Chapter VIII

Mint Administration
MINT ADMINISTRATION

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Gujarat ports were the main entry point of silver imports in the form of bullion and specie - to be converted into Mughal coins. It was first Cambay then Surat through which bullion came to India. Bullion imports into Mughal India at the close of the sixteenth century probably amounted to roughly Rs 2,04,71,768.¹

As a result of oversea trade, Ahmadabad and Surat were successively the largest mints of the Empire - former in the last quarter of the sixteenth century (in Akbar’s reign) and latter in the seventeenth century (during Shahjahan and Aurangzeb’s reign).²

Mints in the Mughal Empire were a source of considerable income to the state, so their proper organization was an administrative necessity. For Abul Fazl, a thoughtful commentator on Akbar’s administrative measures, the successful working of the mint was linked to the prosperity of the Empire. He thus devoted a detailed section of his work to the organization of the mint.³

In the formative phase of Mughal administration, monetary integration of the suba was attempted through a number of administrative and fiscal measures. On the eve of the Mughal conquest of Gujarat, the most prominent currency of the region was the mahmudi, a silver coin of 88 grains first issued by the Gujarat Sultan Mahmud Shah (1458-1511). At least four varieties of the

¹ The Economy of Mughal India, p.381.
³ A’in, I, pp.12-23.
mahmudi, of different weights, fineness and exchange rates, all modeled on Mahmud’s principal silver coin, were in circulation in various part of Gujarat in 1572-73.⁴

An imperial mint was settled at Ahmadabad immediately after Akbar’s conquest of Gujarat in 1572-73 and the very first year of the annexation of the province saw the issue of gold muhrs and silver rupees bearing the Emperor’s name, year issue, mint name and Kalima (Muslim creed).⁵ It became the greatest mint of the empire in very short order. The silver rupees of Ahmadabad predominate in mixed hoards of Akbar’s silver, in the same manner that rupees of Surat dominate hoards of Aurangzeb and the later Mughals.⁶ That the new coin took deep root in popular usage was confirmed by an incident during the brief revolt and capture of Ahmadabad by the deposed Sultan of Gujarat, Muzaffar III, in AD 1583. To proclaim his restoration, he needed to strike silver coins of the exact shape and weight as the rupee of Akbar rather than the reputed mahmudi of his ancestors.⁷

In 1577-78, the mint administration in whole Mughal Empire was reorganized. Under this scheme, administration of silver mints was transferred from local functionaries (Chaudharis) to officials directly appointed by the Emperor. To Ahmadabad mint, Imaduddin Husain was appointed as darogha.⁸

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From 1582 onwards, a series of fiscal and monetary measures were undertaken by the Mughal state aimed at standardizing the monetary system and integrating the regional currencies.\footnote{All these measures are dealt elaborately by Najaf Haider in his article, ‘The Monetary Integration of India under the Mughal Empire’, in I.Habib, ed. India- Studies in the History of an Idea, Delhi, 2005, pp.129-143.}

In 1592, an imperial order was issued to demonetize all precious metal coins of previous regimes.\footnote{A’in, I, pp.284,289; Badauni, III, p. 380.} Under this scheme, massive conversions of mahmudis of Gujarat took place at Ahmadabad mint.\footnote{Najaf Haider, ‘The Monetary Integration of India under the Mughal Empire’, in ed. I.Habib \textit{op.cit.}, p.136.}

The end result of these measures could be seen in the Ahmadabad region. By the end of the sixteenth century, in the sarkar of Ahmadabad, which housed both the capital city of the province and a mint, the rupee had become the sole medium of exchange to the total exclusion of mahmudis.\footnote{Letters Received, vol. III, p.11.}

The imperial monetary system did not penetrate in the southern Gujarat till the early decades of the seventeenth century. In the cities of Surat, Broach and Baroda (in southern Gujarat) local currency of previous regime, mahmudi was still the sole currency of exchange and the money of account.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, vol. I, p.34; Also see Thomas Best, \textit{The voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies}, 1621-14, ed. William Foster, Hakluyt Society, 1934, p.35.} The reason for the continued circulation of mahmudis in southern Gujarat was two fold. One view forwarded is that the volume of coin production in the Ahmadabad mint was not much as to supply rupees to the entire province.\footnote{Najaf Haider,‘Mughals and Mahmudis’, \textit{op.cit.}, p.274.}

Further, much of the supply of the Surat mahmudi came from the autonomous principality of Baglana whose ruler had accepted the overlord
ship of Akbar. Its ruler was allowed to retain his possession on the condition of granting safe passage to merchant caravans through the northern cities of his principality. He was also granted permission to mint *mahmudis* in the name of the Mughal Emperor. These *mahmudi* coins bore Akbar’s legends and dates from AH 985 (1577-78) to 1027 (AD 1617-18). Further, as a policy of matter, at this time, Mughals were not bent on extending their imperial monetary system to southern Gujarat. The rulers of Baglana continued to strike these coins as late as 1638 when their kingdom was annexed.

A policy change took place with the commissioning of the Imperial mint at Surat from 1620 onwards to strike rupees on a regular basis. It was in response to the shifting of maritime trade in the western Indian Ocean from the Gulf of Cambay towards the coast of Surat with the arrival of the Dutch and the English East India Companies. Soon, it replaced the Ahmadabad as the largest mint of the region.

Beside this, a full military campaign was launched against Jam of Navanagar who used to supply *mahmudis* in the large area stretching from Kathiawar to Ahmadabad. It may be recalled that rulers (Jam) of the Navanagar were granted permission to mint coins by the Sultan Mahmud Shah III (1538-54) which they continued till the reign of Jahangir. During

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18 *Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics*, pp.115-130.
19 Akbar had also set up a mint in Surat but it was closed for a time to be reopened in 1620: *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p.176.
21 *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, *op.cit.*, pp.174-178.
22 *Mir’at*, supplt.219-20.
A‘zam Khan’s governorship (in 1641) in the wake of military campaign, the ruler of Jam offered his allegiance and consented to overthrow the mint.  

During the reign of Shahjahan, the political offensive (1641) against the Jam of Navanagar to shut down the mint and stifle the supply of the local coin (mahmudi) was preceded as well as followed, by the decision to establish an imperial mint at Junagadh for the sole purpose of melting mahmudis (bar gudaz mahmudi) and recoining them into rupees. But this experiment was found to affect adversely the royal mint at Ahmadabad. According to the author of the Mir’at, the experiment failed and the mint was discontinued on the advice of the diwan of the suba, Mir Sabir. According to him, “in view of convenience and cost effectiveness (nazr bar suhulat wa kifayat), merchants started coining their gold and silver, brought at Diu, there [Junagarh] rather than taking them to Ahmadabad [mint]”. But the mint at Junagadh continued to strike rupees and hence controvert the textual evidence of its discontinuance.

Under Shahjahan, another active mint was at Cambay. Earlier, under Jahangir, we meet, for the first time, with reference to a distinctively Cambay coinage, which was issued probably not for currency purposes but merely in commemoration of the Emperor Jahangir’s visit to the city. The earliest known coin from the Cambay mint is a rupee of the hijri year 1051 (AD 1641). It developed to be a very important mint in 1675-84. Aziza Hasan has

23 Lahori,II,pp.231-32; Mir’at, I,p.214.
24 Mir’at, I, p.214; Ibid.suppl.pp.211-212.
25 Mir’at, 1.p.214.
26 Mints of the Mughal Empire, op.cit., p.337; Najaf Haider, Mughals and Mahmudis,pp.282-283.
showed there was a great increase in the share of Cambay mint from 1666-74, which was also witnessed in the two decades (1685-1703). This increase, it seems, was at the expense of Surat. Minting at Surat mint was not speedy enough to satisfy the needs of the merchants of that city. Sometimes, especially during the reign of Aurangzeb, the mint at Surat remained closed for sometime due to Maratha raids.29

During the reign of Aurangzeb, the principality of Navanagar was annexed over a dispute over succession.30 The name of Navanagar was changed to Islamnagar and in its mint, mahmudis was to be melted and reminted into rupees.31

In Mughal Empire, mints had the twin functions of minting bullion (gold or silver) or copper, and reminting the old coins that had lost value either by age or by loss of weight or both.32 As a rule, the government compelled the reminting of old coins by either not normally accepting them in payments to the treasury, or by doing so only at a discount (batta).33 For every year, subsequent to the year of issue recorded on the coin, a percentage was deducted from its value irrespective of the actual loss of weight. Besides the factor of age, the loss in weight also caused a discount for which the government as well as the market had set rates. Abul Fazl says that after a number of experiments the discount rates fixed for old rupee were as follows – a loss in weight up to one rati was ignored and the coin treated as equal to

29 Mints of the Mughal Empire, op.cit.pp.327, 329.
30 For details see Chapter Tributary Chiefs.
31 Mir’at, suppl.p.220.
32 For a general discussion of Mughal currency system, see I.Habib, Currency System of the Mughal Empire, Medieval India Quarterly, 1961, Aligarh, IV, pp.1-21.
33 A’in, I, p.289; Also see Shireen Moosvi (tr.) Aurangzeb’s Farman to Rasikdas on Problems of Revenue Administration, 1665 in Medieval India, I.Delhi,1992, p.204 clause 8.
40 dams; in case of loss between one rati and two ratis, the discount amounted to one dam or 2.5 per cent and the coin fetched 39 dams. Further, if the loss exceeded two ratis, the coin was treated as bullion. These discount rates were slightly revived during Aurangzeb’s reign through 2 orders issued in 1692-3 and 1696-7 to Gujarat which lay down that the coin short in weight up to 3 ratis was to be treated as bullion and required reminting. The shortage of new currency and fall in weight of the old coins often enabled the sarrafs to unilaterally increase the market discount rates for their own profit which they acquired by continuing the old currency in circulation. It caused, according to the Mir’at, a great loss to the public and therefore necessitated the issue of these orders. The diwan of Gujarat was repeatedly required to take bonds from the sarrafs that they would strictly follow the official rates and bring the chalani rupee, which was short in weight below 3 ratis, to the mint.

The factor of age or weight or both thus accounted for the old currency inevitably undergoing remitting for which the total charges amounted to 5.6 per cent.

The seigniorage and mint charges (mahsul-i daru-l zarb) levied by Mughals were not realized through mixing alloy in the coin but charged separately on those who wanted to convert their bullion into specie. From Abu-l Fazl’s statement it appears that in the case of the rupee the total charge

34 A’in, I, pp.28-29.
35 Mir’at, I, pp.327,337.
36 Ibid.
37 A’in, I, p.32.
amounted to about 5.6 per cent of the net amount coined;\(^{38}\) and there is evidence that it remained about the same during the later period.\(^ {39}\) But, in 1676, it was abolished by Aurangzeb.\(^ {40}\) The abolition remained in force for only five years and the tax was reintroduced throughout the empire in 1681, now set at three different rates viz. 5 percent charged from Hindu merchants, 3.5 from Europeans and 2.5 percent from Muslims. An order of the subadar of Gujarat, dated 1682, stated that the tax realized on all the gold and silver bullion (hasil i tala wa nuqra ghair maskuk) sold by the merchants to the mints of the province should be at the rate of “two [in] forty” (chahal do) for the Hindus and “one [in] forty” (chahal yak) for the Muslims.\(^ {41}\)

Mints in the Mughal Empire were a source of considerable income to the state. In cities for the collection of mint dues, it constituted a separate mahal and formed a part of the mahalat-i sa’ir balda (urban taxes). In Ahmadabad, it was separate mahal and its annual income was estimated at Rs. 1, 54,362.5 (61, 74,500 dams).\(^ {42}\) In the later source, it was stood at Rs. 25,000 (10, 00,000 dams).\(^ {43}\)

In Surat, the dues from mint were also a part of sa’ir mahal (trade taxes) which also included mahals like Khushki mandi (land transit checkpost), furza (customhouse), Ghalla mandi (grain market), namaksar (salt pans), marammat jahazat (ship building and repairing) and furza-i

\(^{38}\) A’in, I, p.32.
\(^{39}\) I.Habib, Currency System of Mughal Empire, MIQ, IV,1961,p.3.
\(^{40}\) EFI (NS), 1670-77,I, pp.282-83.
\(^{41}\) Mir’at, I,p.304.
\(^{42}\) Mir’at, supplt.p.183.
\(^{43}\) Kaghzat-iMutafarriqa, report in Persian on the Pre-British administrative system in Bengal, prepared by the Rai Rayan and the qanungos under the instructions from the Governor General in Council, Jan. 4, 1777, Add. 6586, Add. 6592, Rotograph No. 203, CAS, AMU, f.76b.
Broach (customhouse of Broach).\textsuperscript{44} According to \textit{Mir’at}, income from Surat mint was combined with dues from the \textit{balda, bazaar} and \textit{Ghalla mandi} forming a one \textit{mahal} whose income was estimated at Rs.3,75,000 (1,50,00,000 \textit{dams}).\textsuperscript{45} For Cambay mint, we have no information regarding its income for initial period. During the first half of eighteenth century, income from mint dues in Cambay amounted to Rs.50,000.\textsuperscript{46}

In Junagarh, mint also constituted a \textit{mahal} where mint was established for melting \textit{mahmudis}. According to \textit{Mir’at}, its income amounted to Rs.2,500 (1,00,000 \textit{dams}).\textsuperscript{47} In Islamnagar, the income from the mint was Rs.1,250 (50,000 \textit{dams}).\textsuperscript{48}

In the seventeenth century, in Surat, the revenue of the mint was farmed to the merchants and officials along with the post of \textit{mutasaddi} of Surat.\textsuperscript{49} In 1629, it was held by Masih-uz Zaman. In 1639, Muiz-ul Mulk (Mir Musa) got governorship of port Surat on farm upon giving two lakhs of rupees more than his predecessor.\textsuperscript{50} In 1641, English factors further inform us that the amount for which Mir Musa had farmed Surat with its mint and customhouse was seventy two lakhs of \textit{mahmudis} per annum. But he had overestimated the produce of the port, for by 1641 he was short in paying the contracted money by 31 lakhs. He was therefore was dismissed from the post.\textsuperscript{51}

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\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Mir’at-ul Haqaiq}, f.99a.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Mir’at}, suppl.p.223.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Mir’at-ul Haqaiq}, f.94a.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.} pp.211-212.;\textit{Kaghzat-i-Mutafarriqa}, f.74a.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.} p.220.
\textsuperscript{49} Ms Blochet BN f. 57a.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{EFI} 1637-41, pp.109-110.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{EFI} 1637-41, pp.XXVI-XXVII, 207.
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Revenues from Surat mint was also assigned in *jagir*. In 1644, Princess Jahan Ara was assigned *sarkar* of Surat in *jagir* which supposed to yield annual revenue of seven and a half lakhs of rupees, with its port yielding another two and a half lakh rupees.\(^52\) In this was also included the revenue from mint as well.\(^53\)

Under Mughals, the mints used to have quite large establishment involving a large number of officers and workers. About mint at Surat, John Fryer (visiting India in 1675) says, “Over-against the Custom-house is a stately Entrance into the Mint, which is a large Town of Offices within itself”.\(^54\)

The superintendent of the mint was known as *darogha-i daru-l zarb*. The English Factors used to call him the ‘mint master’.\(^55\) He was appointed by a *sanad* bearing the seal of finance minister (*diwan-i ‘ala’*) and at the recommendation of the provincial *diwan*. According to Ashin Das, in Surat administration, the appointment of the *darogha* of the mint of Surat was within the patronage of the governor of the place, which was usually kept within the family of the governor.\(^56\) It was most probably the case when the revenue of mint along with the post of governor was farmed to the merchants and officials.\(^57\) According to the *Mir’at*, the *mutasaddi* (governor) of Cambay was also quite often the *darogha* of the mint.\(^58\) In Ahmadabad, a separate

\(^{52}\) Lahori, II, p.397.
\(^{53}\) Ms Blochet 482 BN ff.174b-175a.
\(^{54}\) Fryer, I, p.248.
\(^{55}\) *Akbarnama*, III, p.223; *EFI* 1618-21, p.8.
\(^{56}\) *Indian Merchants and Decline of Surat*, p.25.
\(^{57}\) *EFI* 1637-41, p.207.
\(^{58}\) *Mir’at*, suppl. p.193.
darogha of mint was to be appointed. In 1703-04, Muhammad Ali, son of Shah Mir, sawanh-i nigar, of suba Gujarat was appointed as darogha-i daru-l zarb of Ahmadabad.\textsuperscript{59}

The primary concern of darogha-i daru-l zarb was to supervise the working in the mint. For this, according to Abul Fazl, he was required’ to be cirumspect and intelligent, (who) keeps every one to his work and shows zeal and integrity.\textsuperscript{60} The opening and closing of the mint was at his pleasure,\textsuperscript{61} and those wishing to get their bullion coined had to apply to him.\textsuperscript{62} Having examined, weighed or counted the bullion, old coins, silver or copper, he issued receipt thereof to the customer who had brought bullion or metal to be coined.\textsuperscript{63} When the newly coined money was handed over, it was his duty to see that the mahsul-i daru-l zarb( mint charges), rusum-i ahlkaran(perquisites of officials), and ujratat-i karigaran (wages of workers)had been paid.\textsuperscript{64} He had to see that the entries of the daily income and expenditure in the mint had been entered in the registers (siyaha).\textsuperscript{65} He along with the mushrif and tahwildar used to deposit every month in the state treasury the entire money collected at the mint on account of mint charges.\textsuperscript{66} Annually, he was to submit the income and expenditure records to the office of the diwan-i khalisa for inspection.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{59} Akhbarat A, 227.
\textsuperscript{60} A’in, I, p.13.
\textsuperscript{61} EFI 1618-21, p.8.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. 1661-64, p.22.
\textsuperscript{63} Kaghzat-i Mutafarriq, f.57a-b.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. For the duties of darogha-i daru-l zarb, see also Hidayat –ul Qawa’id, ff.37a-39a.
It was also his duty to see that merchants who imported gold and silver did not sell it elsewhere and cause loss to mint revenue. He used to take bonds from them that they could sell only at the mint.\(^{68}\) In 1697-98, on the complaint of Mir Baqir, \textit{darogha-i daru-l zarb} of Ahmadabad, \textit{diwan} of the \textit{suba} made a rule that gold and silver could not be melt at any other place except mint.\(^{69}\)

To assist \textit{darogha}, was \textit{amin}, appointed in the similar manner as that of \textit{darogha}. In fact, the dyarchical office of the \textit{amin} was instituted to strike a balance between local and imperial interests. He assisted the \textit{darogha} and other officials of the mint in exigent matters. He was to settle the differences between the \textit{darogha} and the working men and to prevent frequent quarrels among the workers in the mint. Abul Fazl describes him literally when he says that he was expected to be impartial.\(^{70}\)

He had a conditional \textit{mansab} with fixed salary.\(^{71}\)

The \textit{mushrif}, appointed by a \textit{sanad},\(^{72}\) acted in the capacity of an account keeper who recorded the daily expenses in the mint.\(^{73}\) At Ahmadabad, his salary was Rs.30 per month.\(^{74}\)

The \textit{tahwildar} kept the daily account of the profits of the mint and received the money collected on account of the mint charges.\(^{75}\) He was also

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\(^{68}\) \textit{Mir’at}, I, pp.303-304,340.  
\(^{69}\) \textit{Mir’at}, I, p.340.  
\(^{70}\) \textit{A’in}, I, p.15.  
\(^{71}\) \textit{Mir’at}, supplt. p.183.  
\(^{72}\) \textit{Ibid.}  
\(^{73}\) \textit{A’in}, I, p.15.  
\(^{74}\) \textit{Mir’at}, supplt. p.183.  
\(^{75}\) \textit{A’in}, I, p.16.
appointed by a sanad and had a fixed salary.\textsuperscript{76} At Ahmadabad, in addition to the tahwildari of daru-l zarb, he held the tahwildari of mahal jauhari bazaar-o manhari.\textsuperscript{77}

Another official was karora though not mentioned in A’in. The Mir’at, however, without mentioning his duties refers to karora as an official attached to mahal-i daru-l zarb appointed through a sanad and having an ‘unconditional’ mansab.\textsuperscript{78}

The muhr-kan (engraver) under Akbar held the rank of 100 zat. He engraved the dies of the coins.\textsuperscript{79} The Mir’at makes no mention of it.

The wazn-kush (weighman) weighed the bullion, the old coins brought to the mint and the new ones paid out after being minted. For this work, he got some commission.\textsuperscript{80} But, the Mir’at shows him a paid employee who received a fixed salary of Rs. 3 per month.\textsuperscript{81}

The darban (watchman) kept a vigil on whatever was brought in or taken out and guarded the mint gates. At Ahmadabad, there were two watchmen; each was paid Rs.4 per month.\textsuperscript{82}

Besides this regular staff, there were a number of skilled workmen employed at mint. They were gudazgar kham (smelter of ore), waraqkash (platemaker), gudazgar pukhta (smelter), zarrab (coiner), sikkachi (stamper), sabbak (melter), qars-kub, chashnigar, and niyariya.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Mir’at, supplt. p.183.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} A’in, I, pp.17-18.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., I, p.16.
\textsuperscript{81} Mir’at, supplt.p.183.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} For these skilled workers and their functions, see A’in, I, pp.16-20.
As we already know, Mughals had open coinage system in which freedom to obtain Mughal coins was granted to bullion suppliers on payment of minting cost (brassage) and seigiorage.

In actual practice, however, merchants had to face one important problem. The coining in the mint was done by officials assigning fixed days to the merchant suppliers, which often clashed with the timetable set by them to make investments in the hinterland markets and to keep commodities ready for shipping in the right seasons. The majority had to cope with delays in the availability of cash to serve their investment plans. But some privileged merchants could be granted access to the mint out of their turn as a favour. In 1684-85, a dastak was issued to the officers of Surat mint officials of Surat port directing them to daily issue 4,000 coins to chief merchant (‘umadat u’l tijjar) Shaikh Hamid. Likewise, another order was issued in 1701-02, directing Surat mint officials to daily issue 4,000 coins to another merchant, ‘umadat u’l tijjar Muhammad Fazil. The English too were exempted from taking turns in the mint towards the end of the seventeenth century. It was this particular problem which made the presence of the money-changers (sarrafs) extremely important in the market as buyers of bullion. Merchants normally did not carry their bullion to the mint but rather sold it to the sarrafs, who could better manage the mint officials.

84 EFI 1661-64,p.22; Indian Merchants and Decline of Surat, pp.46-47.
85 Surat Documents, AMU, No.4 and 5.
87 EFI 1634-36, p.225.
In their capacity as bullion buyers they were in a unique position to assay precious metals and coins (hence the name *sarraf* from Arabic *sayrafi*, money testing) as well to fix their value in the market.\(^88\)

The *sarraf’s* profession brought them close not only to the merchants but also to the mint. They were often appointed in the latter as assayers.\(^89\) The *A’in* stresses that the success of the mint depended on the experience of the *sairafi* (or *sarraf*), as he “determines the degrees of purity of the coin”.\(^90\) Outside the mint as a professional group, they helped the administration in recoinage. In the reign of Aurangzeb, the *sarrafs* of Ahmadabad were ordered to bring to the mint all the silver coins which had lost in weight up to 3 *surkha* (a little over 3 per cent) for reminting.\(^91\)

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89 *A’in*, I, p.16.
In 1644, as we have already seen, the *sarkar* of Surat was assigned in *jagir* to Princess Jahan Ara which also included the revenues from Surat mint. In 1645, we have interesting details of a hospital at Surat. A *parwancha* was issued in accordance with the *nishan* of the Princess, regarding the appointment of *hakim* (physician) at Surat. The *nishan* had specified two rupees to be fixed daily for the *hakim* and two rupees for the medicines and mixture, etc. for the hospital of Princess’ *sarkar*, out of the revenues of *daru-l zarb* (mint). A *hakim* was appointed by transferring another *hakim* who was serving earlier. *Mutasaddis* (officers/ clerks), in charge of the mint, were instructed to provide the daily allowance to the *hakim*.  

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