THE EVOLUTION OF THE MANŞAB SYSTEM UNDER AKBAR UNTIL 1596–7

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The organization of the nobility of the Indian Mughal Empire in numerical grades (manşabs) is now generally recognized as one of the basic elements of its administrative and military structure. Equally general, perhaps, has been a recognition of the manşab system’s many complexities. However, by combining the information in Abu ’l-Fażl’s A’īn-i Akbarī with a number of 17th-century texts and documents, it has been possible to construct a tolerable picture of the working of the manşab system during the 17th century. In many respects, the basic features were first delineated by Moreland and Abdul Aziz; but their views have been greatly refined, and often substantially revised, by M. Athar Ali and Irfan Habib. It is now accepted as beyond argument that by Akbar’s death (1605), manşab was explained in two numerical representations: the first, zāt, determined the holder’s personal pay (talab-i khāṣa) and status in the hierarchy; the second (sawār) indicated the number of horsemen to be maintained by the holder and set the amount sanctioned to cover their pay (talab-i tābīnān). In each case, the rank-number was converted into monetary claims and military obligation by means of the schedules (dastīr al-‘amals) in force at the time. The system undoubtedly gave to the Mughal nobility and military machine a high degree of uniformity and regularity in its functioning, which is likely to have contributed greatly to the stability and strength of the Empire.

The question of how the manşab evolved before it reached, what may, by 1605, be called its classic form (summarily described above) has elicited diverse answers. Both Moreland and Abdul Aziz held that a single numerical rank existed before Akbar, the number directly indicating the size of the cavalry contingent that the rank-holder was expected to maintain. Moreland further supposed that as this number became more and more a sham in terms of cavalry actually mustered, Akbar introduced the second (sawār) rank in his 11th regnal year (1566–67). Hereafter the new and usually smaller numerical rank indicated the size of the cavalry contingent to be maintained, while the first became what in course of time came to be called the zāt rank, indicating personal pay and status only. A. J. Qaisar, in a short but important paper, has cast doubt on the existence of numerical ranks before Akbar, and argued that the two ranks (zāt and sawār) came into existence simultaneously in the 18th regnal year (1573–74). Irfan Habib seems tacitly to accept Qaisar’s finding that the two ranks were established in that year; and he continues to assume, as do practically all the previous writers, that the A’īn-i Akbarī, in assigning to manşab-holders a single rank in a list belonging to a period as late as the 40th regnal year
(1595–6), has simply given the zāt ranks and omitted to supply the sawār ranks.6

It is true that the absence of primary administrative documents makes the unravelling of the process of evolution of the mansab system during Akbar’s reign a difficult undertaking. But it has seemed to me that a study, de novo, of all the passages in our various authorities bearing upon the subject might yet give us sufficient light to enable a fresh interpretation to be made. In some respects the results could even be definitive.

To begin with, my reading of the sources leads me to concur with Qaisar that no numerical ranks existed before Akbar, or indeed until his 18th regnal year (1573–4), when according to Abū ‘l-Faḍl, Akbar instituted the new system of ranks.7 The specific statement that these ranks of the 18th regnal year were numerical is made only in the description of this measure by Badā‘ūnī and Mu‘tamad Khān, but in their accounts the ranks appear clearly as innovations with no reference to any previous system of a like sort.8 The earliest record of the actual award of mansab in terms of a numerical rank comes from the 21st year (1576–7).9

If numerical ranks did not exist earlier, the question how salary payments were made and military obligations imposed before Akbar, and during his early years then follows. Although there is no reference to numerical ranks during Humāyūn’s reign, he did attempt some sort of classification of nobles, and in his time salaries were fixed according to that gradation. Khwāndamīr tells us that “at the command of the Emperor, Hindū Beg has fixed the salaries of the military personnel and also the grades (marātib) of the Imperial servants”10 It is further stated that “the royal (lit. grand) bakhshīs gave the stipend (‘alīfa) and grades as written on the sahams (lit. ‘arrows’).”11 But there is no mention of military obligations corresponding to the grades. It certainly seems difficult for any connexion between the size of military contingent and these grades to have existed, because Humāyūn created no more than twelve gradations, designated “arrows” (tīr or saham). To each of the twelve classes, into which the entire personnel were divided, was allotted one saham. This system of gradation covered everyone, starting from the Emperor himself down to the door-keepers and camel-drivers and included the divines, the sayyids and scholars as well.12 One can hardly imagine that military contingents could have been the basis, or even one of the criteria, of such a gradation.

In the first decade of Akbar’s reign, evidence of any link between the size of contingent maintained by a noble and the salary paid to him (usually in the form of jāgīr or tuyūl assignment) is hard to find. Shams ud-dīn Muhammad Atka Khān’s petition to the Emperor, made in the 6th year (1561–2), makes it obvious that salaries were fixed by the Emperor for individuals in quite an arbitrary fashion. In complaining of the unfair fixing of salaries, the petitioner advanced loyalty, and services rendered, as the acceptable criteria for this
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purpose; he does not even mention the size of contingent actually maintained.\textsuperscript{13}
There are a number of other references in the \textit{Akbar-nāma} and the \textit{Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī} indicating that up to the 18th regnal year, the salaries were specified without defining, at least explicitly, associated military obligations.\textsuperscript{14}

The measures adopted by Akbar in the 11th year (1566–7) (taken by Moreland to signify the institution of numerical ranks) are then the earliest, where an attempt to impose the obligation of maintaining a certain number of troopers is made. Abu ’l-Fazl says:\textsuperscript{15}

“...For all the \textit{umara}’ and the Imperial servants, the (number of) retainers \textit{(naukar)} was fixed and it was settled that everyone would keep some in readiness for service. The troopers belonging to nobles were divided into three categories; and it was ordered that the first kind would get 48,000 \textit{dāms} per year, the second 32,000 \textit{dāms} and the third 24,000 \textit{dāms} per year”.

This passage led Moreland to believe that the second (or \textit{sawār}) rank had now been introduced. However, the passage is not only vague about the size of the retinue to be maintained, but the system it envisages shows a fundamental difference from the \textit{manşab} system proper. Here the system of territorial assignment \textit{(jāgīr)} is taken for granted and the number of troopers is fixed in conformity with it, instead of awarding a rank first, defining the number of troopers on its basis, and then assigning the \textit{jāgīr}, as was the case under the evolved \textit{manşab} system.\textsuperscript{16} This is made particularly clear by Mu’tamad Khān’s exposition of the same measure (of the 11th regnal year). He says that “the number of horsemen to be maintained by the nobles was fixed in accordance with the \textit{jāgīrs} (held by them)”\textsuperscript{17}.

It also does not seem possible to determine the precise basis on which the troopers were categorized in the 11th year. However, in later years, the rates varied according to the race of the noble or the number of horses per trooper. Nevertheless, the salaries quoted here, per trooper, appear to be very high in comparison with the rates fixed later (in the 40th year, 1595–6).\textsuperscript{18} It is possible, however, that the rates of the 11th year were high because the \textit{jama}’ (the expected net revenue realization) was greatly inflated.\textsuperscript{19} Quite naturally, if the \textit{jama}’ was high, the division of its amount by a low rate of salary would have resulted in the imposition upon the assignee of the obligation to furnish an impossibly large contingent. It must also be remembered that the \textit{dāgh} or branding system had not yet been introduced; so whatever might be the military obligation fixed in theory, it could not in actual fact have been effective in the absence of a system of muster and brand.

What was achieved in the 11th year had, therefore, little to do with the fixing of numerical ranks. The 11th regnal year saw simply an attempt to work out the size of military obligation from the estimated revenues of \textit{jāgīr}, with the use of some fixed salary rates per trooper. The \textit{Iqbālnāma} adds that the regulations continued until the \textit{dāgh} was introduced in 1573–4.\textsuperscript{20} This means, in other

\textsuperscript{13} See vol. 1, pp. 206–7, for the passage in \textit{Akbar-nāma}.

\textsuperscript{14} See vol. 1, pp. 222–4.

\textsuperscript{15} ‘l-Fazl, \textit{Iqta’ī bālā}, ii, p. 161.

\textsuperscript{16} Mu’tamad Khān, \textit{Iqtā iṣṭiṣlaḥ}, ii, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{17} Mu’tamad Khān, \textit{Iqtā iṣṭiṣlaḥ}, ii, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{saqāfah} was 10 per cent of one year’s revenue.

\textsuperscript{19} See vol. 1, p. 252.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Iqbālnāma}, pp. 182–3.
words, that the numerical ranks did not really come before the 18th year (1573—4).

One piece of evidence which seemingly contradicts all of this and appears to project the existence of the numerical ranks (mansabs) right back to the beginning of Akbar’s reign is offered by the list of nobles given in the ʿAʿīn-i Akbarī.\footnote{21} Abu ʿl-Faẓl assigns numerical ranks also to thosenobles who died long before the 18th regnal year, or even the 11th year (e.g., Bairam Khān, Tādī Beg and a number of others). This needs some explaining. Qaisar has suggested that Abu ʿl-Faẓl has assigned posthumous ranks to those who died before the 18th year, in order to place them in the same list as the other nobles in hierarchical order.\footnote{22} He bases this contention on the list of Akbar’s nobles in the Tabaqāt-i Akbarī,\footnote{23} which does not give numerical ranks to any noble otherwise known to have died before the 18th or 19th regnal year.

Qaisar’s explanation of the ranks assigned to the earlier nobles in the ʿAʿīn-i Akbarī as “fictitious” ranks seems reasonable, since Abu ʿl-Faẓl’s task was to compile a comprehensive list of all the grandees of the Empire (buzurgān-i jāwīd-daulat), whether dead or alive, until the 40th year; while he professedly wanted to avoid the “unbecoming task” of recording their deeds and misdeeds. The easy way adopted was simply to place them according to their mansabs.\footnote{24} But he was faced with the problem of assigning proper places to those who had died before the mansabs were introduced; and he had no option but to place the earlier nobles among different groups of mansab-holders, thus giving them posthumously, as it were, ranks broadly corresponding to what he deemed to have been their status at the end of their careers.

Nizām ud-dīn in his Tabaqāt-i Akbarī, on the other hand, offers short notices of nobles (avowedly of ranks of above 500 only), which are not arranged according to any hierarchical order. He therefore records mansabs which were actually awarded. I have checked all his names with indexed references in the Akbar-nāma, and my finding is the same as that of Qaisar: there is not a single instance in his notices of a mansab being assigned to any noble who is known to have died before the 18th year. Such earlier nobles as are listed under different mansabs by Abu ʿl-Faẓl, here appear without any mansab whatsoever.\footnote{25} Nizām ud-dīn’s list is, then, another proof that no numerical ranks existed before the 18th regnal year, and thus corrects the contrary impression which the ʿAʿīn’s list conveys.

We may now pass on to the crucial measure undertaken in the 18th regnal year (1573—4), and examine what was done then, particularly the question whether twofold mansab-ranks were instituted at that time. Abu ʿl-Faẓl says that in that year the dāgh was introduced, and the ranks (marāṭīb) of the Imperial officials were fixed.\footnote{26} These innovations were actually put into effect during the next year (the 19th regnal year, 1574—5).\footnote{27} It is under the accounts
of the latter year that we have the first instance of the use of the word manšab in the sense of rank and not (as hitherto) a post or office.28

Mu’tamad Khān treats of this measure at some length. His vision therefore merits attention. He says (under the 19th year):29

“... Manšabs from dahbāšī (10) to panjhażārī (5,000) were established and the salary for each was fixed. A regulation to the effect that the manšabdārs would separately bring their personal horses and elephants for branding (dāgh) was imposed. A trooper, if capable of being a sih-aspa (horseman with three horses) would bring three horses; if capable of being do-aspa (horseman with two horses), two horses; if capable of being a yak-aspa (horseman with one horse only), he would bring one horse for the dāgh. In this way the pay (‘alīfā) for everyone was fixed”.

It emerges from the above passage that the salaries of the manšabdārs were fixed according to their manšabs, while the rates for their troopers were sanctioned separately. Moreover, the manšabdārs were to maintain a separate stable of animals (elephants and horses) on their own according to their manšabs.

A significant point is that both Abu ’l-Fazl and Mu’tamad Khān categorically state that the ranks were fixed “in proportion to (their) fidelity and organisation (sar-kardan) of a unit” and “capacity for leadership and resolution in command of a unit”.30 In other words both suggest that the rank was related to the size of the contingent maintained by the manšabdār.31 At the same time, they make no suggestion that there were twofold (zāt and sawār) ranks; and thus they provide no support at all for Moreland’s assumption that twofold ranks already existed, or for Qaisar’s suggestion that the measure of the 18th–19th year itself directly created twofold ranks.

Even more than Abu ’l-Fazl and Mu’tamad Khān, Badā’ūnī explicitly relates the manšab, as a single numerical rank, to the number of horsemen (sawār) to be maintained. His passage is of great interest and needs to be translated in full:32

“... It was settled that first the nobles would be awarded the manšab of bistī (20) so that each should attend with his retainers (tābīnān)33 in the guard or the place or fort (lit. refuge) which has been fixed (for him). When he has presented those twenty horsemen through the brand (dāgh), according to the regulations, at that time he might be made a sadī (100), etc.; and elephants, horses and camels corresponding to his manšab would be maintained by him according to the rules. When he has brought this number of horsemen to muster, he could, obtaining favour in accordance with his capacity and condition, reach the manšab of hażārī (1,000) and do-hażārī (2,000) up to panj-hażārī (5,000), higher than which there is no rank (pāya)”.

Significantly enough, the final yā (-ī, as in sadī, panj-hażārī, etc.), that was reserved in the later period exclusively to indicate the zāt rank,34 is used here for a rank that quite evidently determines the size of the military contingent. This was not a case of loose usage by Badā’ūnī, because up till 1595–6, the
single rank that was in vogue is always indicated by the final yā in all our authorities.\textsuperscript{35} Abu l-Fażl, who is usually very careful in the selection of words, himself uses the yā-ending for the mansāb which, according to his own understanding, is certainly the rank by which the contingent is fixed. Recording the creation of mansābs higher than 5,000 under the 22nd year, for the three sons of Akbar, he says:\textsuperscript{36}

“... (As) the troopers (sipāḥ) of the grandees and nobles (nauînān-i wălā-shuk̲h̲ u umārā'-yi ālī-qādar) did not exceed 5,000, the rank of the prince Sultān Salīm was fixed as dah-hazārī (10,000) ...; Sultān Murād was awarded the mansāb of haft-hazārī (7,000); and Sultān Dāniyāl was honoured with the rank of shash-hazārī (6,000)."

In this passage the princes’ mansābs (all above 5,000) are compared with the number of troops (sipāḥ) of the nobles, clearly indicating that the number signifying rank either was on a par with, or put a ceiling upon, the size of contingents. Yet the numbers signifying the ranks have the suffix yā, suggesting identity with the later zāt ranks. Indeed, Abu l-Fażl, instead of simply saying that the highest mansāb allowed to nobles was 5,000 (vide Badā’unī and Mu‘tamad Khan above), goes out of his way to speak of “5,000 troopers” instead, so as to emphasize the inter-connexion between the single mansāb and the size of contingents.

This interpretation of the significance initially of mansāb as a single rank is further supported by the Tabaqāt’s indifferent way of expressing mansābs in terms of numbers of troopers (sawārs or naukars).\textsuperscript{37} Moreover in his remarks at the end of his list of Akbar’s nobles, Nizām ud-dīn makes it clear that the mansābs he records are also military ranks. He says:\textsuperscript{38}

“... Let it be known that such of the Imperial servants as maintain only 500 retainers (naukar) are not counted among the umārā’ (pl. of amīr); the rank (martaba) of everyone who is mentioned here is higher than this rank, requisite for being an amīr (palla-i imārat).”

Since Nizām ud-dīn makes explicit reference to the Ā’īn’s list of nobles, and since — leaving barely twenty cases aside — his list gives exactly the same mansābs as the Ā’īn, one can safely conclude that, contrary to the general assumption,\textsuperscript{39} the mansābs given in the Ā’īn’s list are not zāt ranks, but single ranks that represented the number of troopers to be mustered, and at the same time determined personal pay. Abu l-Fażl, therefore, is not to be held guilty of an omission for failing to record the sawār ranks, since as yet they simply did not exist. It may be noted that Abu l-Fażl assigns his list of nobles to the 40th regnal year (1595—6) and, indeed, it contains the name of a person assigned mansābs (single only) according to the Akbar-nāma in that very year.\textsuperscript{40}Apparently, Abu l-Fażl revised his list (available in an earlier form to the author of the Tabaqāt-i Akbarī) up to that year. It is clear, then, that at least until 1595—6, only a single rank was in vogue.
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A crucial piece of evidence from Bāyazīd Biyāt settles the issue beyond dispute. It also offers an insight into the early working of the mansab system and therefore deserves special attention.

"... On the same night, for 100 bar-awardī men (nafar) of Bāyazīd and 100 dāghī men (nafar) of his sons, 14½ lakh tankas were sanctioned in pay... The balance due upon the dāgh (tafāwat-i dāgh) of 100 bar-awardī men is also not assigned to Bāyazīd... In the year A.H. 994 (A.D. 1586) he (Bāyazīd) was appointed to the mansab of do-ṣadī (200). Forty men from amongst the troopers (tābinān) of his deceased son Saʿādatyār were made dākhilī, and the other subsequent sixty retainers were brought to the dāgh. A sum of one lakh tankas and odd was granted to them as loan (musāʿadat) at the time of the dāgh (branding). Up till this date these sixty troopers have got nothing from the Dīwān... During the same year (A.H. 995 = AD 1587) one side of the above-mentioned (Bāyazīd) was struck with paralysis... He resigned his ranks (manāṣib, pl. of mansab), jāgīr and mahīyāna (monthly pay)... Now (therefore) 100 bar-awardī men (nafar), sixty fresh (jadīd) men and forty dākhilī men of the deceased Saʿādatyār have been resumed, and the jāgīr of Sanām transferred (from him)".

Bāyazīd actually accounts for the two hundred sawārs or horsemen that he maintained on being appointed do-ṣadī (200) (the use of the final yā to be noted), proving beyond any reasonable doubt that there was at that time a single rank precisely determining the number of horsemen to be maintained. But he also makes it clear that the fixing of pay for the troopers (tālab-i tābinān) was carried out in two stages. At the time of the award of a mansab, a certain rate per trooper was paid. This rate was to be enhanced after the men and horses had been presented for inspection and dāgh, the difference being styled tafāwat-i dāgh.

It was this evidence which led Irfān Habib to bring out the significance under Akbar of the term bar-awardī, as a pre-dāgh uniform payment per unit of sawār rank, which was intended to be adjusted after the dāgh. His suggestion is further grounded on the testimony of the Āʾīn that clearly defines the term bar-awardī, and implies that the final salary was fixed on the basis of the contingent of troopers (tābinān) actually brought to the brand (dāgh).

The pay sanctioned after dāgh was determined by such factors as the number of horses mustered along with the troopers, and the breed of horses (vide Iqbalnāma quoted above). The Āʾīn in fact furnishes the rates of pay of yak-aspa "one-horse trooper", varying according to horses of different breeds.

Another characteristic of the system apparent from the passages already quoted from Badaʾūnī and the Iqbalnāma, was the obligation of the mansabdārs to maintain animals such as horses, elephants, and camels in addition to the cavalry mounts. These animals were also to be presented for the dāgh.

The generally-accepted view, first propounded by Abdul Aziz, is that these animals belonged to the state, and were assigned to mansabdārs for maintenance,
out of their personal salaries. A fresh examination of the evidence in the ʿĀʾīn-i Akbarī, however, suggests that there is little to sustain this view, and much to indicate a quite contrary state of affairs.

Abu ʿl-Fāzl says in the ʿĀʾīn-i Akbarī that in the 18th regnal year, at the time of the institution of dāgh, or branding, a classification of animals was laid down, and schedules of the sanctioned “average” costs of maintenance of various breeds of horses, elephants, camels, oxen, mules, and carts were issued. The schedules of such rates are duly set out in the ʿĀʾīn, which, in a separate chapter, also gives the numbers of animals of the different species, and the numbers of carts which holders of each mansab were to maintain. At the end of the chapter giving the schedules of rates, Abu ʿl-Fāzl says that elephants and carts were allowed only to mansabdārs; furthermore that camels and oxen as well as “select horsemen” (gazīn-sawār) were allowed to them. This implies that keeping the animals was an advantage, and not a burden; and that the rates applied to the animals kept by mansabdārs, as well as by the ahadīs (gentleman troopers). The implication, that the schedules were of allowances paid to mansabdārs and troopers, and not, as Abdul Aziz seems to have thought, of unrequited out-of-pocket expenditure required of them, is confirmed by certain other statements of Abu ʿl-Fāzl: notably, when he says of specific enhancements in the rates that these were sanctioned to provide relief to the troops. Naturally if the rates had been simply for the costs to the mansabdār and ahadi of maintenance of the required animals and carts, reduction, not enhancement, would have been needed to provide relief for them.

In other words, the measures of the 18th–19th regnal year comprised the following specific innovations: (i) a single number was awarded as mansab; (ii) each mansab indicated, as per schedule, a particular amount of monthly personal pay for the mansab-holder; (iii) against each mansab, its holder was called upon to maintain different numbers of war and transport animals and carts, for which he was paid additional allowances at detailed rates laid down in official schedules; (iv) the mansab-holder was called upon to maintain horsemen equal to the number of the mansab; (v) an advance payment for (the whole or part of?) the mansab was made at a rate called bar-āwardī; and (vi) the bar-āwardī payment being meant to cover only a part of the actual costs, the balance of the full payment was made, or, at any rate, became due, after the contingent of the mansabdār was actually presented for inspection and brand (dāgh).

The final stage of the evolution of the mansab system was marked by an innovation that came in the 40th regnal year (1595–6). Abu ʿl-Fāzl says that in this year, the mansabdārs were grouped into three categories. Those who maintained sawārs equal to their mansab-number were placed in the first category. The second category comprised those who maintained horsemen equal in number to one-half thereof, or more. Finally, those with horsemen smaller in number than one-half of their mansab were put in the third category.
The description of this measure, read together with the passages from Badā‘ūnī and Bāyazīd, implies that while the mansabdārs had been expected to maintain horsemen equal in number to their mansab, this expectation in many cases was not fulfilled.

It may plausibly be conjectured, as we have seen, that, under the procedure in force until the 40th year, the mansabdār was first assigned his personal pay and the salary for a number of troopers equal to his mansab-number, fixed on the basis of a provisional or partial rate termed bar-awardī. He was expected subsequently to present his troops and horses at the muster and brand, after which he was to be paid the balance due to him at the full dāghī rate (tafāwat-i dāgh). The ʿAlīn adds that it was laid down that when a promotion in mansab (the single one presumably) was given, the increased pay for his new personal status (zāt) was allowed on the enhanced rank, but the amount for the additional troopers was paid only after the dāgh.53

The procedure implies that if a mansabdār was unable to produce the required number of troopers at the dāgh, and his contingent fell short of the number of his mansab, even the bar-awardī payment might involve a great loss for the administration. It is true, of course, that, as suggested by Badā‘ūnī’s statement, fulfilment of the obligation to furnish a contingent of a certain size according to mansab was a pre-requisite for all promotions. Upon bringing 20 horsemen to the brand, a mansabdār could be promoted up to the rank of sadī (100); and only upon presenting the full complement of a hundred horsemen, was one qualified to get further promotions.

The situation, then, that obtained was that a sizeable number of mansabdārs received the bar-awardī rate but did not maintain the full number of horsemen.54 The administration acknowledged the force of reality and modified the system accordingly. It was now in the 40th regnal year (and not, as thought by Moreland, in the 11th or 18th regnal year) that the number of sawārs actually expected began to be distinct from the mansab number. The single mansab that was in force now became valid for the payment of salary for the person (zāt) of the mansabdār only, i.e. in respect of his personal status, while a new sawār-number was also assigned, against which the bar-awardī rates were paid. The origin of the description zāt for the first rank and of bar-awardī for the second, or sawār-rank, lies here.55 The terms were clearly in the final stage of evolution (but not yet established completely) when the main text of the ʿAlīn was drafted in or about the 40 regnal year.

The clearly-made distinction came soon afterwards, possibly during the 41st year itself, when the Akbar-nāma offers the first instance anywhere of the grant of a twofold rank.56 The formula for stating the mansab henceforth changed, and the mansab clearly became dual in nature, expressed by two numbers, specifying zāt and sawār (bar-awardī) separately. Abu ʾl-Fażl records under the 41st year that “the rank of Mirzā Shāhruk īh has been enhanced and pay-assignment
made to him for *panjhażarį* (5,000) *zāt*, with half the *sawārs* thereof as *bar-āwardi*". It is also the first instance of the use of the term *zāt* in the technical sense of the personal or first rank.

The situation that obtained in and before the 40th regnal year thus appears to some extent akin to the one envisaged by Moreland for the 11th year of Akbar, though the compulsions seem quite different from those he suggested. It was not inefficiency or maladministration that necessitated the introduction of a second (*sawār*) rank. On the contrary, Akbar’s administration apparently remained exceptionally zealous and exacting in this respect. The existing *mansabs* were indeed left unchanged, but the measure adopted did imply a demotion (through lower *sawār* ranks) for those who did not maintain their contingents in full; and there was a reduction too in their *zāt* or personal salaries to accord with the number of *sawārs* they actually succeeded in maintaining (owing to their classification in three categories instituted in the 40th year, cf. p. 180 above). It could therefore not be termed a compromise, as suggested by Moreland.

The different stages, delineated by us, in the evolution of the *mansab* system under Akbar, may now be summarized.

(i) Until the first decade of Akbar’s reign, as during the previous Mughal reigns, no standing military obligations in terms of size of contingents were fixed. Salaries were sanctioned for individuals in a more or less arbitrary fashion.

(ii) Akbar in his 11th regnal year (1566–7) attempted to fix military obligations; nobles were asked to maintain cavalry troopers in accordance with the revenues of their *jāgīrs*, and on the basis of certain rates sanctioned for troopers.

(iii) In the 18th regnal year (1573–4) the numerical rank (*mansab*) was instituted. The nobles were assigned a single number that determined both their pay and the number of animals (elephants, horses, beasts of burden and carts) that they were required to maintain on their personal establishment (*khāsa*). More important, they were also required to maintain horsemen (*sawārs*) equal in number to that of their *mansab*. But in actual fact, while drawing provisional rates (*bar-āwardi*) for this number, few nobles succeeded in bringing their contingents to the muster, and brand, at the full strength necessary for drawing the latter’s pay at the full, or *dāghī*, rates.

(iv) In the 40th year (1595–6) the *mansabdārs* were grouped into three categories, on the basis of the number of *sawārs* maintained in proportion to the *mansab*. The number of *sawārs*, therefore, began to be deemed distinct from the *mansab* number.

(v) In the 41st year (1596–7), the *mansab* became dual in nature. Henceforth, the *mansab* was expressed by a pair of numbers. The first, designated *zāt*, determined the personal pay and the number of *khāsa* (personal) animals to be maintained according to a given schedule. The second, the *sawār*, indicated
the number of horsemen the mansabdār was required to maintain, to which alone did the provisional or bar-āwardī rates now apply.

Here we reach the point where all the familiar features of the Mughal mansab system can at last be discerned. There were changes made in it subsequently, tending in some respects to simplify it, in others to make it more complex, but the basic principle of the two separate ranks defining distinct claims and obligations came to stay.

NOTES

3 Moreland, 650; Abdul Aziz, 36.
4 Moreland, 643.
5 A. J. Qaisar, “Note on the date of institution of Mansab under Akbar”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 24th Session, 1961, 155–7. By an oversight, 1573–4 has been styled by him the 20th regnal year instead of the 18th.
6 Irfan Habib, 243.
11 ibid., 47.
12 ibid., 43.
13 *Akbar-nāma*, III, 120–1.
14 ibid., II, 45, 229 and 270; *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī*, II, 253 and 264.
15 *Akbar-nāma*, II, 270. My translation of this and other passages from Abu 'l-Fazl is independent of that by Beveridge, where the precise technical sense is often missed.
16 cf. the rather brief remarks of Qaisar, 156–7. It is difficult to agree with him, however, that the Akbar-nāma passage indicates the existence of “three kinds of jāgīrs”.
17 *Iqbālnāma*, II, 213.
18 *Akbar-nāma*, III, 672; the pay schedule stated here allowed 12,000 dāms, 9,600 dāms, and 7,200 dāms, per year for sih-aspa (horseman with three horses), do-aspa (horseman with two horses) and yak-aspa (horseman with one horse) respectively. This was for troopers of Mughal (i.e. Tūrānī and Irānī), Afghan and Indian nobles. For Rājput nobles, the rates were 8,400 dāms for sih-aspas, 7,200 dāms for do-aspas. What rate the Rājput nobles drew for yak-aspas is left obscure. cf. Irfan Habib (n. 2 above), 233.
19 *Akbar-nāma*, II, 270.
20 *Iqbālnāma*, II, 213.
21 *Ā in-i Akbarī*, edited by Blochmann, Calcutta, 1867, 222–32.
22 Qaisar (n. 5 above), 156.
24 *Ā in*, I, 222.
To cite a few names, with the mansabs assigned in the Āʿin-i Akbarī, appearing within brackets.

Bairam Khān (5,000) d. 971 A.H. Akbar-nāma, II, 971.
Tārdī Beg (5,000) d. 964 A.H. Tabaqāt, II, 426.
Adham Khān (5,000) d. 969 A.H. Akbar-nāma, II, 179.
Sīkandar Khān Uzbek (5,000) d. 980 A.H. Tabaqāt, II, 430.
Ḥābīb ʿAlī Khān (5,000) d. 970 A.H. Akbar-nāma, II, 168.
Khwāja Tāhir Muḥammad (1,000) d. 975 A.H. Tabaqāt, II, 443.

(Note: The 18th regnal year = A.H. 980–81)

While the Tabaqāt does not assign any fictitious mansabs to those who died before the 18th regnal year, it lacks the completeness of the Āʿin-i Akbarī’s list in that it fails to assign numerical ranks to some who appear on its list and died well after the 18th year. For example, Muqṣūd ʿAlī (No. 136 in the Āʿin’s list) received the mansab of 1,000 in the 25th regnal year (Akbar-nāma, III, 304–5); but the Tabaqāt does not credit him with any mansab. There are others who were alive at the time the Tabaqāt was completed; yet, though they are assigned mansabs in the Āʿin, the Tabaqāt refrains from recording any under their names. To cite a few examples, with the Āʿin’s mansabs within brackets:

Mīr Sharafr ud-dīn (5,000)
Qutb ud-dīn Muḥammad Khān (5,000)
Rustam Khān (2,000)
Ghiyāṣ ud-dīn ʿAlī Saif Khān (1,000).

Moreover, the Tabaqāt’s list does not mention mansabs below 1,000 (there is only one exception viz. Ahmad ʿAlī Beg’s rank of 700).

These deficiencies in the Tabaqāt’s information show that the Āʿin-i Akbarī’s list remains indispensable. Such deficiencies, however, do not by any means weaken the significance of the Tabaqāt’s list in exposing the fictitious nature of mansabs assigned in the Āʿin to a whole group of persons.

Akbar-nāma, III, 69.
ibid., II, 117.
ibid., II, 117; Badāʿünī, II, p. 190; Iqbalnama, II, 288.
Iqbalnama, II, 288.
Akbar-nāma, III, 117, the phrase used here is ba-andāza-yi ʿaqīdat u sar kardan-i jamāʾat; Iqbalnama, II, 288 has quwwat-i sardār u hausla-yi jamāʾatdārī.
It is generally held (Moreland, 65; Abdul Aziz, 147–9) that the recipients of high ranks (under Akbar, 500, and under Shāhjahān, 1,000) were designated umarāʾ, while the word mansabdār was used for those holding ranks below 500 or 1000. However, Abu ʿl-Faḍl (Akbar-nāma, III, 671, Āʿin, I, 187, 188, 190) and Muʿtāmad Khan (Iqbalnama, II, 288) use the term mansabdār for all rank-holders without any distinction. Only the word umarāʾ, to judge from the Tabaqāt-i Akbarī, 456, was reserved (under Akbar) to those holding mansabs exceeding 500.

Badāʿünī, II, 190.
The printed text reads tābbītān, an obvious misreading for tābīnān.
In the 17th-century chronicles, it is thus common to find the use of the formula panj hazār  chahār hazār to indicate 5000 zāt/4000 sawār, and so on.

Akbar-nāma, III, 170, 184; Tabaqāt, II, 328, 340.
Of Rāja Todar Mal and Qulī Khān, he says that they maintained chahār hazār sawār (4,000 horsemen); Majnūn Qaqshāl had 5,000 naukar; Muḥammad Ḥusain, 1,000 naukar; Aḥmad Beg Kābulī had 700 sawārs (Tabaqāt, II, 433, 435, 441, and 443).
Tabaqāt, II, 456.
Ābdul Aziz, Mansabdari system, 110; Athar Ali, Mughal Nobility, 8; Qaisar (n. 5, above), 156; Irfān Habīb (n. 2 above), 212.
The Āʿin’s list gives Muẓaffar Ḥusain’s rank as 5,000 (No. 8 on the list); he was
awarded this rank in the 40th year (Akbar-nama, III, 671). cf. Irfan Habib (n. 2 above)
245, n. 52.

41 The text reads dakhil; however, dakhili would seem to be the correct reading.

42 Bâyazîd Biyât, Tazkira-i Humâyûn u Akbar, edited by H. Husain, Calcutta, 1941, pp. 373-4. See also Ruqât-i Ḥakîm Abû l-Fath Gîlârî, edited by M. Bashir Husain, Lahore, 1968, 15-16, 20-1 and 27, where the earliest directly contemporary references to mansabs occur (February-March 1581). The Hindi word pûra “full” is employed here for the sanctioning of the full pay against the mansâb, which is clearly single, and directly related to the military obligation.

43 Irfan Habib (cf. n. 2 above), 233.

44 Â’în, I, 176.

45 Ibid., I, 194. It is further stated (p. 175) that if a mansâbdar found it difficult to muster horsemen, he was given some “enrolled” (branded) troopers, in proportion to his rank as part of his contingent. These were paid directly from the Imperial treasury and were called dakhili. The forty dakhili troopers of this kind.

46 Â’în, I, 176.

47 Abdul Aziz, Mansâbdari system, 48-9. He was probably led to this view by the later Mughal practice of calling upon nobles to meet the costs of maintenance of imperial elephants and other animals (khurâk-i dawâb). (Athar Ali [n. 2 above], 51). This does not seem to have existed under Akbar. Even though imperial elephants were given to the princes and nobles to be looked after, Abu ’l-Fazl claims that the costs of maintenance (khwurâsh) were still met by the imperial exchequer (Â’în, I, 135).

48 See Â’în, I, 176-8, for both the statement regarding the 18th year and the schedules of rates.

49 Ibid., I, 180-5.

50 Ibid., I, 178.

51 These enhancements are set out in detail for each animal, etc., in the Â’în, I, 176-8. For the very first enhancement, on horses, Abu ’l-Fazl explains that the rate was increased by 81 dâms, “for the welfare of the troops and to provide relief (to them)” (p. 176, 1.3 from bottom). Further on, speaking of an enhancement of rate on shêrgîr elephants, he describes that as due to “imperial generosity” (p. 178, 1.3).

52 Akbar-nama, III, 671; Â’în, I, 179.

53 Â’în, I, 191.

54 In a passage in a letter ascribed to Abu ’l-Fazl, the complaint is made that “there are some mansâbdars who have jâgîrs (for the rank) of hazârî (1,000) but do not have even a few men with them, while there are many who are sadis (100) and have 50 good horsemen (each) for service in the Deccan and ready for endeavour all the time; and yet the latter remain without jâgîrs”. (Ruqât-i Abû ’l-Fazl, Kanpur, 1879, 45). It will be noticed that Abu ’l-Fazl does not compare the actual contingent maintained with the second (sawâr) rank, but with the single rank, always indicated, as we have seen, by the suffix yâ (-ī). Abu ’l-Fazl reached the Deccan early in the 44th regnal year (1599), and the letter was apparently sent to the Emperor shortly afterwards. Unfortunately, in this letter as well as in some other letters of this collection, there are departures from Abu ’l-Fazl’s usual style, and apparent inaccuracies of fact, which, casting doubt on the genuineness of the documents, detract from their authority as a source.

55 Cf. Irfan Habib (n. 2 above), 234.

56 Akbar-nama, III, 717, for Mirzâ Shâhrukh and for prince Dâniyâl (p. 271). In the latter case the formula employed for stating the paired mansab is what henceforth became standardized, namely, haft hazârî zât u sawâr (“7,000 zât and (7,000) sawâr”).

57 Akbar-nama, III, 717.

58 For these changes, notably, the conversion of bar-âwardî into the sole form of payment for sawâr rank; the institution of do-aspa sih-aspa ranks; the modification of size of cavalry contingents according to geographical location; and the institution of the month scales, cf. Irfan Habib (n. 2 above), 233-9.