method of a share in the crop at a rate which varied according to the condition of the soil. It averaged between 1/4 to 1/3 of the gross produce. 2. Naqdi- Jinsi or cash kind assessment, by which the landlord purchased the Government share at a fixed rate. 3. Zabti or cash assessment per acre on certain crops 4. Qorari or cash lumpsum assessment, where the landholder had himself provided means of cultivation or wells without state help, a fixed assessment in money was appraised under a deed, which stipulated the Governmental share usually at 12 rupees per well.

In Multan, Diwan Sawan Mal imposed a cash deposit on certain crops the produce of which could not stand the delay of division or could not be appraised correctly. This cash assessment was known as Zabti Zama and such crops were called Zabti crops. This method of assessment was applied to the perishable crops as sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, pepper, indigo, oilseeds, pulses, vegetables and the spring fodder.307 In the part near Multan the revenue was usually taken in kind, because grain was required for the troops and the court. In the rest of the district the mahsul was returned to the cultivators, who were obliged to buy it from Government at a rate which was usually 25 percent above the

market price. The following crops paid the rates per *bigha* by this system.\(^{308}\)

**Kharif crops**
- **Rawan**h \(\text{Rs. } 1.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)
- **Jawar grown for fodder** \(\text{Rs. } 1.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)
- **Chilies** \(\text{Rs. } 4.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)

**Rabi crops**
- **Methra** \(\text{Rs. } 10 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 12 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)
- **Peas** \(\text{Rs. } 1.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)
- **Green wheat used as fodder** \(\text{Rs. } 1.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)
- **Tobacco** \(\text{Rs. } 4.00 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 5.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)
- **Saffron** \(\text{Rs. } 4.00 \text{ per } \textit{bigha}\)

In the district of Jhang following are a few instances of the cash rates paid per *bigha*:\(^{309}\)

- **Wheat** \(\text{Rs. } 1\text{-}12 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 2\)
- **Barley** \(\text{Rs. } 1 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 2\)
- **Tobacco** \(\text{Rs. } 8\)
- **Cotton** \(\text{Rs. } 1\text{-}12 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 2\text{-}12\)
- **Indian Corn** \(\text{Rs. } 1 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 2\)
- **Jawar** \(\text{Rs. } 1 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 2\)
- **Sarshaf** \(\text{Rs. } 2 \text{ to } \text{Rs. } 5\)

The rates of land revenue under *Zabti* system varied for not only different crops but at different places also. They varied according the productivity of the soil, nature of crops, means of irrigation and other facilities. The most fertile and favourably situated lands with irrigational facilities were assessed as high as fifty percent of gross produce, while

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the State share on less fertile and unfavourably situated land varied from two-fifths to one-third.\footnote{H.K. Trevaskis, \textit{Land of Five Rivers}, London, 1928, p. 181.} On the other hand, land was assessed at a much lower rate. Fifty percent of the gross produce was rather uncommon and occasional in Multan, where the Government share varied mostly from 1/3 to 1/7 of the gross produce.\footnote{District Gazetteer of Multan, 1883-84, pp. 123-24; Also see Charles A. Roe, \textit{Report on the Revised Land Revenue Settlement of the Montgomery District of Multan of the Punjab}, Lahore, 1878, p. 47.} According to Sita Ram Kohli, "In this province, a peculiar sort of tenure known as the \textit{Chakdari} tenure was prevailing at this time."\footnote{Sita Ram Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh", p. 446.} It probably originated with the desire on the part of the ruling power to reclaim the waste land that was lying in abundance in the country. Where the owner did not cultivate the land Diwan Sawan Mal granted patents to individuals other than the owner to sink wells and earn the profit for themselves paying only a nominal rent to the proprietor through the State. The tenant or the occupant paid the revenue to the State which the latter divided with the proprietor in the ratio of 2 to 1. The cultivators were actually assessed according to their capacity to pay. As far as possible the State dealt directly with the cultivator and joint responsibility for payment of land revenue demand was not enforced.\footnote{James Douie, \textit{Punjab Settlement Manual}, p. 19.}

The other method for the collection of revenue which was prevailing in Multan was \textit{Chahat-i-Iqrari}, by which the cultivated lands were assessed at lump-sum was prevalent only in some very small parts of the Kingdom. Under this system wells were made the basis of assessment. A lump-sum was levied upon the land conveniently irrigated by one well. The land irrigated by an average well, constituted a unit for the purpose of revenue assessment.\footnote{Bhagat Singh, \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times}, New Delhi, 1990, p. 194.} Such wells were called \textit{Chahat-i-Iqrari} or
**Qorari-i-Chahat.** The area irrigated by them was seldom given but undoubtedly the area attached to these wells was specified and the assessment was made with reference to the area attached to the well. A fixed cash assessment on wells was levied according to their quality and the circumstances of each locality. In some places the demand varied according to the number of oxen employed on the well. The usual rate was Rs. 10 to Rs. 12, but a good well would pay Rs. 20. When the lessee cultivated more than the usual area attached to one well, the fixed sum was set aside and the whole of the crop was divided according to the *batai* system. Diwan Sawan Mal encouraged the sinking and repair of wells by giving favourable leases. Generally Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 were charged from the owner of a well that irrigated thirty to fifty acres of land. Approximately the water works amounted to rupees two to three per acre. Diwan Sawan Mal, with a view to facilitating the pastoral tribes of the *bar* encouraged them to found villages and settle down permanently to agriculture, allowing them to hold land at very lenient assessment and ultimately fixed it at sixty two rupees per well. He made a concession in favour of new wells and generally 1/2 to 1/4 of the demand was remitted over a period varying from ten to twenty years. Thus we see that there was no uniform rate of assessment levied on the wells. The amount was to be paid in two installments of *Rabi* and *Kharif*. In Multan and Jhang divisions the Government sank wells at its own expense in order to reclaim the waste land and charged extra in addition

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315 Sita Ram Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh", p. 444.
319 Ibid.
to the revenue ordinarily leviable.\textsuperscript{320} It gave a good deal of encouragement to the spread of cultivation and also allowed the cultivators a reasonably good margin of profit. Wells so constructed by the Government were known as \textit{Chahat Shahana} or royal wells. There was another class of wells in the same division known as \textit{Chahat Istmarari} upon which an assessment of Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 was imposed in perpetuity.

Apart from land-revenue there were separate taxes on pasture lands and orchards. There were many date and other trees in Multan. If a person want a \textit{tahli} tree, he was obliged to obtain a personal interview with Diwan Sawan Mal and make his request. If the tree and the price was paid before leave to cut the tree, was given. Leave could be obtained from the \textit{Kardar} to cut \textit{ber}, Kikar or \textit{siris} trees on payment of from 8 annas to Rs.1.\textsuperscript{321} The amount of revenue from date trees increased in Multan particularly under Diwan Sawan Mal.\textsuperscript{322} Pasture lands were yet another source of revenue to the State as grazing tax was realized from the users of such land. It was Diwan Sawan Mal under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who developed \textit{tirni} as an important source of income to the State. According to O’ Brien, Diwan Sawan Mal collected \textit{Tirni} tax by different methods. \textit{Tirni dukan} was yearly fee of Rs. 1, paid by all artisans, not by shopkeepers, \textit{Tirni Shutaran}, a poll-tax on camels. The rate varied from Rs.1 to Rs. 2 a year. \textit{Tirni rasan} a poll-tax on female buffalos, sheep and goats.\textsuperscript{323} Diwan Sawan Mal first took one goat and one camel from every

\textsuperscript{320} \textit{General Report upon the Administration of Panjab Proper 1849-50 and 1850-51}, pp. 130-40.
\textsuperscript{322} Date Trees were a source of Income to the Government in other areas also. Of all the trees in Muzaffargarh, the largest revenue was derived from the date trees. Edward O’ Brien, \textit{Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Muzaffargarh District of the Punjab}, 1873-80, p. 88.
herd but after the census of cattle fixed the following annual rates in cash.\textsuperscript{324}

- Camel (female) \hspace{1cm} Rs. 2.00
- Camel (Male) \hspace{1cm} Rs. 1.00
- Buffalo \hspace{1cm} Rs. 1.00
- Cow \hspace{1cm} Paise. 0.60

The Government also claimed from 1/3 to 1/6 of all fishes caught in the river, lakes and ponds.\textsuperscript{325}

Apart from the land revenue Diwan Sawan Mal charged a number of cesses.\textsuperscript{326} \textit{Abwabs} were many small cesses collected along with the land revenue. However, there was a uniform percentage taken under this head. They were collected under various heads and described as \textit{malba}, \textit{maghala}, \textit{shukrana}, \textit{nazrana}, \textit{chari}, \textit{naaorchahi}, \textit{dumbiri}, \textit{nazrmuharir}, \textit{paomani}, \textit{kadamkash}, \textit{bhara}, \textit{muhassali}, \textit{nazar mukaddami}, \textit{igtala} or \textit{wazn keshi}, \textit{tapkhana}, \textit{chilkana}, \textit{jamabandi}, \textit{khurak}, \textit{khrach}, and \textit{khira}. They varied from 5 percent to 10 percent of the revenue,\textsuperscript{327} and the rate of revenue ranged from 33 percent to 40 percent on the average. Even one-half share of the Government was equivalent to about 40 percent of the gross produce.\textsuperscript{328} Thus the cultivator normally parted with less than half of his produce. The incidence of \textit{abwab} at places was inversely related to the rates of assessment; where the rate of the Government

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{327} Ganda Singh (ed.), \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume}, Patiala, 1970, p. 136; Sita Ram Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration under Maharaja Ranjit Singh", p. 84.
\end{footnotesize}
share was high, cesses were few; where the rate was low, cesses were many. O’ Brien makes this statement with particular reference to Diwan Sawan Mal’s administration in Muzaffargarh but this was equally true of the other areas under the Diwan. All these methods of assessing land revenue were concurrently employed in one part of the Kingdom or another throughout the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Multan was studded with a system of old and new canals by Diwan Sawan Mal. Land taken by a canals passage/course were held to be the property of the persons through whose lands the canals passed. Diwan Sawan Mal was the first to interfere in this matter by prohibiting the cutting of Shisham trees on the canal banks without a licence. The annual canal clearance was done by the whole body of canal irrigators. Diwan Sawan Mal introduced the hasil cher system under which the canal clearance was undertaken by Government in consideration of the payment of a certain rate.

Among them Nakdi Jinsi or cash kind assessment indicated the first step towards a cash revenue and this form of assessment became more common under Diwan Sawan Mal. According to the standing orders of Diwan Sawan Mal, the Kardar was to send the schedule of rates (nirkhnama) of all grains duly signed by the panches and the zamindars every season. These rates varied from locality to locality, but were generally slightly higher than those prevalent in the local market. Another special method of assessment sometimes employed for wells in the heart

330 For more details about Canals see Chapter V.
of Rawa, more especially on the borders of the present Multan and Ladhran Tehsils, was to take a certain sum (generally Rs. 2 or Rs 3) per yoke cattle in use on the wells.\footnote{P.J. Fagan, \textit{Punjab District Gazetteer of Multan, 1923-24.}, p. 238.}

The revenue was collected twice a year, a month or so after the reaping of the two harvests, called the \textit{Rabi} (summer) and the \textit{Kharif} (winter) respectively. The \textit{Kharif} officer incharge of the collection in a \textit{Talluqa} was the \textit{Kardar} (collector) and he was assisted by subordinate officials like \textit{Muqadams} (foreman), \textit{Patwari} (revenue assessors) and \textit{Qanungos} (hereditary registrars)\footnote{For more details about \textit{Kardar, Muqadam, Patwari and Qanungo} see Chapter V.}. The actual collection was made by \textit{Muqadams} with the help of \textit{Chaudharis}. They had the right to a commission on the revenue payable through them-the rate being generally five percent of the total collection. After defraying local expenses out of the revenue proceeds the balance was remitted to the \textit{Khazana-i-Amra} (main treasury) at Lahore or else handed over to one of the Receivers-General of revenue. Remittances to Lahore were usually made by means of \textit{hundis} drawn upon Amritsar bankers.\footnote{Shahamat Ali, \textit{The Sikhs and the Afghans}, p. 22.}

The dates of the payment were, accordingly, so fixed that the cultivators could find time to sell his produce or could conveniently borrow from the village \textit{sahukar} (banker) and were consequently in a position to pay his liabilities to the Government. The State share from the \textit{rabi} crop was paid in \textit{Jeth-Har} (May-June), that is about a month after the harvesting was over and that for \textit{Kharif} was paid during \textit{Katik-Maghar} (October-November)\footnote{Bhagat Singh, \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times}, p. 199; Also see Sita Ram Kohli, \textit{"Land Revenue Administration under Maharaja Ranjit Singh"}, p.499.}.

The collection of revenue was made in both kind and cash. In Multan, collection for the same crop was made partly in cash and partly
in kind.\textsuperscript{338} In Multan a \textit{Patta} was given for a well, fixing its assessment varying from Rs. 12 to Rs. 20 in accordance with the area and nature of the crop sown. It would be generally 25 \textit{bighas} of wheat for the \textit{rabi}, 5 \textit{bighas} of cotton and 15 \textit{bighas} of Jawar for the \textit{Kharif}. All extra cultivation was charged according to a certain rate per \textit{bigha}.\textsuperscript{339} Revenue in cash was collected in installments.\textsuperscript{340}

The revenue system of Sawan Mal was essentially fluctuating. Whether the harvest was good or bad enough was left over to the cultivator to live upon.\textsuperscript{341} At the time of famine or scarcity in produce due to some natural calamity the \textit{Maharaja} was always sympathetic towards the cultivators. Diwan Sawan Mal’s assessments were adjusted on a very perfect knowledge. He began low and gradually raised the assessment as circumstances justified it. Under Diwan Sawan Mal there was a great deal of personal interaction with the cultivators and it was part of the administration to ensure that the rights of all persons attached to the land were secured.

Further, in the province of Multan, where the country was little better than a desert and the cultivator more or less depended upon artificial irrigation, the State undertook the task of sinking wells, and Diwan Sawan Mal started other irrigation works by way of repairing the old canals and digging of several new ones.\textsuperscript{342}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{338} \textit{District Gazetteer of Multan, 1883-84}, p. 124.
  \item \textsuperscript{339} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{340} According to the Instructions issued to the \textit{Kardars} of Multan by Diwan Sawan Mal. They were expected to send the revenues punctually in six installments, three each for \textit{Kharif} and \textit{rabi}:
  \begin{itemize}
    \item \textit{Kharif}:
      \begin{itemize}
        \item First Installment : 15 Magh
        \item Second Installment : 15 Poh
        \item Third Installment : 15 Magh
      \end{itemize}
  \item \textit{Rabi}:
    \begin{itemize}
      \item First Installment : 15 Jeth
      \item Second Installment : 15 Har
      \item Third Installment : 15 Sawan
    \end{itemize}
  \end{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{341} E.B. Steedman, \textit{Report on the Revised Settlement of the Jhang District of the Punjab 1874-1880}, p. 114.
  \item \textsuperscript{342} For more details see chapter V.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Misr Rup Lal was another Hindu appointed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh *Nazim* of Jalandhar Doab. About the revenue assessment in Jalandhar, it is asserted that "Miser Rup Lal's demand seems to have been usually moderate and equal to have included all legitimate extra dues and that his rates were such that holders to his leases seldom hesitated at a later period to produce them before the British settlement officers-a sure sign that they would not object to pay his assessment". On 31 December 1832, Misr Rup Lal was appointed to collect Rs. 5,22,000 from the *Kardars* and *Jagirdars* of Doaba but he was enjoined to make the collection keeping in view the prevailing conditions of the country. He was more successful than his predecessors in introducing cash payments of revenue. Misr Rup Lal compounded in one sum the revenue and all extra dues and cesses leviable by the state; and his rates were such that holders of his leases, seldom hesitated, at a later period, to produce them before the British settlement officers -a sure sign that they would not object to pay his assessments. Even in the famine year of 1833 there were very few unpaid balances. Misr Rup Lal was a popular and concientious administrator and did not approve oppression of any kind. His revenue measures have been unanimously described as efficient and progressive. The amount of the revenue collected by him from Doab of Jalandhar was about rupees 18,72,902.

The Sikh rulers were anxious to increase cultivated area by bringing more and more waste pasture lands under cultivation. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in fact, made all possible efforts to protect cultivators from official oppression and the raids of the marauding tribes living on the borders of his Kingdom. Strict instructions were given to the army not to

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destroy crop and oppress the peasants.\textsuperscript{348} According to Sohan Lal Suri, the \textit{Maharaja} issued an \textit{Ishtiharnama} (proclamation) to most of his provincial \textit{Nazims} and \textit{Jagirdars}, namely Raja Gulab Singh, Suchet Singh, Misr Beli Ram, Misr Rup Lal and Ram Kishan, Lehna Singh Majithia, Colonel Mihan Singh, Bhai Mohan Singh, Dal Singh, Surjan Singh and Diwan Sawan Mal asking them to keep in view the solicitude and prosperity of the subjects in all administrative matters, especially in collection of revenue and to avoid every kind of oppression of the cultivators.\textsuperscript{349} In the same manner under Ranjit Singh’s special direction, the Governor of Kashmir, Kirpa Ram gave to the people there least cause of complaint.\textsuperscript{350} Diwan Kirpa Ram introduced the system of farming out to the highest bidder the revenue of various \textit{Pargnas} or districts. The collection for the same crop was made partly in cash and partly in kind.\textsuperscript{351} Forty lakhs was the sum paid annually in the treasury of Ranjit Singh by Diwan Kirpa Ram. The \textit{shawl} trade was in flourishing condition. The tax on \textit{shawls} brought about 12 lakhs of the whole revenue\textsuperscript{352}. The rest was obtained from taxes on produce and a number of direct and indirect impositions.

The total amount of land revenue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s Kingdom is estimated at Rs. 1, 24, 03, 900 by Murray\textsuperscript{353}. The amount given by Murray includes income realized from tributes. Shahamat Ali estimated the total revenues from land at Rs.1,96,57, 172.\textsuperscript{354} The figures

\begin{footnotesize}
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given by Cunningham are only about 5 lakhs less, amounting to Rs. 2, 79,00,000.\textsuperscript{355} According to these figures, the total annual revenues from land in the dominions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh ranged between 2 and 3 crores of rupees and on the average, they were more than two and half crores of rupees.

In Kashmir, the average of these figures comes to over 34 lakhs of rupees a year. Shahamat Ali gives 36, 75, 000 rupees as land revenue in 1838.\textsuperscript{356} Cunningham writing in 1844, gives 30, 00, 000 rupees for Kashmir.\textsuperscript{357} The average for Multan works out to about 41 lakhs of rupees a year. According to Shahamat Ali, the land revenue of Multan was 38, 98, 550 in 1838.\textsuperscript{358} For 1844 Cunningham gives 45,000,000 rupees for Multan.\textsuperscript{359} The average for those parts of the five Doabs which were covered by the former Mughal province of Lahore comes to over 95 lakhs of rupees a year. Shahamat Ali’s estimate is however Rs. 18,72, 902\textsuperscript{360} and according to Cunningham it was Rs. 22,00,000.\textsuperscript{361} The average for the three provinces of Kashmir, Multan and Lahore adds up to 1 crore and 60 lakhs of rupees a year.

Misr Rallia Ram was the head of the customs department\textsuperscript{362} with his son, Misr Sahib Dayal who latter succeeded him. Besides land tax, there were some other, though less important sources of revenue to the State exchequer including customs and excise duties. Customs duties were levied on every article even on fuel wood and vegetables. No

\begin{footnotes}
\item[355] Cunningham, \textit{A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Satluj}, New Delhi, 1977, p. 387, Appendix XXXVIII.
\item[356] Shahamat Ali, \textit{The Sikhs and the Afghans}, p. 22.
\item[357] Cunningham, \textit{A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Satluj}, p. 384, Appendix XXXVIII.
\item[358] Shahamat Ali, \textit{The Sikhs and the Afghans}, p. 21.
\item[359] Cunningham, \textit{A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Satluj}, p. 384, Appendix XXXVIII.
\item[360] Shahamat Ali, \textit{The Sikhs and the Afghans}, p. 21.
\item[361] Cunningham, \textit{A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Satluj}, p. 384, Appendix XXXVIII.
\item[362] Lepel Griffin, \textit{Ranjit Singh}, New Delhi, 2002 (reprint), p. 130.
\end{footnotes}
distinction was made between rich and poor. Griffin mentions that duties were charged on 48 articles.\(^{363}\) As regards salt tax Wade told the \textit{Maharaja} on 25 February, 1832, that in British territory it was customary to take salt from the trader at one place. Afterwards he could go anywhere in his country and nobody could interfere with him. He suggested that the same practice should be adopted in the Sikh Kingdom. On 16 May 1839, the \textit{Maharaja} approved the following scale of customs duties on export and imports.\(^{364}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shawls</td>
<td>Rs.10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per maund</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Rs.7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>Rs.2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth of all sorts</td>
<td>Rs.0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, Molasses, Oil,</td>
<td>Rs.1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs, Fruits, metals, dyes</td>
<td>Rs.0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain of all sorts</td>
<td>Rs.0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duties were levied on all articles irrespective of their place of origin or destination. Uniform rates of duties were fixed on all articles without making distinction between articles of luxury and necessity.\(^{365}\) It is said that Ranjit Singh's taxation embraced everything and every locality.\(^{366}\) Even the agricultural produce on which land tax had been paid did not escape duty. While passing from one side of the country to another it would pay these charges as many times as it met a customs line, so that before reaching its destination its original price got sometimes doubled and even more. However, The customs were not oppressive and objectionable. As earlier stated in Chapter II, because had

\(^{363}\) Ibid, p. 145.  
\(^{365}\) Bhagat Singh, \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times}, p. 206.  
\(^{366}\) For more details see Chapter II.
they been so, thus writes N.K. Sinha, the merchants could have changed their routes and conveyed "their goods through the territory of a less exacting chief."\(^{367}\) Commerce was in a flourishing condition. The total amount of income realized from customs is estimated by N.K. Sinha at Rs. 16,36,114,\(^{368}\) while Lepel Griffin estimates it at Rs. 16,37,000\(^{369}\) and Murray brings this figure to Rs. 19,00, 600.\(^{370}\)

Before the appointment of Diwan Bhawani Das no tax submitted to Lahore *Darbar* was received from salt mines. It was Diwan Bhawani Das who first organised the tax from salt mines systematically.\(^{371}\) According to N.K. Sinha, the tax from salt monopoly amounted to Rs. 8,00,000 approximately\(^{372}\) and according to Sita Ram Kohli the sale of salt brought Income of Rs. 4,63,675.\(^{373}\)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh offered the office of *Mir Munshi* to Diwan Devi Das for one lakh of rupees. Royal seals were affixed on all kinds of contract and this also seems to have brought in a good income, as sometimes they were farmed out to responsible officials for fixed money payments. All these sources of income, judicial as well as Royal seals, were known as *wajuhat-i-Moqarari*. Diwan Devi Das requested the *Maharaja* to grant him some concession in the fixed amount. The *Maharaja* said that as more places had come into his possession and he should willingly agree to it. Devi Das, thus, accepted and promised to abide by all the orders of the *Maharaja*.\(^{374}\) On 15 November, 1814 at Amritsar, Maharaja Ranjit Singh told Diwan Devi Das that he could get

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\(^{373}\) Sita Ram Kohli, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Delhi, 1953, p. 217.

\(^{374}\) G.L. Chopra and H.L.O. Garrett (eds.), *Events at the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1810-1817*, p. 42.
contract of the Maharaja's seal for Rs. 1,75,000. He agreed to it.\textsuperscript{375} On 5, February, 1816, Hakim Rahulla Khan accused Diwan Devi Das of taking bribes from everybody. Diwan Devi Das who was present replied that he had acquired everything through the blessing and glory of his master and repudiated the accusation. At this the Maharaja smiled.\textsuperscript{376} Murray estimated the annual income from the Moharana at Rs. 5,77,000.\textsuperscript{377}

One of the most important cesses of the Sikh times was Nazr or Nazrana for the Kardars, the daftaris and the like. The rate of the Nazrana for the Kardars in Chhachh was four rupees, and for other mutasaddis, two rupees\textsuperscript{378}. Some of the other cesses were Jama bandi, for the preparation of the rent roll; Nazar-i-muharrir, to start weighing; muhasili, for the field watchman; bhara, for carriage hire; Khurak, towards feeding the measures; Chilkana, to make up the difference between the standard and other rupees; Sarrafi, for testing the money paid as revenue; Nazr-i-muqaddami, for good harvests; Shukrana, for rise in prices after commutation; Compensation, for bhusa not taken in kind; a fixed amount per plough for not sowing Zabti crops, money commutation for fodder, Begar, and for a skin, a blanket and a pair of shoes; and Nazr-i-Kanjan, a cess on each Kamil well of eight yokes. All these cesses were not levied at a single place. Where the produce from land was actually bataied, the equivalent of extra cesses were taken out.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{375} Ibid., p. 180.
\item \textsuperscript{376} Ibid., p. 230.
\item \textsuperscript{377} Murray, \textit{History of the Punjab}, Vol. II, p. 151.
\item \textsuperscript{378} \textit{Foreign Department: Secret Consultation}, 28 April 1848, No. 66, NAI.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
before the produce was divided between the cultivator and the Government.\textsuperscript{379}

Besides the Governors, there were other officers and \textit{Kardars}, such as the sons and nephews of the \textit{Faqir} and the \textit{Misr}, who governed the small districts. These officers sent the amount by means of the \textit{Hundis} at Amritsar. Amarnath states that in 1815, Diwan Moti Ram along with Fakir Aziz-ud-Din realized Rs. 6,000 from Patta town.\textsuperscript{380} In 1838, the \textit{Maharaja} demanded from Diwan Dina Nath an account of the \textit{Nazrana} and \textit{Mushaksha} payments due from the Rajas of Suket and Mandi.\textsuperscript{381}

During Maharaja Ranjit Singh's period no regular budget was prepared. The money received from different sources was earmarked for specific purposes and the Government roughly knew the expected income and expenditure. The main heads of the expenditure were the royal household, the administration, the army, the pious and charitable organizations, works for the improvement of agriculture, public works and rewards, gifts and presents bestowed by the \textit{Maharaja}. The expenses of administration comprised salaries of the public servants including the Ministers, Governors and other officers and the personnel of the Government.

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\textsuperscript{379} For more details see \textit{District Gazetteer of Multan, 1883-84}, pp. 124-25; \textit{District Gazetteer of Gujranwala, 1883-84}, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{380} Amarnath, \textit{Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh}, p.77.
\textsuperscript{381} Similarly, in June 1832, the total assessment with Ram Chand \textit{Kardar} of Amritsar was Rs. 1,01,000 of this Rs. 86,000 had been realized. The remainder of Rs. 15,000 was to be paid by him.
Sohan Lal Suri, \textit{Umdat-ut-Tawarikh}, Daftar III, (Part-II), p. 146; During the same year in December the region of Gujrat, Mirpur, Chamak and Kurianwala was granted to Shiv Dayal son of Diwan Moti Ram for Rs. 2,10,000, while Rs. 21,000 were granted to him in lieu of salary. The \textit{Maharaja} ordered that he should engage himself in making collections from his country keeping in view the prosperity of the region and the satisfaction of the \textit{Zamindars}. On 13 June, 1832, Misr Amir Chand, nephew of Jassa Misr and Ram Dayal Peshauria were ordered to collect large sums of money from Jalandhar, Rahon and other places keeping in view the prosperity and pleasure of the \textit{Zamindars}. Rs. 700 were given to Amir Chand. Sohan Lal Suri, \textit{Umdat-ut-Tawarikh}, Daftar III, (Part-II), pp. 159,142.
\end{flushright}
Despite various changes, financial administration remained in an unsatisfactory condition till the last years of Ranjit Singh's reign. He was personally responsible to a large extent for this State of affairs. He trusted his memory for remembering complicated accounts of his expenditure and for many years periodically allowed the rough memoranda of those who were responsible to him to be destroyed. In the absence of records embezzlement became quite easy. Not to speak of lower-grade officials, men at the top took advantage of the situation. Diwan Sawan Mal surpassed everyone in trade or in any speculation in which rapid fortune could be made.\textsuperscript{382}

From the provinces of Lahore, Multan and Kashmir during the Mughal period the total revenues had amounted to $3^{1/2}$ crores of rupees. In the reign of Ranjit Singh the land revenue from these provinces came to only about $2^{1/2}$ crores. This was not due to low production. The difference in the total revenue was due largely to the lower rates of assessments. On the whole despite its flaws it was simple, just and intelligible to the common people.

It becomes clear from the above facts that the Kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had highly developed and efficient system of financial administration. Although land revenue was the major source of revenue collection, other taxes, like customs, cases, from an important part of the system of someone. Similarly the State expenditure was also accounted for under several well defined heads. As has been observed several Hindu financial administration like Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Dina Nath, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Devi Das, Diwan Sawan Mal, Misr Rup Lal, Diwan Kirpa Ram etc. were instrumental in making Ranjit Singh's financial administration successful. Interestingly many inovative and

modern schemes like, *Ijaradari, Zabti* system, *Chahat-i-Qarari*, struck a balance between the interests of the rulers and the rule.