



The Delhi Sultanate-III: The Tughlaq Dynasty (1320-1413)

For Prelims: [Tughlaq Dynasty](#)

For Mains: Muhammad bin Tughlaq's Experiments, Policies Taken by Firoz Shah Tughlaq, Agrarian Reforms & Changes in Nobility During the Reign of Muhammad Tughlaq

After the Khilji dynasty, the [Tughlaq dynasty \(1320-1413\)](#) came to power in Delhi. The Tughlaq dynasty formed an important period in the history and culture of the Sultanate.

Economic life accelerated due to the establishment of karkhanas or factories, and irrigated canals facilitated agriculture. Inland and maritime trade increased and quickened the process of urbanization. **Urban centers, schools, mosques, and public buildings also proliferated.**

Who were the Important Rulers of the Tughlaq Dynasty?

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (Ghazi Malik)

- The **founder of the Tughlaq dynasty was Ghazi Malik** who ascended the throne as Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in AD 1320.
- After a brief rule, **he died in AD 1325** and his son **Muhammad Tughlaq ascended to the throne.**
- Under the Tughlaqs the **Delhi Sultanate was further consolidated. Many outlying territories were brought** under the direct control of the Sultanate.
- He built the **fortress city of Tughlaqabad** which was the **capital and a strong fortress designed for defense.**

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq

- He became the Sultan of Delhi after his father's death, even though he has been blamed for his father's death by some historians.
- The **Sultan believed in the Divine Right theory of kingship.** Following a liberal policy, **he appointed officials irrespective of caste, creed, or religion.**
 - He also **did not discriminate against his Hindu subjects.**
- He undertook a policy of conquest and sent expeditionary forces to Khurasan, Nagarkot, Qarajal, Mewar, Telingana, and Malabar. **Diplomatic relations were established with many Asian countries.**
 - His **empire was the most extensive one** among the medieval Sultans.
- He **constructed the Royal residence of Jahanpanah along with the Begumpuri mosque.**

Firoz Shah Tughlaq

- The cousin of Muhammad Tughlaq, Feroz (or Firuz) Shah Tughluq, **ascended the throne in 1351** and ruled until 1388. Although not a capable military leader like his predecessors, the **Sultan was a great builder of cities, monuments, and public buildings.**

- The Sultan **imposed the four taxes sanctioned by Islamic laws**, including a tax on non-Muslims. His campaign to Jajnagar (Odisha) in 1361 **destroyed the famous [Puri Jagannatha temple](#)**.

What were the Achievements of Firoz Shah?

- Firoz Shah Tughlaq worked majorly for the development of infrastructure in his kingdom.
 - **Diwan-i-Khairat:** Office for charity
 - **Diwan-i-Bundagan:** Department of slave
 - **Sarais (Rest House):** For the benefit of merchants and other travellers
 - **Four New Towns:** Firozabad, Fatehabad, Jaunpur and Hissar
- **He constructed canals from:**
 - **[Yamuna](#)** to the city of Hissar
 - **[Sutlej](#)** to the Ghaggar
 - Ghaggar to Firozabad
 - Mandvi and Sirmour Hills to Hansi in Haryana
- **Taxes imposed under Firoz Shah Tughlaq:**
 - **Kharaj:** Land tax which was equal to one-tenth of the produce of the land
 - **Zakat:** Two and a half percent tax on property realised from Muslims
 - **Kham:** One-fifth of the booty captured (four-fifth was left for the soldiers)
 - **Other Taxes:** The irrigation tax, garden tax, octroi tax and the sales tax

What were Muhammad bin Tughlaq's Experiments?

Transfer of Capital

- Next to Alauddin Khalji, Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1324 - 1351) **is best remembered as a ruler who undertook a number of bold experiments** and showed a keen interest in agriculture.
- The **most controversial step** that Muhammad Tughlaq undertook soon after his accession was the **so-called transfer of the capital from Delhi to Deogir** (later renamed as Daulatabad).
- **Only the upper classes**, such as the shaikhs, nobles, and ulema, **were required to move to Daulatabad, while the rest of the population remained in Delhi.**
- Eventually, **due to growing discontent and the realisation that it was difficult to control the northern territories from the south, Muhammad bin Tughlaq decided to abandon Daulatabad as the capital.**
- It **helped in bringing North and South India closer together** by improving communications. **Many people, including religious divines who had gone to Daulatabad, settled down there.** They **became the means of spreading in the Deccan the cultural, religious and social ideas** which the Turks had brought with them to north India.
 - This **resulted in a new process of cultural interaction between North and South India**, as well as in South India itself.

Token Currency

- Another **controversial project undertaken by Muhammad bin Tughlaq was the introduction of "Token Currency"**. According to Barani, the Sultan introduced token currency **because the treasury was empty due to the Sultan's schemes of conquest as well as his boundless generosity.**
 - There **was a shortage of silver in the world in the fourteenth century** and India had to face the crisis. Therefore, the **Sultan was forced to issue copper coins instead of silver.**
- He **introduced a copper coin (Jittal) instead of a silver coin (tanka)** and ordered that it be accepted as equivalent to the tanka. However, **the idea of token currency was new in India and was difficult for traders and common people to accept.**
- The State also did not take proper precautions to check the imitation of coins issued by mints. The **government could not prevent people from forging new coins and soon new coins**

flooded the markets.

- According to Barani, **the people began to mint token currency in their houses.** However, the common man failed to distinguish between copper coins issued by the royal treasury and those which were locally made. **Thus, the Sultan was forced to withdraw the token currency.**

Khurasan & Qarachil Expedition

- In the early 14th century, the Delhi Sultanate under Muhammad bin Tughluq embarked on **several military expeditions to secure its frontiers and resolve boundary disputes.**
 - The **Khurasan expedition** aimed to establish more defensible frontiers in the west. However, this expedition did not materialize.
 - **Qarachil expedition** was an attempt to resolve a boundary dispute with neighboring hill states that were under Chinese influence.
 - However, this expedition ended in failure. Despite this setback, there was **later diplomatic communication between China and Delhi.**

What Agrarian Reforms & Changes in Nobility Took Place During the Reign of Muhammad Tughlaq?

▪ Agrarian Reforms:

- Muhammad Tughlaq **undertook a number of measures to improve agriculture.** Most of these were **tried out in the Doab region.** Muhammad Tughlaq **did not believe in Alauddin Khalji's policy of trying to reduce the khuts and muqaddams** (headmen in the villages) to the position of ordinary cultivators. But **he did want an adequate share of the land revenue for the state.**
- The **measures he advocated had a long-term impact, but they failed disastrously during his reign.**
- Right at the beginning of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, **there was a serious peasant rebellion in the Gangetic doab due to over-assessment.** Peasants fled the villages and Muhammad Tughlaq **took harsh measures to capture and punish them.**
 - A severe **famine that ravaged the area for half a dozen years made the situation worse.**
- Efforts at **relief by giving advances for cattle and seeds, and for digging wells came too late.** So many people died in Delhi that the air became pestilential.
- The sultan **left Delhi and for two and half years lived in a camp called Swargadwari,** 100 miles from Delhi on the banks of the Ganges near Kanauj.
- After returning to Delhi, **Muhammad Tughlaq launched a scheme to extend and improve cultivation in the doab.** He set up a separate department called **diwan-i-amir-i-kohi.**
- The **area was divided into development blocs headed by an official whose job was to extend cultivation** by giving loans to the cultivators and to induce them to **cultivate superior crops—wheat** in place of **barley, sugarcane** in place of wheat, **grapes** and dates in place of sugarcane, etc.
- The **scheme failed largely because the men chosen for the purpose proved to be inexperienced and dishonest,** and misappropriated the money for their own use.
- Muhammad Tughlaq had died in the meantime, and **Firoz had written off the loans.** But the **policy** advocated by Muhammad Tughlaq for extending and improving cultivation was not lost. It **was taken up by Firoz, and even more vigorously later on by Akbar.**

▪ Challenges of a Diverse Nobility:

- Another problem that **Muhammad Tughlaq had to face was the problem of the nobility.** With the downfall of the **Chahalgani Turks** and the rise of the Khaljis, **the nobility was drawn from Muslims belonging to different races, including Indian converts.**
- Muhammad Tughlaq **entertained people who did not belong to noble families but belonged to castes** such as barbers, cooks, weavers, wine-makers, etc. He even **gave them important offices.**
- His **nobility consisted of descendants of Muslim converts, including a few Hindus,** as well as foreign appointees. This **diverse composition led to a lack of cohesiveness and loyalty among the nobles.**

- The **vast empire provided opportunities for rebellion and the establishment of independent spheres of authority**. Muhammad Tughlaq's harsh punishments further fueled this trend.
 - As a result, **his reign marked both the zenith of the Delhi Sultanate and the beginning of its disintegration**.

How did Firoz Shah Tughlaq Rise to Power?

- During Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, **there were repeated rebellions across his empire, particularly in South India**. These uprisings were organised by local governors and caused significant strain on his armies.
- Muhammad Tughlaq's **forces were further weakened by a devastating plague, resulting in the death of two-thirds of his army**. After returning from south India, **another rebellion led by Harihara and Bukka led to the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire**, while foreign nobles in the Deccan formed the Bahmani Empire.
- **Bengal also gained independence**. Although Muhammad Tughlaq managed to suppress rebellions in Awadh, Gujarat, and Sind, **he ultimately died in Sind and was succeeded by his cousin, Firuz Tughlaq**.
- Since Muhammad Tughlaq's **policies created discontent among the nobles, army, and influential Muslim theologians and Sufi saints**.
- After ascending to power, Firoz Tughlaq **faced the challenge of preventing the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate**. He **pursued a policy of appeasement** towards the nobles, army, and theologians while asserting authority over easily manageable areas.
 - He **did not attempt to regain control over South India and the Deccan**.

What were the Policies Taken by Firoz Shah Tughlaq?

- Firoz Tughlaq **was not a remarkable military leader, but his reign brought a period of peace and gradual development**. He implemented a **decree allowing the succession of positions and iqta (land grants) to the sons, sons-in-law, and slaves of deceased nobles**.
- He abolished the practice of torturing nobles and officials during account audits. These measures **pleased the nobles and minimised rebellions**.
 - However, **the policy of hereditary offices and iqta had long-term drawbacks**. It limited the recruitment of competent individuals outside a small circle and made the sultan dependent on a narrow oligarchy.
- He extended the principle of heredity to the army, allowing old soldiers to be replaced by their sons, sons-in-law, or slaves. **Soldiers were no longer paid in cash but instead received assignments on land revenue from villages**.
 - Consequently, **soldiers did not benefit in the long run**, and the military administration became lax, and corruption increased.
- He aimed to appease the theologians by proclaiming himself a true Muslim king and emphasising that his state was truly Islamic. **Since the time of Iltutmish, there had been a conflict between the orthodox theologians and the sultans** regarding the nature of the state and its policies towards non-Muslims.
 - To **maintain the theologians' satisfaction, some were appointed to high offices**, although the judiciary and educational system remained under their control.
- He boycotted the practices in the kingdom, the scholars deemed un-Islamic. He was the one who started the imposition of Jaziya.
- Firuz Tughlaq **was the first ruler who took steps to have Hindu religious works translated from Sanskrit into Persian**, so that there may be a better understanding of Hindu ideas and practices.
 - Many books on music, medicine and mathematics were also translated from Sanskrit into Persian during his reign.

