Chapter – II

THE INSTITUTION OF WIZARAT* UNDER THE MUGHALS

The Mughal emperors were pivots of their government and kept all strings of administration in their hands, yet it was impossible for them to rule their vast kingdom single handedly. They had inherited a legacy of complex traditions and mixed conventions and developed their own theory of kingship. The administrative setup established by them was unique in the sense that it was not completely divorced from the past and took the neo-political trends into account as well.

The creation of a strong nobility was one of the most significant achievements of the Mughal emperors. The functioning of the administrative set up, the discharge of political and military duties by the state, and the maintenance of social standards, all depended on the proper working of the institution of nobility.

The evolution of the Mughal nobility as an institution was the result of a long process of historical growth. Its roots can be traced back to political and economic progress in West Asia under Islam, as well as the peculiar socio-economic conditions of India. The perceptions

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* The Term used for the king’s counsellor and head of administrative setup (Prime Minister) under the Sultanat of Delhi was Wazir. Under Akbar, the highest office in the empire was that of “Vakil-us-Sultanat”. There were times when the offices of the Vakil and Wazir Coexisted. When the office of Vakil was in use, the Wazir looked after finance but in his absence (under Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb) it was the Wazir/Diwan who looked after finance as well as general administration and was the premier noble and Emperor’s counsellor.

of the Sultans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the traditions that the Mughal rulers had inherited from their turko-mongol background also contributed to its evolution.¹

The nobility, that generally implied a class of persons who were officers of the king as well as a superior class in the political ranking, possessed special administrative and political status.² The Mughal emperor and the nobility, the two essential components of the governing class were dependent on one another and it was this element of interdependence between the two that led to an internal cohesion that was responsible for the rise of a strong centralized state under the Mughals.³ Although the nobility was the creation of the emperor, it was also the sole apparatus to execute his policies and implement his schemes. This explains the element of interdependence between the Mughal emperors and the Umara.⁴

The Wazir who was the leader of the nobility occupied a place of prime importance in Mughal polity. His status and responsibilities varied from time to time, depending on the contemporary environment, the aptitude of the monarch and the exigency of the situation. In fact the Wazir was an inseparable adjunct of the monarch. He was his chief counsellor, mouthpiece and the main instrument for the execution of his policies and orders.

The senior official under the Mughals, who has been often called Prime Minister held different titles like Vakil, Vakil-us-Sultanat, Wazir, Diwan, Diwan-i-Ala and Diwan Wazir under different Mughal

emperors and one cannot deny his being the emperor's lieutenant in all matters. The significance attached to the post and its historical continuity, barring the times when the office was kept in abeyance, added to its importance.¹

There is evidence that the office existed even under Changiz Khan whose Wazir is said to have exercised enormous influence and was consulted on every important issue and even served under the Khan's son Ogotai.²

Timur, the great Turkish conqueror and the other ancestor of Babur, whose legacy to the Mughal emperors by way of political institutions is as conspicuous as that of Changiz Khan, also realized the need of a council of ministers for the smooth running of the administration.³ It is apparent from the Malfuzat-i-Timuri that in the graded aristocracy of Timur, the highest officer in civil affairs was the Prime Minister known as Diwani-Ala or Wazir and "the two posts were synonymous and the distinction between Diwan and Wazir existing in the Ottoman Empire was not found in Timur's domain."⁴ Although a system of checks and balances, for which Akbar is much acclaimed, existed at all levels during Timur's time whose political maxims included the saying "Too great a share of government should be trusted to none",⁵ he held his Wazir in high esteem and regarded him as the most respected and confidential servant of the royalty. According to the traditions preserved in the Malfuzat-i-Timuri, Timur contemplated

¹ During the period of 97 years (1560 – 1657) there were ten Vakils, and they covered in all about 39 years. Of these very often the Diwan replaced the vakil and functioned as the premier noble of the Mughal Court, and the senior most in the official hierarchy performing the duties of the Wazir, in Ibn Hasan, Central Structure of the Mughal Empire, p. 140.
² Ralph Fox, Genghis Khan, John Lane, Bodley Head, London, 1936, p. 151.
³ Sharfuddin Ali Yazdi, Zafarnama, Eng.trans, Major Davy, as Political and Military Institutes of Tamerlane, Idarah-i- Adabiyat-i-Deli, New Delhi, 1972, p.69.
⁵ Major Davy, Political and Military Institutes of Tamerlane, p. 72.
seven Wazirs working under a Prime Minister Diwanbegi. Of those the Waziri Mamlukat, the Waziri Sayar, the Waziri Sipah and Waziri Karkhana appear to have had some connection with financial affairs.

Before the conquest of India, Babur was not in a position to organize a nobility fully disciplined and subservient to him¹ and the nobles who remained with him were treated more as associates. His arrival in India saw the revival of the Wizarat but its character was as indefinite and powers as widespread as in the days of the early Turks. In his sporadic life Babur had perhaps little time to further the process of evolution of the institution of Wizarat.²

Under Babur, there are several references to the Diwan, a term synonymous with Wazir. As early as 1494 A.D., when Babur ascended the throne, the term seems to be in usage as he appointed Hasan Yaqub to the government of Andyan and also made him the master of household, i.e., the Prime Minister.³ However, the most important person who held this office and became Babur’s chief advisor was Baqi Chagniani. He exercised great influence over Babur and was his right hand man.⁴ As Babur’s chief counsellor Baqi had virtually assumed the role of Wazir and was assigned the transit duties as well as collection of property tax from large mountaneous areas.⁵ No man enjoyed higher

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estimation in the eyes of Babur and everything was done in compliance with his advice. No other man of Babur enjoyed more trust and authority as Bagi Chagniani.¹

However, after sometime relations between the two become strained as Baqi Chagniani became overbearing in his conduct and instigated Jahangir Mirza to occupy the throne of Kabul. Babur refused to tolerate this arrogant posture adopted by his Wazir and asked him to resign.² Although Babur appointed other ministers, he never allowed anyone to become too powerful. Here he seems to have retained the Decrees (Yasas) of Changiz Khan to a great extent and exercised as much control over his nobles as any descendnet of Changiz Khan. These customary rules designated as Tura-i-Changezi were closely followed by him.³ At the same time he did not refrain from consulting his senior nobility before reaching a decision on important matters.⁴ In addition there was an inner council consisting of Nizamuddin Khalifa, Qauban Ali Beg, Tardi Beg, Hindu Beg and a few others who met in an inner apartment known as the Khilwat Khana of the palace.⁵ After 1526 A.D. the highest office in the empire was held by Nizammuddin Khalifa, commonly called Mir Khalifa, the most important luminary on the political scene during Babur's time. He was, according to the

³ In his memoirs, Babur writes, "My forefathers and family had always sacredly observed the rules of Changiz. In their parties, their courts, their festivals and their entertainments, in their sitting down and rising up they never acted contrary to the Tura-i-Changez". Baburnama, Vol. II, p. 7.
⁴ Mohibbul Hasan, Babur, Founder of the Mughal Empire in India, p. 162.
impression given in Babur’s memoirs, older than Babur and like him a member of the family to which Timur belonged. He was endowed with three titles of Sayyid, Khwaja and Barlas and four ranks Amir, Wakil, Sultan and Khalifa. Although contemporary sources are not clear regarding his official designation, later scholars say he was the Wazir. Nizamuddin Ahmad calls him Vakil-us-Sultanat. Badaoni gives him the designation of Vakil and Wazir Mutlaq. Abul Fazl only says “he held a high rank under His Majesty and the pillar of Babur’s government. Mullah Zain, Khalifa’s contemporary, in his letter of victory giving an account of the battle of Khanwa refers to Khalifa as the pillar of the imperial fortune and the intimate counsellor.

Although Babur while acknowledging Khalifa’s services does not designate him as Wazir, the titles of Wakil and Sultan Khalifa had been bestowed on him. From these titles and on the basis of the account of contemporary historians, it can be inferred that Nizamuddin Ali Khalifa

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1 Gulbadan Begum, Humayun Nama, p. 26,
2 Rushbrooke Williams, An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century, S.Chand and Co., New Delhi, n.d., p. 171.
8 Babur, Baburnama, Vols. I and II, p. 565; Shaikh Zainuddin, Tabagat-i-Baburi, p. 57, quoted by Mohibbul Hasan, Babur, Founder of the Mughal Empire in India, p. 163, refers to Amir Khalifa as “the nearest and most favourite of the king, the strong arm of the Imperial State – the premier noble”.

9 Babur, Baburnama, Vols. I and II, p. 565; Shaikh Zainuddin, Tabagat-i-Baburi, p. 57, quoted by Mohibbul Hasan, Babur, Founder of the Mughal Empire in India, p. 163, refers to Amir Khalifa as “the nearest and most favourite of the king, the strong arm of the Imperial State – the premier noble.”
was the Vakils or Prime Minister and exercised general supervision over the civil and military affairs of the kingdom and over the heads of departments. He also enjoyed a special status among the members of the royal family. So much trust was reposed in him that during Babur's illness Amir Khalifa was free to do what he deemed to be proper in the interest of the state. By his long service, good administration and arrangements of campaigns he had made himself indispensable to the king.

The extent of power enjoyed by Amir Khalifa is also evident from the fact that he attempted to regulate the succession to the throne after Babur's death. This is also indicative of a new dimension assumed by the nobility who asserted their claim that the empire belonged not to the ruler but to the ruling family. However, Amir Khalifa realized his mistake and changed his mind. Not much importance is attached to this incident except that it was a black mark on the otherwise loyal and devoted services of one of the most powerful Wazirs of the time.

As regards the institution of Wizarat, Humayun continued the policy of his father. Less energetic but more ceremonious than Babur, Humayun emphasised that the king was the shadow of God on earth. His official historian, Khwandamir, called his Majesty the
personification of the spiritual and temporal sovereignty. He left the Wazir in full possession of his powers. His Prime Ministers, Amir Wais, Hindu Beg and Qaracha Khan were in charge of overall administration and also held charge of civil and military affairs.

The position enjoyed by Hindu Beg as Humayun's Wazir is well described by Abul Fazl who says,

"The shutting and opening the binding and loosening of the great affairs of the officers and Wazirs, and of all the government clerks and those entrusted with civil affairs, and the fixing of the pay of the soldiers and the appointment of the household servants rested with him".

The status of Hindu Beg as Wazir is also gauged from the fact that when in spite of Sher Shah's repeated affirmations of obedience and loyalty, Humayun doubted his credibility, he sent no less a person than Hindu Beg, his trusted Wazir, on a fact-finding mission. Although Sher Khan outwitted him and bullied Hindu Beg into the belief that he had no intentions of breaking the Chunar accord which was misleading, Humayun's trust in his Wazir is reflected.

Hindu Beg's involvement as Humayun's advisor in administrative and military affairs and the latter's dependence on him is established by Humayun appointing Hindu Beg to assist Mirza Askari (who was appointed Viceroy of Gujrat) and to look after the province after its

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2 Ibid., p. 29.
acquisition.\textsuperscript{1} Hindu Beg's ability and authority to take independent
decisions is also reflected from the fact that when on Bahadur Shah's
renewed attempts at reconquest of Gujrat, his express messages to
Humayun for decisive orders failed to evoke any response, he appointed
Askari as the emperor and himself the Wazir.\textsuperscript{2}

Qaracha Khan, Humayun's Wazir after his defeat by Sher Khan
and subsequent exile served him very loyally in his initial years as
Wazir.\textsuperscript{3} Soon after his success over Badakshan, Humayun fell seriously
ill, an illness which came very near to changing the history of Mughal
rule in Hindustan. At this time of crisis, Qaracha Khan the Prime
Minister conducted himself with great decision and served his master
whole heartedly.\textsuperscript{4} Humayun addressed Qaracha Khan as Walid-i-
Mohtrim (Respected father). On one occasion when Kamran threatened
Qaracha Khan of putting his son to death, he assured Humayun of his
support by saying, "I consider each hair of your Majesty's head worth
the life of a son.\textsuperscript{5}

In 1545 A.D. Humayun attempted a redistribution of powers of
the Vakil, where Diwan went into the hands of the Wazir and general
administrative functions remained with the Vakil. He probably wanted
to use one office to balance the power of the other\textsuperscript{6}. This was not liked
by Qaracha Khan and he, on account of his position, was allowed to

\textsuperscript{1} The Council, led by Hindu Beg, had suggested that Bahadur Shah be appointed
Viceregal. Hindu Beg's advice, that would have enabled Humayun to govern the
province in the most peaceful way, although rejected by Humayun, reflects the
Wazir's political acumen. William Erskine, History of India under the first two
sovereigns of the House of Timur, Babur and Humayun, Vol. II, Idarah-i-Adabiyai-
i-Delli, p. 133; Ishwari Prasad, Life and Times of Humayun, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{2} Ishwari Prasad, Life and Times of Humayun, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{3} Gulbadan Begum, Humayun Nama Eng. trans, p. 180
\textsuperscript{4} Jauhar Aftabchi, Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat, Eng. trans. Major Charles Stewart, Idarah-i-
Adabyat-i-Delli, 1972, p. 86; William Erskine, History of India under the First Two
\textsuperscript{5} Jauhar Aftabchi, Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{6} Iqtidar Alam Khan, Wizarat under Humayun", P.I.H.C., 1960, p. 249.
retain both the posts of Vakil and Wazir. Later on there were some differences between Humayun and Qaracha Khan owing to his Prime Minister's growing arrogance. Qaracha Khan lost his temper on account of a quarrel with the Diwan, Khwaja Ghazi of Tabriz, and demanded his dismissal. No amount of persuasion from Humayun could satisfy him and he deserted to the side of Kamran.

Later Humayun forgave him but knowing that Qaracha Khan could be dangerous asked him to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. The latter however in defiance continued to be in league with Kamran. He was finally slain while fighting against Humayun.

The account of the Wizarat under Babur and Humayun is reflective of the nature of the Mughal ruling class in general. The

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1 Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Wizarat under Humayun", P.I.H.C., 1960, p. 249.
4 Humayun permitted Qaracha Khan to make his obeisance, addressed some conciliatory words to him and then desired him to be seated on his left below Tardi Beg. Abul Fazl, Akbar Nama. Vol. I, pp. 534-535; Nizamuddin Ahmad; Tabaaat-i-Akbari. Vol. I, p. 479; Jauhar Aftabchi, Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat, p. 54; Erskine, History of India under the first two Sovereigns of the House of Timur, Babur and Humayun, p. 363.
5 When Kamran marched against Humayun and an alarm was raised, Qaracha Khan did not desist from his treacherous designs and announced that Kamran was coming only to pay homage and an armed demonstration would frighten him. Ishwari Prasad, Life and Times of Humayun., pp. 289-90.
6 There is difference of opinion regarding his death, Gulbadan Begum says that in the battle of Charikaran, Qaracha Khan and many others were killed. Humayun Nama, p. 196; Jauhar Aftabchi says Qaracha Khan fell lifeless in the field. Seeing him in this condition a soldier of Mirza Hindal's party galloped up to him and cut off his head and carried it to the king, Tazkirat ul Waqiat p. 101; Abul Fazl heard from a reliable source that Qaracha's head was struck off by Qambar Ali Lahori a servant of Hindal whose brother was killed by Qaracha, Akbar Nama, Vol. I, p. 570; Nizamuddin Ahmad says Qaracha Khan was taken prisoner and was conducted to the presence of Humayun where he was killed by Qauban Ali Lahori, Tabaqat i Akbari, Vol.II, p. 78.
Nobility failed to constitute a disciplined and effective organization that could cope with the complex problems faced by the newly established empire in India.¹

The first two sovereigns of Mughal India did not have the security of a stable empire which would empower them to introduce fundamental changes in the administrative structure to break the highheadness of the nobility. The fact that their Wazirs came from Central Asia and claimed of high descent also made them proud and arrogant.

On his accession Akbar was convinced that for the establishment, consolidation and expansion of the empire, he must have a ruling class that would owe everything to the emperor and their clan and family loyalties should not come in the way of their obedience to the sovereign. A significant aspect of the transformation that came about in the functioning of some institutions of the Mughal empire under Akbar was the evolution of a culturally unified nobility out of the multi-racial and religiously divergent elements inherited by him.² His greatest contribution to Indian constitutional development lies in his setting up of an administrative system based on a fusion of central Asiatic, Hindu and Persian systems which became the basis on which the Mughal empire rested not only during his time but also during the reigns of his three successors. Earlier Akbar's Turkish ancestor Timur also brought about a fusion of Mongol and Islamic ideas in polity. The turko-mongol culture, which he diffused throughout Central Asia by his conquest³ was later brought to Hindustan by Akbar's grandfather Babur. Akbar

An important element introduced by Akbar into imperial polity was the establishment of certain principles governing the relations between the king and the nobility. His success was the result of the creation of a composite nobility and removing the dependence of the sovereign on the Muslim nobility alone, also because of his essentially humane approach towards the members constituting the nobility, a feature that distinguished the Mughal Emperor from other polities of the contemporary Islamic world. Bairam Khan the first person to hold the office of *Vakil-us-Sultanat*, whose otherwise spotless career of devotion to the Mughal ruling house was tarnished towards the last years of his life when he rebelled against Akbar is reflective of this attitude.

Although Akbar prided himself for being the author of most of his measures there is undeniable evidence to prove that he benefited greatly from the counsel of able ministers. His first Prime Minister, Bairam Khan, belonged to the Baharlu clan of the Qaraqulnu Turks and was the fifth in descent from Ali Shuker Beg, a prominent noble in the

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2. In contrast to their despotic contemporaries the Mughal emperors stand apart, as executions of leading members of the nobility was a common feature under Shah Abbas (1587-1629) the Great Safawid Emperor, whereas under Mughal emperors, even dismissals, leave alone executions, were very rare. Harman Kulke, *The State in India 1000 – 1707*, O.U.P., 1997, p. 271.

3. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p.234 says he professed gratefulness to God for not finding any capable minister or they would have taken the credit for measures initiated by him.

court of Mirza Jahan Shah (1437-67 A.D.), the ruler of Azarbaijan. The family ever since the time of Ali Shukr Beg had intermarried with the Timurids.1

The reconquest of Hindustan by Humayun and his sudden death within a few months leaving behind Akbar a boy of thirteen to succeed him determined the drastic change in the position enjoyed by the Wazir.2 Bairam Khan, Humayun's trusted noble was not only to act as tutor and guardian (Ataliq) but also his Vakil-us-Sullivan3 and the circumstances in which he assumed the office was sure to make him all powerful. Faced with an immense task he had to nurture the state which was still in its infancy by military successes and revitalise the political set up by keeping its administrative needs in mind.

Bairam Khan in his capacity as Khan-i-Khanan4 was virtually the grand Wazir or the first class Wazir of Al Mawardi model. The initial years of Akbar's reign provide numerous examples to prove the fact that Bairam Khan enjoyed supreme position in the empire and often did

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1 Shukr Beg's son Pir Ali Beg was married to the daughter of Mirza Sikander. The two sons of Mirza Jahan Shah were married to the two daughters of Ali Shukr Beg, while a third daughter married the son of the Timurid Sultan Abu Said. Later Sultan Mahmud's daughter by Pasha Begum was married to Babur. Baburnama, Vol. I, pp. 48-49; Afzal Hussain, "Marriages among Mughal nobles as an index of Status and Aristocratic Integration"; P.I.H.C., 1972, pp. 304-312 discusses the pattern of marriages among Mughal nobles.


3 The title given to the highest ranking officer in the Mughal administration. The Prime Minister in the times of Akbar was designated as the Vakil.

4 Khan-i-Khanan (Lord of Lords) was the earliest and the highest title in the Mughal Kingdom and as it would appear was bestowed without being associated with any special official duties. It was conferred only on one person and appears to connote rank rather than power and office. Blochman in the translation of Ain-i-Akbari mentions the title and its insignia. In the assemblage of Amirs i.e., the dignitaries of the imperial court, the Khan-i-Khanan took precedence over all other nobles immediately after the royal princes. Bairam Khan was the first recipient of this enviable title.
not consult the emperor on important issues. He took upon himself the
duty of appointing and dismissing ministers, took decisions in military
and political affairs, appointing his own men to key positions and
imprisoning or executing influential officials, if he considered such
actions necessary in the interest of the state. It was alleged that he
even interfered in the personal matters of the emperor, who could incur
personal expenditure only with his approval. By these appointments
Bairam Khan was able to have complete control over a large portion of
the areas that had been brought under Mughal rule. In order to show
his implicit confidence in Bairam Khan Akbar gave his consent to the
marriage of his protector with Salima Sultan Begum the daughter of
Humayun's sister and therefore a cousin of Akbar, further boosting his
position.

There is no parallel in the history of Northern India of the position
and power enjoyed by Bairam Khan as Wazir. As the centre of all
political initiatives, Bairam Khan himself enjoyed the position of a
defacto ruler. He sat in the Diwan Khana twice a week and put civil and
military affairs in order. Pir Mohammad Sarwani, his personal servant,

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1 Areas in Doab were assigned to Ali Quli Uzbek (Sarkar of Sambhal) Abdullah Khan Uzbek (Sarkar of Kalpi) Sikander Khan Uzbek was sent to assist in operations against Sikander Sur. Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, pp. 69, 97,105-106 and Badauni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. II, p. 14, give the details of cooperation between Bairam Khan and the Uzbeks. Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Mughal Court Politics During Baram Khan's Regency", Medieval India A Miscellany, Vol. I, p. 28.

2 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, pp. 63-64, 70-71, tells us that Bairam Khan opposed the marriage of Akbar to the daughter of Abdullah Khan Mughal, Badauni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, writes he (Akbar) had no voice in some of the transactions relating to the expenses of the exchequer and because there was no privy purse at all, the servants of the Emperor had poor fiefs, Vol. II, pp. 26-29, 36-39.


4 Salima Sultana Begum was the daughter of Mirza Nuruddin Mahomed and the niece (half sister's daughter of Humayun). She had a political vein and wrote under the pen name of Makhfi (Concealed), Shah Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, Vol. I, p. 371.
was attached with the King in the capacity of the *Vakil* of the regent and was a key figure in the administration.¹

Two old officers of the empire Khwaja Sultan Ali and Mir Asghar Munshi were dismissed by him.² Khwaja Aminuddin was appointed Bakshi and Shaikh Gadai Kamboh was appointed ‘Sadr’. Both these officers were protégés of Bairam Khan.³ Although Bairam Khan’s services to the ruling family and the newly, established kingdom cannot be ignored,⁴ the events of his four years regime reveal that once he got the strings of power into his hands he failed to rise above the level of an ordinary administrator.⁵ Excess of power, lead Bairam Khan to adopt a harsh and discordant practice towards his supposed and suspected enemies.

The concentration of all authority in the hands of one group of nobles was naturally resented by the other groups. Primary among them were Maham Anagah and her son who were resentful at being denied their due share in power. Gradually they made Akbar an

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² Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, p. 14, says Khwaja Sultan Ali and Mir Asghar Munshi were arrested by Bairam Khan because they were considered supporters of Tardi Beg
⁴ There can be no better testimony to Bairam Khan’s worth than that recorded by Badaoni, who could seldom see any good in a Shia, “In Wisdom, generosity, sincerely goodness of disposition, submissiveness and humility, he surpassed all. The second conquest of Hindustan and the building up of the Empire were due to his strenuous efforts, his valour and his wise policy...” Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, pp. 265, 266.
⁵ To his own menial servant..... he gave titles of Sultan and Khan and presented them with ..... rich fiefs and productive territories, whilst he with total want of consideration made the Khans, the Princes the officers and the trusted servants of H.M. Jannat Ashiani, whose rank, claims and qualifications are known to every one to be in want of dry bread.......” Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, pp. 106-107.
accomplice in a conspiracy against the regent leading to his removal. Akbar who was now himself tired of the bonds of tutelage was convinced by this group of nobles that unless Bairam was removed he would not be in a position to exercise real power. Soon after the Khan-i-Khanan met with a tragic end on being murdered in January 1561 A.D.

The arrogant attitude adopted by Bairam Khan and the difficulty Akbar had in removing him led Akbar to define the powers and functions of the later incumbents vis-à-vis the emperor. The distribution of Bairam Khan’s power and distinctions between three individuals was the first step in that direction. Shihabuddin Ahmed, with whom Maham Anagah was later associated, was given control of political and financial affairs, Shamsuddin Atka Khan, the standard, drum and tumantogh and Munim Khan the office of Vakil and the title of Khan-i-Khanan.

This change which resulted in the Prime Minister gradually losing his power of a defacto grand Wazir, was brought about by circumstances not entirely in Akbar’s hand, but his deliberate policy adopted a little later accelerated the process of clipping his authority. Maham Anagah who controlled affairs soon after Bairam Khan was removed from the scene, kept Akbar as her willing tool which she used very effectively to achieve her end. Though Maham Anagah could not openly take part in directing public affairs but she firmly held the reins

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1 Badaoni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, specifically mentions that Maham Anagah and Adham Khan often spoke to Akbar against Bairam Khan, Vol. II, pp. 35-37. Mohammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbari, pp. 57-58, says Bairam Khan’s main fault was giving undue favours to a section of nobles at the cost of the old nobility, Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, pp. 93-94, however, writes that in the conspiracy against Bairam Khan the initiative was taken by Akbar himself and he conveyed his intentions to others.


4. The assassination of Bairam Khan by Afghans besides the lake Sahasnak, Patan (Baroda) on 31st January 1561 (Akbar nama. Victoria and Albert Museum I.S. No. 5/117) Artist: Tubi and Tiryyia.
of government. As leader of the conspiracy against Bairam, she was greatly successful in her designs.

However there are several incidents which indicate that Maham Anagah who on account of her excellent services, abundant wisdom and exceeding devotion to Akbar regarded herself as the substantive Prime Minister, was not as influential as it is thought. It was during the so-called ascendancy that Akbar married a Rajput princess, abolished forcible conversion of prisoners of war and inspite of Maham Anagah’s opposition appointed Atka Khan as Vakil-us-Sultanat. It is argued that in the later stages Akbar was using Maham as a tool and within a course of a year and a half, she found that her influence had completely vanished. It was therefore Akbar who used Maham Anagah to crush his enemies. As soon as he found her unwilling to cooperate further, and inclined to dominate, he set her aside and chose new allies. Her tenure as Prime Minister witnessed a significant change in the attitude of Emperor as well as status and position enjoyed by the Vakil. Quick changes in the office of Vakil indicated a change, and with every change the interest of Akbar was served and he finally emerged successful.

Munim Khan enjoyed two tenures as Vakil. The first soon after the suspension of Bairam Khan when he was also given the title of Khan-i-Khanan. Munim Khan was the son of an amir also called

3 When Adham Khan, son of Maham Anagah, slew the Vakil-us-Sultanat Atka Khan, Akbar did not care about Maham Anagah’s position and got Adham Khan killed; Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 273; Muhammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbari, pp. 100-101.
Bairam Khan, and was a grandee of the Humayun’s court. In his capacity as Vakil, Munim Khan like Bairam Khan was supposed to exercise control over both financial as well as military and administrative affairs of the state as the post of Wazir entrusted with the responsibility of managing finances was not revived, having fallen into disuse during the preceding four years.

However, the actual powers of the Vakil were not the same as those exercised by Bairam Khan. Akbar had started taking greater interest in matters of government and therefore the Vakil could not enjoy the same position as enjoyed during Akbar’s minority. Although Munim Khan enjoyed full powers of the office, he found it difficult to function without the cooperation of Maham Anagah, hence he attached himself to her group. Fear of the popularity of Atka Khan was another factor that made them cooperate with each other.

Shamsuddin Atka Khan, the next Vakil, who was raised to the Prime Ministership after the fall of Bairam Khan and Munim Khan’s first tenure as Vakil, was the son of the Mir Yar Muhammad “a spiritually minded householder” and had been taken into imperial

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1 Some manuscripts read Miram, but Bairam is the preferred reading. Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. II, p. 42.
2 The concept of Wazir, who was to be in sole charge of the revenue department and independent of the Vakil, first came in vogue under Humayun. At the time of Humayun’s death the diwani was controlled by his Wazir Khwaja Sultan Ali, Iqtidar Alam Khan, “Wizarat under Humayun” (1545–1555) P.I.H.C., 1960, p. 249; when Bairam Khan became, Vakil-us-Sultanat he took charge of the diwani himself and the office of the Wazir was probably abolished. It was probably not revived till 1564 when Muzaffar Khan was raised to the status of Diwan-i-Wizarat-i-kul, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 193.
4 Atka Khan’s letter to Akbar, vide Akbarnama, Vol. II, pp. 119-121. The letter was written probably in May 1560, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 120; Maasir-i-Rahimi, Vol. I, pp. 667-668. Akbar had earlier promised the ‘tumantough’ to Munim Khan but it seems that after having decided to appoint him Vakil, the king considered it prudent to satisfy the vanity of Shamsuddin by conferring upon him the prestigious standards till then enjoyed by Bairam Khan. Shah Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, Vol. II, pp. 531-535.
service after the battle of Kannauj.\textsuperscript{1}

When Akbar was convinced of the offences of Maham Anagah and was looking around for other advisers, Atka Khan sent a petition to Akbar requesting him to assign the office of \textit{Vakil} to him. This petition of Atka Khan which was accepted by Akbar is a very important landmark in the development of the institution of Vikalat for it connotes that the petitioner could suggest such a thing to the emperor and that Akbar even agreed to it.\textsuperscript{2}

The appointment of Atka Khan to the highest office of \textit{Vakil}\textsuperscript{3} led to antagonizing Maham Anagah and Munim Khan\textsuperscript{4} and resulted in the formation of two camps in the court which eventually led to the murder of the \textit{Vakil} by Maham Anagah's son Adham Khan.\textsuperscript{5}


\textsuperscript{2} Promotions and new appointments were made by an order called \textit{Farman-i-Sabti}. According to Abul Fazl, \textit{Farman-i-Sabti} were issued for three purposes: 1. For the appointment to Vakilship; 2. For the tutorship of a prince; 3. for appointment to the post of Wazir (finance Minister) or to the post of Sadr or Judge. Even after promotions were made, the Emperor considered representations made by the nobles. The case of Shamsuddin is an outstanding example of this. As the victor of Bairam Khan, he felt that he had not been given promotion which he deserved for having suppressed a formidable rebellion. Abul Fazl, \textit{Ain-i-Akbari}, Vol. I, pp. 137-138.

\textsuperscript{3} Shamsuddin is described as \textit{Vakil} in the sources, but it is difficult to find out the date of his appointment Abul Fazl, \textit{Ain-i-Akbari}, Vol. I, p. 595; \textit{Akbaranama}, Vol. II, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{4} Abul Fazl remarks, "When the Khan Aazam in his straightness and loyalty undertook the service of the Shahinshah, Munim Khan and Maham Anagah should have looked upon him as a providential helper instead of being so grieved and vexed. Abul Fazl, \textit{Akbarnama}, Vol. II, p. 231.

Mohammad Alif Qandhari, \textit{Tariikh-i-Akbari}, pp. 100-101; Muhammad Qasim Ferishtah, \textit{History of the Rise of Mohammedan Power in India till the year 1612.} Vol. I, p. 252, also supports Qandhari's statement that there was a long drawn struggle which finally resulted in the murder of Shamsuddin.

\textsuperscript{5} Abul Fazl, \textit{Akbarnama}, Vol. II, p. 276. Abul Fazl says Munim Khan's "motive in instigating Adham Khan was that after this affair the binding and loosening of the transaction of the sublime family and the control of all matters - political and financial, would be in his hands"; \textit{Tabaqat-i-Akbari}, Vol. II, 158 and \textit{Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh}, Vol. II, p. 52 also say that Shamsuddin's murder was the result of a conspiracy of Munim Khan. However, Iqtidar Alam Khan in \textit{Political Biography of a Mughal Noble - Munim Khan Khan-I-Khanan (1497-1575),} argues against the existence of a wider conspiracy, pp. 66-67.
The Prime Ministership of Atka Khan though short lived was significant because unlike his predecessors, Bairam Khan, Maham Anagah and Munim Khan, he remained devoted to the ruling family and served the emperor selflessly. His murder\(^1\) was a very tragic incident but Akbar refrained from carrying out any reprisals against Munim Khan and reinstated him to the little of Vakil-us-Sultanat and the title of Khan-i-Khanan\(^2\) in June 1562 A.D. Akbar displayed wisdom in doing so, as circumstances demanded that he makes use of the services of all experienced officers but henceforth the person holding the office of Vakil was only to be an instrument of shaping his policies.

The prestige and authority of the highest office of Vakil in the empire suffered on account of the circumstances in which it was refilled. Munim Khan continued to hold it till June 1567 A.D., but his involvement in Atka Khan's murder did not permit him to wield full authority.\(^3\) Within three months of his reinstatement his financial authority was clipped with the creation of the office of Diwan of crown territory (Khalisa) and the appointment of Aitimad Khan a competent financier to hold charge of it in September 1562 A.D.\(^4\)

The most effective blow to the authority of Vakil came in March 1564\(^5\) when Muzaffar Khan was promoted from the post of Diwan-i-

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1 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, gives the date as May, 1562, Vol. II, p. 269. Nizamuddin Ahmad, Tabaqat-i-Akbari places the occurrence a year later in 1563 A.D. In the details of the murder also authorities are at variance. Badaoni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, states that Adham himself killed Atka Khan; others says that he gave him a dagger thrust and left him to be killed by his attendants, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, pp. 321,324.


3 Bayazid Bayat, Tarikh-i-Humayun wa, Akbar, ed., Hidayat Hussain, Bib. Ind. Series, Asiatic Society of Bengal, p. 275,discusses in detail the difficulties faced by Munim Khan, the restrictions placed on his movements and how the officers humiliated him in every possible manner.


5 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 189, says it seems to have occurred some time after Munim Khan's return from Jalalabad in March, 1564 A.D.
Buyutat to that of Diwan-i-kul, a post created to directly supervise the revenue and financial affairs of the empire.\(^1\) Further, the appointment of Lashkar Khan as Mir Bakshi deprived the Vakil of his military responsibilities as well. However, his position as the first man in the state continued and he held the highest rank but his influence henceforth depended not on his office, but upon his personality and the conditions of the time. Although the outward distinction and prestige remained, the real power behind the office was no more there. The fact that Akbar chose to keep the office of Vakil in abeyance as he could not find a suitable person for the most coveted office in the empire is reflective of the role that he was to assume in the coming years.

The six year tenure of Munim Khan was extremely unsuccessful and proved fatal for the office of the Vakil. During the first phase he showed uncertainty and placed himself in the hands of Maham Anagah and during the second too he showed lack of initiative and was no longer the motive force behind administrative decisions. However, Shaikh Farid Bhakkari calls him a man of excellent disposition and one of the most valiant men of the age.\(^2\)

However, the rapid increase in the size of Akbar's empire and the consequent increase in the work of administration made it necessary for him to revive office of vikalat.\(^3\) Muzaffar Khan Turbati was appointed to

\(^{1}\) Iqtidar Alam Khan, Political Biography of a Mughal Noble Munim Khan, Khan-i-Khanan, 1497-1575 p.72, says Munim Khan was stripped of his power as Vakil, which was transferred to Muzaffar Khan. Khan reproduces Akbar's orders which are found in Abul Qasim Namakin's, Munshat-i-Namakin urging all to "regard him as Wakil-i-kul Sahib-i-Ikhtiyar, wa Wazir-i-tadbir wa fird-i-qtidar (a Wakil-i-kul possessing wide authority and an efficient and powerful wazir) and cooperate with him." Abul Fazl also hints that the office of Diwan-i-Wizarat-i-Kul carried with it functions and powers of both Vakil and the Wazir, Akbarnama, Vol. II, p. 97. It appears that this order, while formally recognizing the Wazir and Wakil as two separate and independent offices, sought to entrust both of these to one and the same person.


\(^{3}\) Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. III, p. 68.
the high position in November 1573. He was given the title of Jumlat- 
ul-Mulk. Although he had perfect knowledge of revenue affairs, his 
performance in the highest office was just satisfactory because faithful 
adherence to Akbar's revolutionary policies and statesmanship rather 
than specialized knowledge of revenue were the basic requirements of 
success as Akbar's Prime Minister. Muzaffar became haughty and 
arrogant during his tenure as Vakil which proved to be very short. 
However in the absence of any other alternative as well as his 
experience he was reappointed to the office in October 1577 A.D. 
Muzaffar was the last of Akbar's Vakils who exercised some influence on 
the administration but his position was purely personal and the respect 
shown to him by the Emperor was due to his efficient service and 
loyalty and not to his office.

After Muzaffar Khan, Akbar did not appoint any one to the Vikalat 
for a period of ten years (1579-89 A.D.) simply because no one was 
found fit for the post. During this time Todar Mal enjoyed the high 
office of Mushrif Diwan. According to Abul Fazl he enjoyed virtually the 
position of a Vakil, but the importance given to him as the head of the 
finance department was never ignored, especially because the financial 
head was supervising the government machinery as well. However, 
realizing the honorific value of the Vikalat, he did not abolish it and 
held it as the highest spectacular reward that could be given to the 
ablest and the most favoured official.

1 Mohammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbari, p. 216; Abul Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. 
I p. 340, places the incident in the eighteenth year of Akbar's reign, 1574 A.D. 
3 Mohammad Arif Qandhari who knew Muzaffar very well gives detailed 
information about how on one of his visits to Ajmer, Akbar allowed Muzaffar Khan 
to go on horseback while he himself walked a distance of a kilometre to the shrine. 
Tarikh-i-Akbari, p. 266. 
5 We read of no Hindu Diwan being given the title of Wazir. Todar Mal in 1581 A.D. 
was given "Ali Mansab Vazarat Kul Men Haid Ulisatqaql", Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri, p. 
355; quoted in J.N.Sarkar, Mughal Administration, Calcutta, 1924, p.23.
Perhaps the appointment of Todar Mal to the highest office was not made in a formal manner. But it is certain that he functioned as Prime Minister from 1582 A.D. till his death in 1589 A.D. This is clear from what Abul Fazl wrote “virtually the position of Vakil (Prime Minister) was conferred on him. Everything was referred to him and a choice ordering of administrative and financial matters was the result”. He rightfully enjoyed the virtual position of Vakil. In terms of his contribution to the Mughal Empire, Raja Todar Mal occupied the highest place amongst Akbar's Hindu nobility (the others being Man Singh, Bhagwan Das, Birbal etc.)

It is difficult to ascertain whether Todar Mal enjoyed all the powers of his new office. It was against Akbar's considered policy to make the Prime Minister the head of the administrative set up and consequently the Raja must have wielded the powers of a Prime Minister whom the jurists call the Wazir of the second category. Nevertheless he continued to attend to all political and revenue matters till 1589 A.D.2

Todar Mal is said to have been the last great Prime Minister of Akbar's reign. After his death Akbar raised Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, son of Bairam Khan to the position of Prime Minister at the end of December 1589 A.D. Infact ever since the removal of Bairam Khan the position of his family had by and large deteriorated, though

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1 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. III, p. 561, Ibn Hasan does not include Todar Mal among Akbar's Vakils but R.P. Tripathi who also omitted the Raja's name in his Some Aspects of Muslim Administration has rectified the error in his later work "Rise and Fall of Mughal Empire" Vol. I, Todar Mal was appointed Mushrif-i-Diwan in 1574 A.D., (Akbarnama, Vol. III, p. 158) and was promoted to a higher post in March 1582 A.D. (Akbarnama,Vol. III, p. 381) During the reign of Akbar, there was no post higher than that of Mushrif-i-Diwan, except Vikalat, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 6.

Akbar did retain some of its members in high ranks and positions. This appointment was more of a personal favour for his attachment to the king from the boyhood rather than conferment of any real power. With his rise the eclipse of the family from influential court circles came to an end. His position rose further when he was married to the sister of Mirza Aziz Koka.

During his tenure as Vakil he was given the jagir of Jaunpur and ordered to take charge of the place. Since he was posted at Jaunpur, he remained more or less cut off from the court. His talent was utilized in military successes. Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, was perhaps the greatest of Akbar's Prime Ministers, in courage, generosity and political skill.

The last person to hold the office of Vakil under Akbar was Mirza Aziz Koka, son of Shamsuddin Atka Khan and Akbar's nurse Jiji Anaga. Akbar's love for him is revealed from his saying "I so love Aziz that though he shows evil thought we can think nothing but good of him". Mirza Aziz Koka enjoyed a distinct position amongst Akbar's Vakils. Akbar often commented "a stream of milk connected him and Aziz." An idea of Aziz Koka's prestige can be had from the fact that two of his daughters were married to princes of the royal family — one of them to prince Murad and another to prince Khusrau during his tenure as Vakil.

It is surprising that none of the contemporary sources mention

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1 Afzal Hussain, The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir, A Study of Family Groups, p. 27.
2 Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, Dhakirat-ul-Khawanin, p. 22
3 He performed great deeds in Akbar's time like the victory of Gujrat, conquest of Sind and defeat of Suhail Khan of Bijapur, Shan Nawaz Khan, Maasir-ul-Umara, Vol. I, p. 63; Mohammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbari, p. 5.
6 Ibid., p. 121.
much as regards the power of Aziz Koka as Vakil. Though he exercised an immense influence on the emperor he does not appear to have exercised much influence in the administration of the empire.

In 1605 A.D. when Akbar was ill, a plot was hatched to set aside Salim, (Jahangir) the heir apparent and place his son Khusrau (Aziz Koka's son in law) to the throne. The fact that this plot was hatched by the Vakil of the Empire along with Raja Mansingh throws light on the power enjoyed by Aziz Koka in his capacity as the highest official in the empire.1 The conspiracy failed and Jahangir on his accession to the throne, honoured most of his commitments.2 The fact that Aziz Koka's name does not appear in any administrative measure despite occupying the highest office of the empire till Akbar's death, shows that the office was more of a personal dignity than any real or substantial work and that Akbar in practice took the sting out of the Vakilship and made it almost harmless.

The history of Vikalat during the reign of Akbar was one of gradual decline. From the enjoyment of unlimited authority in the beginning of the reign the Vakil's position in the beginning of the seventeenth century became more or less honorific and though he continued to enjoy dignity and prestige he became a shadow of his former self. The policy of Akbar was followed by his successors and none of the later Vakils appear to have regained the influence which a Prime Minister under an absolute monarchy was expected to exercise. Following his father's example, Jahangir did not allow any individual to gather too much authority in his hands and overshadow the emperor. In the initial years the Vakil was the highest officer, the vice regent or

1 Afzal Hussain, The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir, A Study of Family Groups, analyses the details of conspiracy, p. 186.
the Prime Minister of the Empire. It is significant that during the reign of Akbar's successors it was the Wazir who became supreme in importance and was considered as the premier noble.

Sharif Khan, son of the great painter and calligraphist Abdussamad was the first Vakil under Jahangir. Considering that he was given the highest grade, the title of Amir ul Umara and the distinctions enjoyed by Bairam Khan, the powers of the Vikalat could have been revived under him. But owing to his illhealth he was replaced by Asaf Khan Qazvini who again on account of lack of trust by the emperor was shifted to the Deccan. Their appointment and dismissal reflects two significant trends in the early period of the institution. Firstly, the emperor making use of his discretion in appointing and removing high officials to the office and secondly, refraining from conferring the post on any high ranking noble.

The second phase of Wizarat under Jahangir began in 1611 A.D., the year Jahangir married Nur Jahan and the subsequent rise of Itmad-ud-Daulah to the Wizarat. From this time onwards the Vakil as the senior most official is not heard of and it is the Wazir/Diwan, though theoretically the finance minister, supervised all other branches of administration. A just, fair and compassionate man, Itmad-ud-Daulah was exceptionally well educated and considered exceedingly clever and skilful both in writing and transacting business. He did not owe his rise entirely to the influence of his daughter.

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1 Beni Prasad, *History of Jahangir*, p. 95.
During the next eleven years Itmad-ud-Daulah, who was the Diwan-i-Ala, held the main strings of administration. As regards the status enjoyed by him, he reminds one of Bairam Khan and it may be presumed that in the appointment of generals, for supervision of the army and fresh appointment of governors, his voice carried weight. He had the complete trust of Jahangir who conferred upon him the title of Madar-ul-Mulk, 'Pivot of the country.'

During his tenure as Prime Minister, Itmad-ud-Daulah was rewarded substantially with honours bestowed upon him, the likes of which no other minister on record had ever seen. In addition to the post of Diwan until his death, he probably acquired the additional office of Vakil after the death of Amirul Umara Sharif Khan, although there is evidence that his son Abul Hasan Asaf Khan also served as Vakil during this period. In 1615 A.D. he was given a standard and drums to be beaten after the Emperor's entrance to the court. In 1616 A.D., when Jahangir was disturbed at the death of his grand daughter, Itmad-ud-Daulah was called upon to write his memoirs. On one occasion Jahangir even removed his turban and placed it on Itmad-ud-Daulah's head as a sign of special favour. He was one of the three privileged persons to receive a personal copy of the 'Jahangirnama', a record of first twelve years of Jahangir's reign.

The Wizarat, by the time Itmad-ud-Daulah came to occupy the
post, had developed into a well organized institution and during his incumbency, he acted as the Wazir of the Mughal Empire, with great skill. However, it is significant that though contemporary authorities bear testimony to his qualities and every honour and distinction was conferred upon him, Jahangir continued to conduct the government in his own way without the domination of the Wazir.1

After the death of Itmaduddaulah,2 the Emperor appointed Abul Hasan as Diwan or Wazir.3 Born Abul Hasan, he received the titles of Itiqad Khan in 16114 and Asaf Khan in 1614.5 As a result of family ties and because of his expertise as a courtier Asaf Khan was taken in by Jahangir as his adopted son (farzandi). “And like his own father was known as the pillar of the kingdom”.6 He was the most powerful member of the Nur Jahan Janta.7 An idea of the power enjoyed by Asaf Khan as Prime Minister is found in the remark by Francisco Pelsaert,

“The king does not trouble himself with public affairs but behaves as if they were of no concern of his. If anyone approaches him he will give no definite answer of yes or no

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1 Sir Thomas Roe was present at the court during the period of Itmad-ud-Daulah’s glory and his account of him creates the same impression. He has made mention of him on different occasions and in all these accounts there is not the slightest indication of his influence over the king.
2 Jahangir expressed his loss, at Itmad-ud-Daulah’s death in the following words, “Though the weight of such a kingdom was on his shoulders...... yet no one ever went to Itmad-ud-Daulah with a petition or business, who turned from him in an injured frame of mind”, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Vol. II, p. 222.
6 Ibid., p. 81.
7 Francisco Palsaert, Jahangir’s India, The Remonstrante of Franciso Palsaert, Eng.trans. W.H. Moreland, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, Delhi, 1972, “Jahangir is king in name only, while she (Nur Jahan) and her brother Asaf Khan hold the Kingdom firmly in their hands”, p. 50.
referring him promptly to Asaf Khan who makes it a point to communicate it to Nur Jahan, his sister".\(^1\)

It is surprising that the post of Vakil which was kept in abeyance between the fourth and twenty first year of Jahangir's reign was revived towards the end and the honour was bestowed on Asaf Khan at a critical time. The fact that Asaf Khan was related to both Nur Jahan and the ambitious prince Shah Jahan and could have maintained a balance must have prompted Jahangir to do so. \(^2\)

Asaf Khan was the only Vakil to emerge relatively unharmed through the bitter years of succession emerging after 1627 A.D., as the most powerful man in Shah Jahan's government. On Shah Jahan's accession, both Asaf Khan, already the first man in the state and the person to whose influence, tact and cool courage Shah Jahan owed his throne, and Abul Hasan the Diwan were confirmed in their respective posts.\(^3\) Asaf Khan as Vakil was given the title of 'Yamin-ud-Daulah' (right hand of the state) and had the charge of Azuk\(^4\) seal and rank of 8000/8000 a rank which no officer had hitherto received.

Contemporary sources point to certain differences between the two senior most officials of Shah Jahan, and Asaf Khan in his capacity

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\(^2\) Irfan Habib, says that Asaf Khan always held the office of Vakil eversince the death of Itmad-ud-Daulah (except for the summer of 1626 when he was ousted by Mahabat Khan) although not appointed officially; Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Family of Nur Jahan during Jahangir's reign" – A political study, _Medieval India – A Miscellany_, Vol. I, p. 79.

\(^3\) Mutamad Khan, _Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri_, Eng. trans. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. VI, p. 436; Abdul Hamid Lahori, _Badashahnama_, Vol. I, pp. 113-114; quoted in Banarsi Prasad Saksena, _History of Shahjahan of Dihli_, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1958, p. 65. He says, "On February 26th, 1528 A.D. Shah Jahan arranged a magnificent reception for Asaf Khan .... and he was conferred to the office of Vakil".

as Vakil prevailed upon the emperor leading to the appointment of Iradat Khan as Diwan.\(^1\) This is probably the only instance in Mughal history when Diwan was nominated by the Vakil and always worked together\(^2\) Asaf Khan tried to assert himself and act as Wazir-i-Tafwid but despite the regard for his father-in-law the emperor adopted a cautious policy and refused to be over shadowed by the Vakil. This also explains the early dismissal of Asaf Khan’s nominee Iradat Khan\(^3\) and appointment of Afzal Khan to the office of Diwan. Asaf Khan, the last person to hold the office of Vakil died in 1641 A.D.\(^4\)

Even before the Vikalat had actually ceased to exist, its duties were being entrusted to either the Wazir or Diwan in such a manner that they might bear the burden of the administration and at the same time not be in a position to wield power and influence which it was desired to avoid.\(^5\)

The Diwan or the Diwan-i-kul became responsible for revenue and finance and corresponds exactly with the Diwan-i-Wizarat of the Sultanat and the Diwan-i-Amal of Ibn Khaldun. During the latter half of Shah Jahan’s reign, the Diwan/Wazir came to be considered the

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\(^1\) The diwan by virtue of his control over financial affairs considered the Vakil to be only an ornamental head. Moreover his constitutional position had become secondary since 1564 A.D.


\(^3\) Iradat Khan was given the title of Azam Khan and transferred to Deccan. B.P. Saksena, History of Shahjahan of Dihli, p. 75.


\(^5\) Ever since the reorganization of the government by Akbar the Vakil disappeared as an administrative officer. Henceforth the Diwan signed all state documents both as Diwan and Vakil. He emerged as the King’s minister par excellence .... all imperial orders were first recorded in his office and he alone issued orders on behalf of the King. R.C. Majumdar, ed., History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. VII; The Mughal Empire Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1994, (3rd ed.), p.430.
highest office as the office of Vakil\(^1\) had become almost defunct by that
time.

Afzal Khan who held office for ten years till his death (1630-
1640) was a very trusted and respected man and wielded substantial
influence on the administration. According to Abdul Hamid Lahori, all
important farmans were drafted by him.\(^2\) He even accompanied the
emperor on all his tours. His ascendancy over the Vakil is revealed by
the fact that in 1638 A.D. when Shah Jahan was confined to bed, only
Afzal Khan was admitted to royal presence to apprise him of the state of
the empire and consult him on important issues.

Afzal Khan was irreproachable in his conduct and admired by all.
Shah Jahan often said that in twenty eight years of service he never
heard a bad word from Afzal Khan against anyone. Chander Bhan
Brahman who owed his rise to Afzal Khan says "inspite of personal
capacity, literary merits and high position he was modest and
unassuming."\(^3\) Inspite of the position enjoyed by him, there is
conclusive evidence to prove that Shah Jahan like his predecessor
wanted his senior most officers to be subservient to him.

Islam Khan Mashhadi was appointed as Diwan in 1639 A.D.
known for his ability and scholarship, he was rightfully called Sahib-i-
Saifo-Qalam (master of pen and sword).\(^4\) He himself suggested the

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\(^1\) Next to the Vakil, the most powerful officer was the Diwan, also called Vazir or
Diwan-i-Kul. Besides being the head of the finance department, he was
responsible for the working of other administrative departments and signed every

\(^2\) Letters to Nazar Muhammad Khan, ruler of Balkh (sixth year); Letters to ruler of
Iran (Sixth Year); Draft of treaty in the form of a farman to Adil Khan (Bijapur)
quoted in Ibn Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, p. 190.

*Dhakirat-ul-Khawanin*, p. 87.

name of his successor Sadullah Khan to the Emperor and chose to be transferred as governor of the Deccan. This speaks volumes about the character and self-respect of Islam Khan.

Sadullah Khan was appointed to the office of Diwan in the nineteenth year of Shah Jahan's reign. Brought into politics by Shah Jahan himself, he was the most learned and efficient official in the long line of Mughal Wazirs. He had an extraordinary capacity for the management of officers placed under his charge. Sadullah Khan on account of his efficiency and integrity enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor and a general respect from subordinates. Under him, the Wizarat functioned with great efficiency. Shah Jahan's letter written to Ali Mardan Khan at his death is the best attestation of a Wazir's loyalty and worth in his master's estimation. Besides his departmental affairs Sadullah Khan performed active military service as well. A man of high learning, Sadullah Khan's sudden death deprived Shah Jahan of his most trusted, loyal and efficient Wazir. Mir Jumla was appointed to the exalted office in 1556 A.D. in recognition of his talents as well on

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3 Besides Persian and Arabic he knew Turkish language. Brahman worked as his assistant and writes about him, as he judged him from personal contact, not as a mere subordinate official. He says 'In learning and scholarship his presence reminded one of Abul Fazl.' Chander Bhan Brahman, *Chahar Chaman*, Eng. trans. Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzib*, p.232.

4 He is credited with reforms like creating Chaklas (circles) by grouping several parganas and placing each under an amin and faujdar.

Shahjahan's letter to Ali Mardan Khan expressing his feelings at Sadullah Khan's death.
گلستان صدری و منصوری مستند صفات کمی و بی‌بی‌بی
فکر علم نمایندگان و راهکار خلاق برای کنون دنیای
کمی علم در نیاز به معاونی که عطوم و زیست‌آموز با نام
عبارت‌کلام اقحام سعدی ارمان کلمه پنبه‌ای رنگارن و در
مروزوزن رضیب به‌دس، درغیر نفع بی‌پای یافتیم،
بی‌سوین در باراد حضرت‌ها قرار نیازی و بید بود درجه‌رخ
ربا ونا و خشم فرسیدر محاصره سرها نبوده‌ی این‌گونه
مقدم شدند و معاون مراد در درباری که با تماشای تازه‌ای
نیز که بر حسن فکر، حمد می‌اند بی‌پای بگذاریم,
شیری، بر این سرگردان از میری بی‌پای، بر این، چنان
اگر بخشد از اگرکدی و سعی کردی، درگذوش، دارم چرا
می‌تواند روی آورم؟ از واشص درخت برای کسکان
و از واشص درخت برای همسایه‌ی، می‌گذرانم,
و این رکد، می‌کرسد که یک‌سی درون‌دنیا بی‌پای
وبی‌پای در نیاز ماهمکن کسا.
عدم رعایت انتظامات سفارش یافته کننده می‌پیچیم، درعبید
امه‌نیت سعادت نیست مهر ضمانت نیایانه راه‌های و
درگاه قید و مرخصی و جانرفتیه، می‌توانید راهک
بری عفونی راه‌نیابی واگذاری دسته‌داری شهادت و نمای
در منابعه شکایت به‌صورت هرگونه عزم برای
پیامد واردان کنترل حیات زندگی، منصوب نشته‌هایی
نیست. در حالی که عفو و تخفیف، ناظر است برای
ما و من گم‌مانده از دسترسی راهبان از این سبب
ماست نزددم و ضرر نفسی، آرای سیدبدا دست خالی
مکاسبانه‌ای که بی‌عنایت صنعت جامان و
جایگاه و همچنین سلسله روانی فراموشان‌های عالی‌
به‌نتیجه‌گیری می‌شود.
Translation of Shah Jahan's letter to Ali Mardan Khan

This letter was written to Ali Mardan Khan on Sadullah Khan's death. Shah Jahan has shown his grief through this condolence message on the sad demise of Sadullah Khan to Ali Mardan Khan. In this message Shah Jahan has expressed his opinion and called Sadullah Khan a great patriot and able administrator who has been faithful and loyal to his majesty till his last breath. He was a very honest, noble and dedicated person and was respected by all sections of the society, whether the nobility or the common person of the empire. Whatever ministerial assignments were given to him he did his job honestly in a well organized manner which is an example for every minister and persons of lower rank. The kingdom, was handled very faithfully and efficiently by him.

Therefore his sudden demise is a personal loss to me (Shahjahan which cannot be filled. He was an unmatched personality. Other minister and officials should follow the ways, means and path shown by Sadullah Khan.
the recommendation of Aurangzeb who had seen great potential in Mir Jumla during his stay in the Deccan.

One can easily identify that Wizarat under Shah Jahan was the culmination of a policy of recognition of merit that began under Akbar and Jahangir. The fact that six Diwans out of eight were non Kahanazads suggests that family considerations were not the main criteria for these appointments and the personal merit continued to be the basic consideration for selection to this office. The appointment of Diyanat Rai and Raghunath Rai even for short durations also eliminates the role of religion as a guiding principle in these appointments. It seems there was no fixed tenure of office during this time. The fact that both Afzal Khan and Sadullah Khan held office till their deaths shows that the tradition of a life-time appointment established by Jahangir continued. The inner working of the Wizarat shows that the system had greatly developed by that time and the details which are absent in Akbarnama and Ain-i-Akbari must have been incorporated later on.

There seems to be a change in the relationship between the emperor and his senior nobility as Shah Jahan was very sociable in his dealings with his Diwans and tried to establish a good rapport with them.

By the time Aurangzeb ascended the throne, the experimental period of the institution had ended and the office had emerged as a full fledged institution. The head of the Wizarat designated as Wazir, Wazir-i-Azam, Wazir-i-Muazzam or Diwan-i-Ala enjoyed a very high political status but correspondingly lesser effective powers. They enjoyed a high

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2 There seems to be a link between Mansab and post. Diwans like Afzal Khan and Sadulla Khan were promoted to panj Hazari (5000 zat) before their appointment as Diwans. Others had already reached that mansab. This suggests that 5000 was the qualifying mansab for the post of Diwan during this period. Firdoz Anwar, Nobility under the Mughals (1628-58), p. 118.
position in administrative hierarchy and supervised all departments of the centre and provinces including control of land assignments and the grant of madadmaash land.\(^1\)

Aurangzeb’s long reign of almost fifty years was dominated by three powerful Wazirs. The first among them, Muazzam Khan originally called Mir Mohammad Saeed had played an active role in Aurangzeb getting his throne.\(^2\) A great officer who was unrivalled in his age for judgement, far sightedness, wisdom and courage.\(^3\) He spent most of his life fighting Aurangzeb’s enemies. Infact both Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb utilized Muazzam Khan’s unrivalled qualities of military leadership and unsurpassed knowledge of Deccan for their imperialistic purposes. Though he continued to hold the office he could neither influence nor control politics and in his absence his legal and formal duties were performed by his deputies.\(^4\)

Aurangzeb’s second Prime Minister, Jafar Khan, Umdat-ul-Mulk, was the grandson of Itmad-ud-Daulah. He was appointed to the Wizarat in 1663 A.D. and was highly respected by Aurangzeb.\(^5\) However, no record of his intention to improve the condition of the

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\(^1\) It was a grant of land made in recognition of the need, piety, learning or family of the recipient.


\(^3\) On account of the qualities possessed by him Aurangzeb had great regard for him and addressed him as “Baba” or “Babaji” – Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p.29; Manucci, however, says he addressed Mir Jumla in this way in a false display of affection, *Storia do Mogor*, Vol. I, p. 240.


people stand to his credit. He was a powerless Wazir of a powerful emperor.

Nawab Asad Khan¹, entitled Asaf-ud-Daulah Jumdat-ul-mulk, who adorned the high office for more than three decades was the last and favourite Wazir of Aurangzeb. The author of Maasir ul Umara says he was made deputy Wazir in the thirteenth year of Aurangzeb’s reign and promoted as Wazir only in the twentyseventh year.² During the intervening years Aurangzeb kept the powers of the Wazir in his hands.³ Asad Khan was a very competent and influential Wazir. Such was Aurangzeb’s confidence in him that he once mentioned “there is not, nor will there be any Wazir better than Asad Khan”.⁴ However, inspite of all his qualities and Aurangzeb’s faith in him he was not allowed to assert himself and act independently. Inspite of his position Asad Khan never dared to question the authority of the emperor and preferred to shelve his personal ambition and always lent personal support to him.⁵

Although Aurangzeb has been criticised for his religious intolerance against Shias, he did not let his religious feelings influence the affairs of the state. The fact that all his Wazirs were Shia Muslims reflects that he was practical and rose above religious feelings in administrative matters. Excessive centralization of power in the hands of Aurangzeb and his preoccupation in the troubled affairs of Deccan prevented his Wazirs from making any contribution towards the growth of the departments they headed nor initiate any improvements in the

¹ It was the title given to him by Shah Jahan in the twenty seventh year of his reign. Manucci, Storia Do Mogor, Vol. I, p. 21.
⁴ Letter quoted in Jadunath Sarkar, History of Aurangzeb, Vol. V, p.222. Aurangzeb in another letter to his son writes “Although I shall leave behind me a very competent Wazir, who has come to the front in my reign and whom I shall have protected, yet what good will it do, as the four pillars of the Empire, viz., my four sons, will never leave that poor man to himself to do his work”.
⁵ Laiq Ahmad, The Prime Minister of Aurangzeb, p. 143.
revenue administration. This could be accepted as a reasonable explanation of the general unrest that was to encompass the empire towards the end of Aurangzeb’s reign.

By the time Aurangzeb died, the old pre-Mughal tradition of the Wazir being the premier noble at the court and the leading counsellor of the king apart from being the head of the financial administration had been largely established. Apart from this, the Wazir’s post carried with it a substantial following among the nobility and opportunities for personal gain. The Wazir’s office therefore became a coveted post and the target of intrigue and conspiracy in the seventeenth century.¹

However, by and large upto Aurangzeb’s time, inspite of the subtle changes in the character of the Wizarat, the Wazir posed no threat to monarchy. The personal capacity of the Mughal emperors and the immense prestige associated with monarchy prevented the Wazir from assuming overriding ambitions.

¹ Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, p. 62.