



## 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 Jainagar (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.

