

Mughal Kings and Kingdoms from <http://www.oxfordartonline.com>

Dynasty of Central Asian origin that ruled portions of the Indian subcontinent from 1526 to 1857. The patronage of the Mughal emperors had a significant impact on the development of architecture, painting and a variety of other arts.

The Mughal dynasty was founded by Babur (reg 1526–30), a prince descended from Timur and Chingiz Khan. Having lost his Central Asian kingdom of [Ferghana](#), Babur conquered [Kabul](#) and then in 1526 Delhi (see [Delhi, §1](#)). He was a collector of books and his interests in art are apparent in his memoirs, the *Bāburnāma*, written in Chagatay Turkish. Babur built palace pavilions and laid out gardens. The latter, divided into four parts by water courses (Ind.-Pers. *chār-bāgh*, a four-plot garden), became a model for subsequent Mughal gardens.

Babur was succeeded by Humayun (reg 1530–40, 1555–6), who initiated a number of building projects, most notably the Purana Qila' in Delhi. Sher Shah usurped the throne and drove Humayun into exile in 1540. During the [Sur \(ii\)](#) interregnum, Humayun travelled to Iran where he was able to attract a number of Safavid court artists to his service. In 1545 he re-established Mughal power in the subcontinent with the capture of Kabul, which was the centre of Humayun's court until he took Delhi in 1555. Little is known of the Kabul period, but painters from Iran arrived there, and apparently some manuscripts were produced. Humayun died in 1556, shortly after his return to Delhi.

Akbar (reg 1556–1605) inherited a small and precarious kingdom, but by the time of his death in 1605 it had been transformed into a vast empire stretching from Kabul to the Deccan. A ruler of genius, Akbar established political, administrative and cultural institutions that endured until the 19th century. The history of his reign and the details of its institutions were recorded by his courtier Abu'l al-Fazl in the *Akbarnāma* and *Āyīn-i Akbarī*. Akbar introduced active state patronage of craft manufacture and textile production. His interest in the imperial painting workshops apparently encouraged the development of a new composite style (see '[Abd al-samad and fig.](#)'). Numerous manuscripts were created for the imperial court, and their style was imitated in works produced for the nobility. Akbar's contribution to architecture included an impressive series of forts and palaces exhibiting a fascinating blend of Persian and Indian styles, the most important built at [Agra](#),

He was also interested in music and attracted outstanding musicians to his court, including the famous Tansen of Gwalior.

Jahangir (reg 1605–27) continued the policies set in place by his father and, for the most part, did not interfere with the institutions of state. As a patron, he had an active interest in painting, architecture and gardens, as indicated by surviving pictures and monuments and his memoirs, the *Tūzuk-ī Jahāngīrī*. Like earlier emperors, he was an acute observer of the everyday world and took a special delight in curiosities from distant lands that were arriving in India. His connoisseur's eye for painting is revealed by the attributions, written in his own hand, that are found on many pictures. Splendid pieces of carved jade and other precious objects made for Jahangir attest an impressive level of craftsmanship and the opulence of the emperor's material surroundings.

The dynasty's greatest patron of architecture, Shah Jahan (reg 1628–58), established an entirely new city at Delhi and undertook the wholesale reconstruction of the palaces at Agra and Lahore. His most famous project was the [Taj Mahal](#) at Agra (see [Agra, §II, 1](#)), a stunning mausoleum of white marble built for his wife. All these buildings exhibit a careful synthesis of diverse Indian and Persian elements. The formality of Shah Jahan's architecture was paralleled in painting and the decorative arts. Miniatures of the court exhibit a cool grandeur, as do the paintings in the *Shāh Jahānnāma* (Windsor Castle, Royal Lib.), an illustrated history of the reign. Of the many precious objects made for the court, perhaps the most impressive is the Emperor's white jade wine cup (London, V&A).

Aurangzeb (reg 1658–1707) ascended the throne after imprisoning his father and eliminating his brothers and nephews. In the early part of his reign, patronage continued as before, with portraits of the Emperor following the conventions established in the time of Shah Jahan. Aurangzeb's rule, however, was marked by a gradual increase in Islamic orthodoxy. Painting and music were discouraged at court; artists began to rely on the nobility for patronage, some migrating to regional centres. Aurangzeb added little to the imperial palaces built by his forebears but commissioned the construction of a number of mosques. The best-known example is the Badshahi Mosque at Lahore, a building of extraordinary scale. Wars in the Deccan against Bijapur and Golconda occupied much of Aurangzeb's rule, and portions of the empire in the north-west began to slip from Mughal hands.

The rule of the later Mughals (1707–1857) was marked by political disintegration. The Marathas gained control of Maharashtra and central India, the British slowly expanded their holdings in Bengal and the Sikhs emerged as a militant force in Punjab. The Nizam of Hyderabad broke away in 1724, and Sind was ruled by its own emirs. The Nawabs of Murshidabad and Lucknow, while ostensibly vassals,

were independent for all practical purposes. A devastating blow came in 1739 during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719–48) when Nadir Shah of Iran sacked the Mughal capital. With relatively little territory or revenue, the Mughal court ceased to set the standard in the arts.

## Bibliography

### Early sources

Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur: *Bāburnāma* (c. 1530) Eng. trans. and ed. by A. S. Beveridge, 2 vols (London, 1922/R New Delhi, 1970)

Abu'l al-Fazl: *Āyīn-i Akbarī* [Annals of Akbar] (c. 1596–1602); Eng. trans. in 3 vols: vol. i, trans. H. Blochmann, ed. S. L. Gloomer ([Calcutta], 1871/R Delhi, 1965); vols ii–iii, trans. H. S. Jarrett, ed. J. Sarkar (1948–9/R New Delhi, 1972–3)

Abu'l al-Fazl: *Akbarnāma* (c. 1596–1602); Eng. trans. H. Beveridge, 3 vols (Calcutta, 1907–39/R New Delhi, 1972–3)

Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir: *Tūzuk-ī Jahāngīrī* [Memoirs of Jahangir] (c. 1624); Eng. trans. A. Rogers, ed. H. Beveridge (London, 1904–14/R Delhi, 1968)

ʿAbd al-Hamid Lahauri: *Pādshāhnāma* [Emperor's book] (c. 1654–5); ed. K. Ahmad and A. Rahim, 2 vols (Calcutta, 1865–8)

### General

B. Prasad: *History of Jahangir* (London and Madras, 1922, rev. Allahabad, 5/1962)

J. Sarkar: *History of Aurangzeb*, 5 vols (Calcutta, 1925–34)

J. Sarkar: *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 3 vols (Calcutta, 1932–50)

I. Habib: *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963)

M. Athar Ali: *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (Bombay, 1968)

S. A. A. Rizvi: *The Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (Delhi, 1975)

A. R. Khan: *The Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar* (Simla, 1977)

A. J. Qaisar: *The Indian Response to European Technology and Culture, 1498–1707* (Delhi, 1982)

T. Raychaudhari and I. Habib, eds: *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, i (Cambridge, 1982)

M. Hasan: *Babur, the Founder of the Mughal Empire in India* (Delhi, 1986)

D. Streusand: *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (Oxford, 1989)

W. E. Begley, ed.: *Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan: An Abridged History of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan* (New Delhi, 1990)

J. Richards: *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge, 1993)