

Administration Under Delhi Sultanate

This article will give an idea of the working of the administration under the Delhi Sultanate. The administration under the Delhi Sultanate was segregated into various parts - Central, Provincial, Judicial, Local, etc.

Delhi Sultanate Administration

The [Delhi Sultanate](#) period extended from 1206 CE to 1526 CE for almost 320 years.

Administration

- The effective administrative system under the Delhi Sultanate made a powerful impact on the Indian provincial kingdoms and later on the Mughal system of administration. At its peak, the Delhi Sultanate controlled regions as far south as Madurai.
- The Turkish ruler Mahmud of Ghazni was the first to adopt the title of Sultan. The Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic State with its religion as Islam. The sultans were considered to be the representatives of the Caliph. The name of the Caliph was included in the khutba (prayer) and also inscribed on their coins. This practice was even followed by Balban, who called himself “the shadow of God”. Iltutmish, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and Feroz Tughlaq obtained a 'mansur' (letter of investiture) from the Caliph.
- The ultimate authority for the military, legal and political activities rested with the Sultan. There was no clear law of succession during this period. All the sons had equal claims to the throne. Iltutmish even nominated his daughter, in preference to his sons. But such nominations or successions were to be accepted by the nobles. Sometimes Ulemas also played a pivotal role in getting a favourable public opinion. However, military superiority remained an important factor in matters of succession.

Central Administration

- There were a number of departments and officials who assisted the Sultan in the matters of administration. The post of Naib was the most influential one and practically enjoyed all the powers of the Sultan. He had control over all the other departments. The post of Wazir was next to the Naib and he headed the finance department called Diwan-i-Wizarat. An Auditor-General for examining expenditure and an Accountant General for checking income worked under the Wazir. The period of wazir-ship of Feroz Shah Tughlaq Khan-i-Jahan is generally considered as the high watermark period of the Wazir's influences.
- Diwan-i- Ariz was the military department which was headed by Ariz-i-Mumalik. He would recruit the soldiers and administer the military department. However, Sultan himself was the Commander-in-chief of the army. During the reign of Alauddin Khalji, the number of soldiers in

the department was about three lakh. The efficient army helped in containing the Mongol invasions along with the Decan expansion. The Turks also had a large number of properly trained elephants for war purposes. The cavalry was given prime importance and was considered more prestigious.

- The department of religious affairs, Diwan-i-Risalat dealt with pious foundations and granted stipends to deserving scholars and men of piety. This department granted funds for the construction of madrasas, tombs and mosques. It was headed by Chief Sadr who also functioned as Chief Qazi, the head of the judicial system. Other judges and Qazis were appointed in various parts of the Sultanate. Sharia or Muslim personal law was followed in civil matters. The Hindus were governed by their own personal law and their cases were dispensed by the village panchayat. The criminal law was governed by the rules and regulations made by the Sultans. Diwan-i-Insha was the department of correspondence. All the correspondence between the ruler and the sovereigns of other states as well as with his subordinate officials was handled by this department.

Provincial Government

- Iqtas, the provinces under the Delhi Sultanate were initially under the dominion of the nobles. Muqtis or Walis was the name given to the governors of the provinces and were responsible for maintaining law and order and collecting the land revenue. The provinces were further divided into Shiqs, which was under the control of the Shiqdar. The Shiqs were further divided into Pargana, comprising a number of villages and was headed by the Amil. The village remained the basic unit of administration and its headman was called Chaudhri or Muqaddam. Patwari was the village accountant.

Iqtas (Province) ⇒ Muqtis or Walis (governor)



Shiqs (District) ⇒ Shiqdar



Pargana (Sub districts) ⇒ Amil



Village ⇒ Muqaddam or Chaudhri.

For more [UPSC notes on Medieval History](https://byjus.com/upsc-notes-on-medieval-history/), check the link.

Delhi Sultanate Economy

- Under the Delhi Sultanate, certain land reforms were introduced in the revenue department. The lands were categorised into three classes-
 - Iqta land - the lands which were allotted to the officials as iqtas instead of payment for their services.
 - Khalisa land - it was directly under the control of the Sultan and the revenue generated was utilised for maintaining the royal court and royal household.
 - Inam land - it was allotted to religious institutions or religious leaders.
- The farmers paid one-third of their produce as land revenue and sometimes even half of the produce. They also had to pay other taxes and lived miserable lives. However, Sultans like Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and Firoz Tughlaq provided better irrigation facilities and also takkavi loans which helped in the increased agricultural production. They also promoted the cultivation of crops like wheat instead of barley. A separate agriculture department, Diwan-i-Kohi was set up by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. Firoz Tughlaq promoted the growth of the horticulture sector.
- A number of cities and towns had grown during this period which led to rapid urbanisation. The important cities were - Multan, Lahore (north-west), Anhilwara, Cambay, Broach (west), Lakhnauti and Kara (east), Jaunpur, Daulatabad and Delhi. Delhi was the largest city in the east. A large number of items were exported to the countries on the Persian Gulf and West Asia and also to Southeast Asian countries. Overseas trade was dominated by Khurasanis (Afghan Muslims) and Multanis (mostly Hindus). Inland trade was under the control of Gujaratis, Marwari and Muslim Bohra merchants. These merchants were rich and lived luxurious lives.
- Roads were built and maintained for facilitating smooth transport and communication. The royal roads were particularly kept in good condition. In addition to the royal road from Peshawar to Sonargaon, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq built a road to Daulatabad. Sarais or rest houses were built on the highways for the convenience of the travellers.
- During the Delhi Sultanate, the cotton textile and silk industry flourished. The introduction of sericulture on a big scale made India less dependent on other countries for the import of raw silk. Paper was extensively used from the 14th and 15th centuries which led to the growth of the paper industry. Other crafts like carpet weaving, leather making and metal crafts also flourished due to the increase in their demand. The goods needed by the Sultan and his household were supplied by the royal karkhanas. Costly articles made of gold and silver were manufactured by the royal karkhanas. The nobles were paid well and they copied the lifestyle of the Sultans and lived a luxurious life.
- The system of coinage had also developed during the Delhi Sultanate. Several types of tankas were issued by Iltutmish. During the [Khalji rule](#), one tanka was divided into 48 jitals and 50 jitals during the Tughlaq rule. After the south Indian conquests by Alauddin Khalji, gold coins or dinars became popular. Copper coins were less in number and dateless. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq experimented with token currency and also issued different types of gold and silver coins. The

coins were minted at different places. At least twenty-five different types of gold coins were issued by him.

- The Turks popularised a number of crafts and techniques like the use of iron stirrup, use of armour (for both the rider and the horse), improvement of Rahat (Persian wheel which helped in lifting the water from deeper levels), the spinning wheel and an improved loom for carpet weaving, use of superior mortar, which helped to erect magnificent buildings based on the arch and dome, etc.

Delhi Sultanate Social System

There were hardly any changes in the structure of the Hindu society during the Delhi Sultanate. The Brahmins continued to enjoy the highest place in the social strata. The severest restrictions were placed on mingling with the chandalas and other outcasts. During this period, the practice of keeping women in seclusion and asking them to veil their faces in the presence of outsiders (purdah system) became prevalent among the upper-class Hindus (particularly in North India). The Arabs and Turks brought the purdah system into India and it became a symbol of the higher classes in society. The practice of sati was widely prevalent in different regions of the country. [Ibn Batuta](#) mentions that permission from the Sultan had to be taken for the performance of sati.

During the Sultanate period, the Muslim society remained divided into ethnic and racial groups. The Afghans, Iranians, Turks and Indian Muslims developed as exclusive groups and rarely married each other. Converts from the lower sections of Hindus were also discriminated against.

For the Hindu subjects, from the time of the Arab invasion of Sindh, they had been given the status of zimmi or protected people i.e., those who accepted the Muslim rule and agreed to pay a tax called jaziya. At first, jaziya was collected along with land revenue. Later, Firoz Tughlaq made jaziya a separate tax and levied it on Brahmins also, who were earlier exempted from the jaziya.

Slavery had existed in India for a long time, however, it thrived during this period. There existed slave markets for men and women. Slaves were generally bought for domestic service, for company or for their special skills. Firoz Shah Tughlaq had about 1,80,000 slaves.

Delhi Sultanate - Art and Architecture

Art and architecture was a combination of Islamic and Indian styles that took a new direction during the Delhi Sultanate. Domes, arches, lofty towers, minarets, Islamic script were introduced by the Turks. The dome is the prominent feature of the mosques in contrast to the shikhara of Hindu temples.

Delhi Sultans had a great taste for architecture. The architecture was a blend of Indian and Islamic styles.

Qutub Minar is a towering 73m high tower constructed by [Qutub-ud-din Aibak](#) and completed by Iltutmish in memory of the Sufi saint Qutub-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki. Later Alauddin Khalji built an entrance to the Qutub Minar called Alai Darwaza.

The palace complex of Tughlaqabad was built during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq built the tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq on a high platform. He also built Jahanpanah, one of the cities of Delhi. Firoz Shah Tughlaq built Hauz Khas, a pleasure resort and also built the Feroz Shah Kotla fort. The [Tughlaq](#) rulers started building the tombs on an elevated platform. The Lodhi Gardens in Delhi is an example of the architecture of the Lodhis.

The three well-developed architecture styles were:

1. Delhi or Imperial Style
2. Provincial Style
3. Hindu architectural style

Period	Examples
Mamluk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qutub Minar • Quwat-ul-Islam Mosque • Tombs of Nasir-ud-din Muhammad • Siri, new town in Delhi
Khilji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dargah of Hazrat Nizam-ud-din Aulia • Alai Darwaza
Lodi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lodi Gardens • Moti Masjid in New Delhi • Tomb of Sikandar Lodi

Delhi Sultanate Literature

The Sultanate of Delhi period witnessed some great scholars and some are:

- Alberuni
- Amir Khusrau
- Zia-ul-Barani

Many Sanskrit works were translated into Arabic and the Urdu language originated during the Sultanate period.

Delhi Sultanate Music

The sarangi and the rabab, new musical instruments were introduced during this period. Also, new ragas like ghora and sanam were introduced by Amir Khusrau. He is also credited with fusing the Iranian and Indian musical systems to create Qawwali. He also invented the Sitar. Ragadarpan, the Indian classical work, was translated into Persian during the rule of Firoz Shah Tughlaq. Pir Bhodan, a Sufi saint, was one of the great musicians of this period. Raja Man Singh of Gwalior was a great lover of music and encouraged the composition of a great musical work called Man Kautuhal.

Read more on [art and culture during the Delhi Sultanate](#) in the link.

Delhi Sultanate Literature

The Delhi Sultans gave huge importance to literature and showed more interest in the progress of Persian literature.

- Besides theology and poetry, history writing was also encouraged.
 - The most renowned historians of this period were Minhaj-us-Siraj, Zia-ud-din Barani, Hasan Nizami and Shams Siraj.
 - Tabaqat-i-Nasari was authored by Minhaj-us-Siraj which gives a general account of the history of Muslim dynasties up to c. 1260 CE.
 - The history of the Tughlaq dynasty, Tarikh-i-Firoz was written by Barani.
- Prince Muhammad, the eldest son of Sultan Balban was a great patron of scholars and provided protection to two great scholars of his time i.e, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan.
- **Amir Khusrau** has been regarded as the greatest Persian poet of his age.
 - He is said to have written more than 4 lac couplets.
 - He created a new style of Persian poetry called Sabaq-i-Hind or the Indian style.
 - His important works include Khazain-ul-Futuh, Tughlaqnama and Tarikh-i-Alai.
 - He was a great singer and was given the title 'Parrot of India'.
- Translation of certain Sanskrit books was done into the Persian language during this period. Zia Nakshabi was the first to translate Sanskrit stories into the Persian language.
- The book Tutu Nama or the Book of the Parrot was first translated into Turkish and then to many European languages.
- The famous book Rajatarangani written by Kalhana belonged to the period of Zain-ul-Abideen, the ruler of Kashmir.
- In the Arabic language, **Al-Beruni's** Kitab-ul-Hind is the most important work.
 - Al-Beruni or [Alberuni](#) was an Arabic and Persian scholar patronized by Mahmud of Ghazni.
 - He learnt Sanskrit and translated two Sanskrit works into Arabic.
 - He was impressed by the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita.

- In his work Kitab-ul-Hind (also known as Tarikh-ul-Hind), he had mentioned the socio-economic conditions of India.
- A large number of scholars flourished at the courts of provincial rulers as well. Chand Bardai, a Hindi poet, was the author of Prithviraj Rasau.
- Nusrat Shah patronised the translation of Mahabharata into Bengali. Krittivasa prepared a Bengali translation of the Ramayana from Sanskrit.

Frequently Asked Questions on Administration under Delhi Sultanate

Q 1. How was the administration under the Delhi Sultanate?

Ans. The administration under Delhi Sultanate was very systematic. The Sultan was the head of the empire, accompanied by a Wazir or the Finance Minister. Five other ministers were also appointed for the proper administration of the sultanate:

- Diwani-I-Risalt – Foreign Affairs Minister
- Sadr-us-Suddar – Minister of Islamic Law
- Diwan-I-Insha – Correspondence Minister
- Diwan-I-Ariz – Defence or War Minister
- Qazi-ul-Quzar – Minister of Justice

Q 2. How was the Delhi Sultanate provincially administered?

Ans. The entire empire was divided into various Iqtas. These were further divided into smaller units called Parganas, Shiqs, and the villages.
