
UNIT 28 THE BAHMANIS

Structure

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28.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about :

- the emergence of the Bahmani kingdom,
- the conflict between the old Dakhni nobility and the newcomers (the Afaqis) and how it ultimately led to the decline of the Bahmani Sultanate, and
- the administrative structure, society, economy and other cultural aspects.

28.1 INTRODUCTION

You have seen that the Delhi Sultanate first intruded into the South during the time of Alauddin Khalji. It was during Muhammad Tughluq's reign that significant conquest of the South was effected. In this Unit, we will trace the story of the end of the Tughluq rule in the Deccan and its replacement by the Bahmani Sultanate. It will also take into account the conquests, consolidation, administrative system and the culture of the period.

28.2 RISE OF THE BAHMANI POWER

Let us review the political situation in the Deccan immediately prior to the establishment of the Bahmani kingdom. Most parts of the Deccan were conquered and annexed to the Delhi Sultanate during Muhammad Tughluq's reign. He made elaborate administrative arrangements for the Deccan region. Ulugh Khan was appointed as the superior governor or "viceroys" of the region. The whole region was divided into 23 *iqlims* or provinces. The most important of these were Jainagar (Orissa), Marhat (Maharashtra), Telingana, Bidar, Kampili and Dwarsamudra. Subsequently, Malwa was also placed under the governor of the Deccan. Each *iqlim* was divided into a number of rural districts (*shiq*). Each *shiq* was divided into *hazaris* (one thousand) and *sadis* (one hundred) for collection of revenue. The main officers were *shiqdars*, *wali*, *amiran-i hazarah* and *amiran-i sadah*. The revenue officials were called *mutsariffs*, *karkuns*, *chaudhris*, etc.

In this set-up, the most powerful person was the 'viceroy' of the Deccan who was virtually the master of a large region with as many as 23 provinces. Another important functionary with wide powers was **amiran-i sadah** i.e. the chief of 100 villages.

In spite of this elaborate administrative set-up, the real control of the Sultan was weak mainly because of:

- the distance from Delhi
- difficult geographical terrain
- wide powers enjoyed by the 'viceroy' and other officers.

In this situation, any dissatisfaction of the officers (posted in the Deccan) with the centre could lead to the snapping of ties with Delhi.

Beginning of Trouble

The role of the **amiran-i sadah** in making the Deccan independent of the Tughluq rule is relevant. These officers of noble lineage performed the twin functions as military officers and revenue collectors. They had direct connection with the people of their territory. When a series of rebellions broke out in the South, Muhammad Tughluq attributed them to the massive power exercised by these **amirs**; as a result, he embarked upon a policy of suppressing them which in turn sounded the death-knell of the Tughluq rule in the Deccan. We will briefly take note of the various rebellions which broke out during this period and how they contributed to the rise of a new kingdom and a new dynasty.

The earliest Deccan rebellion against the centre took place in 1327 at Sagar in Gulbarga. It was headed by Bahauddin Gurshasp and supported by local chiefs and **amirs**. The revolt was crushed but it paved the way for the need to establish the capital at a place more centrally located than Delhi from where the southern provinces could also be kept in check. Muhammad Tughluq, thus, made Deogir the second capital of the empire in 1328. But the scheme failed as the very nobles who were sent to stabilise the Tughluq rule in the Deccan weakened the control of Delhi.

The first major successful rebellion occurred in Ma'bar. The governor of Ma'bar : alliance with certain nobles of Daulatabad raised the banner of revolt. In 1336-37, the governor of Bidar also rebelled but was suppressed.

Muhammad Tughluq felt that the danger to the Tughluq rule in the Deccan was from the scions of the old nobility whom he had sent to the South from Delhi. He, therefore, adopted the policy of replacing them with a new breed of nobles who would be loyal to him. But this was not of much help due to the recalcitrant behaviour of the **amiran-i sadah** who ultimately carved out an independent kingdom in the Deccan.

Around 1344, the amount of revenue due from the Deccan had fallen sharply. Muhammad Tughluq divided the Deccan into 4 **shiqs** and placed them under the charge of neo-Muslims whom Barani calls 'upstarts'. This was not liked by the **amiran-i sadah**. In 1345, the nobles posted in Gujarat conspired and rebelled against Delhi. Muhammad Tughluq suspected the complicity of the **amiran-i sadah** in the Gujarat insurrection. The viceroy of the Deccan was ordered by Muhammad Tughluq to summon the **amirs** of Raichur, Gulbarga, Bijapur, etc. to Broach. The **amiran-i sadah**, fearing drastic punishment at the hands of Muhammad Tughluq, decided to strike a blow at the Tughluq rule in the Deccan and declared themselves independent at Daulatabad by electing Nasiruddin Ismail Shah, the senior **amir** of Deogir, as their Sultan. Gulbarga was the first region to be taken after the establishment of their rule in Daulatabad. Those opposing the Delhi Sultanate consisted of the Rajputs, Deccanis, Mongols, Gujarati **amirs** and the troops sent by the Raja of Tanjore. They emerged victorious in the end. But Ismail Shah abdicated in favour of Hasan Kangu (Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah) and, thus, was laid the foundation of the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan in 1347. The new kingdom comprised the entire region of the Deccan. For the next 150 years, this kingdom dominated the political activities in the South.

28.3 CONQUESTS AND CONSOLIDATION

The political developments of the Bahmani kingdom can be divided into two phases: In the first phase (1347-1422), the centre of activities was Gulbarga while in the

second phase (1422-1538) the capital shifted to Bidar which was more centrally located and fertile. During this phase, we find conflicts between the Afaqis and the Dakhnis touching its peak.

28.3.1 First Phase, 1347-1422

In the period between 1347-1422, major conquests were effected. Kotgir in Andhra Pradesh, Qandahar in Maharashtra, Kalyani in Karnataka, Bhongir in Telingana, Sagar, Khembhavi, Malkher and Seram in Gulbarga (Karnataka), Manram, Akkalkot and Mahendri in Maharashtra and Mandu in Malwa (Madhya Pradesh) were subjugated. The Bahmani rule covered Mandu in the north to Raichur in the south and from Bhongir in the east to Dabhol and Goa in the west.

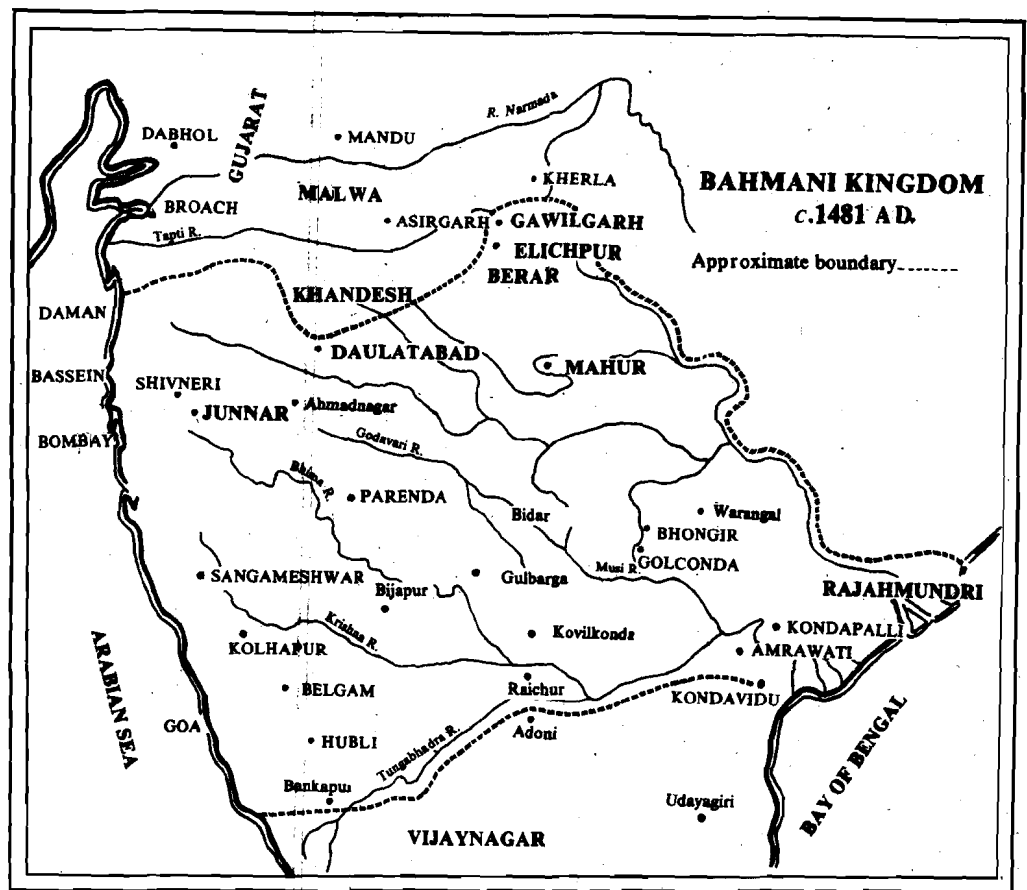
The Raya of Telingana and Raya of Vijaynagar were the main rivals of the Bahmanis in this period. In one engagement with the Raya of Telingana Golconda was handed over to the Bahmanis. However, war with Vijaynagar did not prove to be decisive and the Tungabhadra Doab continued to be shared between the two powers.

Very soon the Bahmanis lost Goa to Vijaynagar in the late 14th century. In one campaign launched by the Bahmanis against the Raja of Kherla (Maharashtra), who was being encouraged by the rulers of Vijaynagar, Malwa and Khandesh to rebel against Bahmanis, he was forced to submit. In Telingana, two rivals—Vema (of Rajahmundry) and Velama (of Telingana) (Andhra factions) —were supported by Vijaynagar and Bahmanis respectively. The Bahmanis tried to intrude into Telingana but were repulsed by the Vemas. The Bahmanis continued to side with one Andhra faction against the other for territorial gains. An important factor for the Bahmani losses in the campaign against Vijaynagar in the early 15th century was the fact that the Velamas who had earlier supported the Bahmanis had shifted their allegiance to Vijaynagar.

28.3.2 Second Phase, 1422-1538

The period between 1422-1538 was marked by the shift of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. It was centrally and strategically located. The three linguistic areas (Marathi, Kannad and Telugu) converged on this point. The struggle for supremacy between the Vijaynagar and the Bahmanis continued in this period as well. Warangal was annexed to the Bahmani kingdom in this period. The independent kingdoms of Malwa and Gujarat (see Units 23, 24) also had to bear the brunt of the Bahmani power. While Malwa proved to be weak, the Sultanate of Gujarat, in spite of two major campaigns, did not give way to the Bahmanis. An important consequence of the latter confrontation was the formation of alliance between the Sultanate of Khandesh and Bahmanis to counter the threat from Gujarat.

Between 1436-1444, two clashes occurred between the Vijaynagar and the Bahmanis. In the first one, the Bahmanis had to face defeat. However, the second one, according to Ferishta, ultimately proved to be advantageous for the Bahmanis. The Rajas of Sangameshwar and Khandesh were subjugated. In the Gujarat campaign, the major cause of the defeat of the Bahmanis was the internal strife between the two factions of the nobles, the Deccanis and the Afaqis (you will read about this in the subsequent section). The Deccanis had betrayed the Bahmani cause. Therefore, in the campaign against Khandesh, the Deccanis were excluded which brought serious repercussions. In 1446, to suppress the Raja of Kherla and Sangameshwar (Konkan), the Deccanis and the Afaqis were sent. The expedition ended in disaster for the Bahmanis. The Deccanis blamed the Afaqis who were consequently punished. Later the Afaqis pleaded their case and regained ascendancy in the court. These strifes proved harmful for the empire. This was the period when Mahmud Gawan came into prominence as the Bahmani minister. The ruler of Orissa in alliance with the king of Telingana attacked the Bahmanis but they were repulsed by Mahmud Gawan. The ruler of Malwa also made a bid to conquer the Bahmani territories (e.g., Bidar). However, he had to retreat when Gujarat came to the rescue of the Bahmanis. Another attempt of Malwa also failed. Mahmud Gawan conquered Hubli, Belgaum and Bagalkot. The Bombay-Karnatak zone came under the Bahmani sway. Under Gawa's able guidance, the empire extended from Orissa to Goa (Konkan). Finally, Mahmud Gawan, an Afaqi, became a victim of group rivalry and was



MAP 6

murdered at the hands of the Deccani party. After this, the kingdom rolled down the path of disintegration. Wars undertaken against Vijaynagar ended in disaster and ultimately by 1538 the Bahmani dynasty came to an end and the kingdom broke up into 5 states—Berar, Bidar, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the role of the **amiran-i sadah** in making the Deccan independent of the Tughluq rule. Answer in about eight lines.

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- 2) Fill in the blanks:

- i) **Amiran-i sadah** were the
- ii) rebellion took place in 1327 at Gulbarga.
- iii) was the cockpit between the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar rulers.
- iv) The Vemas were the rulers of

- 3) The history of the Deccan during the 14-15th century was one of struggle for supremacy between the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar rulers. Comment in 80 words.

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28.4 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE AFAQIS AND THE DAKHNIS AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE KING

We have seen in Block 5 that nobles played a crucial role not only as consolidators but also as kingmakers in the Sultanate. Every Sultan's interest was to win the loyalty of his nobles. The same tradition continued in the Bahmani kingdom as well. As early as Alauddin Bahman Shah's reign we see as many as three factions: one which helped Alauddin Bahman Shah in establishing an independent kingdom in the Deccan; the other was the Tughluq faction and the third faction comprised of local chiefs and vassals who had personal interests.

From Alauddin Mujahid's reign (1375-78) onwards, a new factor was introduced in the composition of the nobility, i.e. the **Afaqis**. This word means 'universal'—persons who were uprooted and hence did not belong to any region. They were also called **gharibud diyar**, that is, 'strangers'. These Afaqis had migrated from Iran, Transoxiana and Iraq. But it was during Ghiyasuddin Tahamtan's reign, in 1397, that the real clash between the Dakhnis and the Afaqis began when the Sultan appointed many Afaqis to higher posts: for example, Salabat Khan was appointed the governor of Berar, Muhammad Khan **sar-i naubat** and Ahmad Beg Qazwini as **peshwa**. Appointment of the Afaqis to such high posts which were earlier held by the Dakhnis greatly raised dissatisfaction among the old nobility and the Turkish faction under the leadership of Taghalchin. Taghalchin succeeded in reducing their influence as early as 1397 when he successfully conspired the murder of Ghiyasuddin and placed Shamsuddin Dawud II (1397) as a puppet king and assured for himself the post of **Malik Naib** and **Mir Jumla**. It was Ahmad I (1422-36) who for the first time appointed Khalaf Hasan Basri, an Afaqi (with whose help he got the throne), to the highest office of **wakil-i Sultanat** and conferred on him the highest title of **malik-ut tujjar** (prince of merchants). This phenomenal rise was the result of the continuous expression of loyalty shown by the Afaqis compared to the Dakhnis. It was the Afaqi Syed Hussain Badakhohi and others who helped Ahmad I in his escape during his Vijaynagar campaign in the early years of his reign. As a result, Ahmad I recruited a special force of the Afaqi archers. Similar other favours were also showered on them. This policy created great resentment among the Dakhnis. Clashes between these two groups can be seen during Ahmad's Gujarat campaign when, on account of the non-cooperation of the Dakhnis, the Bahmani arms had to face defeat under the leadership of **Malik-ut tujjar**. This gulf widened further during Ahmad II's reign. At the time of the attacks of Khandesh army on account of the non-cooperation of the Dakhnis, only the Afaqis could be despatched under Khalaf Hasan Basri. Humayun Shah (1458-1461) tried to maintain equilibrium between the two factions. During Ahmad III's reign (1461-65 A.D.), the Dakhnis felt that much power was concentrated into the hands of the Afaqis with **Khwaja-i Jahan Turk**, **Malik-ut tujjar** and Mahmud Gawan at the helm of affairs. On the other hand, the Afaqis were dissatisfied because the power which they enjoyed under Ahmad II's reign was greatly reduced under the latter's successor. Mahmud Gawan, the chief minister of Muhammad III (1463-1482), also tried to maintain the equilibrium between the two. As a result, he appointed Malik Hasan as **sar-i lashkar** of Telingana and Fathullah as **sar-i lashkar** of Berar. But Mahmud Gawan himself fell prey to the conspiracy of Zarif-ul Mulk Dakhni and Miftah Habshi. Once the equilibrium was disturbed, the successive weak kings became puppets in the hands of one group or the other.

During Shihabuddin Mahmud's reign (1482-1518), the clash reached its climax. While the king showed his distinct inclination for the Afaqis, the Dakhnis joined hands with the Habshi (Abyssinian) faction. The latter, in 1487, in a desperate bid attempted to kill the king but failed. It resulted in a large-scale massacre of the Dakhnis which continued for three days. All these factional fights weakened the centre. Shihabuddin's reign itself was marred by continuous rebellions and intrigues of Qasim Barid, Malik Ahmad Nizamul Mulk, Bahadur Gilani, etc. Shihabuddin's death (1518) provided these nobles almost a free hand in their provinces. Finally, Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur was the first to claim his independence in 1537. Thus began the physical disintegration of the Bahmani Sultanate.

28.5 CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Bahmanis seem to have copied the administrative structure of the Delhi Sultans. The king was at the helm of affairs, followed by **wakil**, **wazir**, **bakhshi** and **qazi**. Besides, there were **dabir** (secretary), **mufti** (interpreter of law), **kotwal**, **muhtasib** (censor of public morals). **Munihians** (spy) were appointed not only in every corner of their kingdom, but we are told that during Muhammad's reign, **munihians** were posted at Delhi, too.

During Muhammad I's reign, the Bahmani kingdom was divided into four **atraf** or provinces, i.e. Daulatabad, Berar, Bidar and Gulbarga each ruled by a **tarafdar**. Since Gulbarga was the most important province, only the most trusted nobles were appointed who were called **mir naib** (viceroys)—distinct from the governors (**tarafdar**) of other provinces. Later on, as the boundaries of the kingdom expanded, Mahmud Gawan divided the empire into eight provinces. Certain parts of the empire were put under the direct control of the Sultan (**khassa-i Sultani**).

28.6 ARMY ORGANIZATION

The **amir-ul umara** was the commander of the army. The army mainly consisted of soldiers and cavalry. Elephants were also employed. The rulers maintained a large number of bodyguards known as **khassakhel**. Muhammad I is stated to have had four thousand bodyguards. Besides, there were **silahdars** who were in charge of the personal armoury of the king. In times of need, **barbarden** were asked to mobilize troops. Another characteristic feature of the Bahmani army was the use of gunpowder that gave them military advantage.

Niccolo Conti, an Italian traveller, who visited India in the 15th century, writes that their army used javelins, swords, arm-pieces, round-shields, bows and arrows. He adds that they used 'ballistae and bombarding machines as well as siege-pieces'. Duarte Barbosa who visited India during 1500-17 also made similar remarks that they used maces, battle-axes, bows and arrows. He adds: "they [Moorish] ride on high-pommelled saddle.... fight tied to their saddles..... The gentios.... the larger part of them fight on foot, but some on horseback..." Mahmud Gawan streamlined the military administration as well. Earlier, the **tarafdars** had absolute authority to appoint the **qiladars** of the forts. Gawan placed one fort under one **tarafdar's** jurisdiction, the rest of the forts within a province were placed under the central command. To check corruption, he made a rule that every officer should be paid at a fixed rate for every 500 troopers maintained by him. When he was given revenue assignments in lieu of cash, the amount incurred by the officer in the collection of revenue was to be paid to him separately. If he failed to maintain the stipulated soldiers, he had to refund the proportionate amount to the exchequer.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How can we say that conflict between the Afaqis and the Dakhnis ultimately sealed the fate of the Bahmani kingdom? Write in ten lines.

2) Define the following:

- a) Afaqi
- b) Dakhni
- c) Malik-ut tujjar
- d) Munihians

3) What were the major changes brought about by Mahmud Gawan in administration and army organization? Write in 60 words.

28.7 ECONOMY

Mahmud Gawan ordered for systematic measurement of land fixing the boundaries of the villages and towns. Thus, in this regard he was the forerunner of Raja Todar Mal. All this greatly helped the exchequer. First, the income of the empire was ensured and became known in advance; secondly, it also curbed the corruption of the nobles to the minimum, thereby increasing the state's income.

In the Bahmani kingdom, trade and commerce was in a flourishing state. Nikitin, a Russian traveller, who was in the Deccan during 1469-74, provides ample information regarding the commercial activities of Bidar. He says that horses, cloth, silk, and pepper were the chief merchandise. He adds that at Shikhbaludin Peratyr and at Aladinand bazar people assembled in large numbers where trade continued for ten days. He also mentions the Bahmani seaport Mustafabad-Dabul as a centre of commercial activity. Dabul was well-connected not only with the Indian but also with the African ports. Horses were imported from Arabia, Khurasan and Turkestan. Trade and commerce was mostly in the hands of the Hindu merchants. Musk and fur were imported from China.

28.8 SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The social structure of the Bahmanis was cosmopolitan in character. There were Muslims, Hindus, Iranians, Transoxonians, Iraqis and Abyssinians (Habshis). The Portuguese came during the early 16th century. This heterogeneous character becomes more prominent if we look at its linguistic pattern: Persian, Marathi, Dakhni (proto-Urdu), Kannada and Telugu languages were widely spoken in various parts of the kingdom.

Broadly, two classes existed in the society. According to Nikitin, there were poor, and the nobles who were "extremely opulent". He says that "the nobles were carried on their silver beds, preceded by twenty horses caparisoned in gold and followed by three hundred men on horseback and five hundred on foot along with ten torchbearers." Nikitin also gives a graphic account of the grandeur of the Bahmani **wazir**, Mahmud Gawan. He mentions that everyday along with him 500 men used to dine. For the safety of his house alone, everyday 100 armed personnel kept vigilance. In contrast, the general population was poor. Though Nikitin mentions only two classes, there was yet another class—the merchants (the so-called middle class).

The **sufis** were greatly venerated by the Bahmani rulers. Initially, they migrated to the Deccan as religious auxiliaries of the Khaljis and the Tughluqs. The infant Bahmani kingdom required the support of the **sufis** for popular legitimization of their authority. The **sufis** who migrated to the Bahmani kingdom were chiefly of the Chishti, Qadiri and Shattari orders. Bidar emerged as one of the most important centres of the Qadiri order. Shaikh Sirajuddin Junaidi was the first **sufi** to receive the royal favour. The Chishti saints enjoyed the greatest honour. Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz, the famous Chishti saint of Delhi, migrated to Gulbarga in 1402-3. Sultan Feroz granted a number of villages as **inam** for the upkeep of his **khanqah**. But during the later period of his reign dissensions between the two developed on account of the **sufi's** support for the Sultan's brother Ahmad as his successor. It finally led to the expulsion of Gesu Daraz from Gulbarga.

With the large influx of the Afaqis in the Bahmani kingdom, the Shias also found their place under Fazlullah's influence. Ahmad I's act of sending 30,000 silver **tankas** for distribution among the Saiyyids of Karbala in Iraq shows his inclination for the Shia doctrine. The most influential **wazir** of Ahmad III was also a Shia.

Hindu traditions and culture also influenced the Bahmani court. Sultan Feroz's (1397-1422) marriage with a daughter of the royal family of Vijaynagar helped greatly in the Hindu-Muslims cultural harmony. There is a legend that Feroz even once went to Vijaynagar in the guise of a Hindu **faqir**. Even in the most important ceremony like the celebration of **urs**, Hindu influences are to be seen. During the **urs** celebrations, the **Jangam** (the head of the Lingayats of Madhyal in Gulbarga district) would perform the ceremony in typical Hindu fashion—conch-blowing, flower offerings, etc. What is interesting is that the **Jangam** wore Muslim apparel with the usual cap that the Muslim **darwesh** (hermit) used.

You will read about other cultural aspects like architecture, education etc. in Block 8.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Write a note on trade and commerce under the Bahmani rule.

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- 2) Mark right (✓) or wrong (X) against the following statements :
- Nikitin was an Italian traveller who visited India during the 15th century.
 - Under Mahmud Gawan, systematic measurement of the land was done.
 - Gesu Daraz was a famous Suhrawardi saint.
- 3) Discuss Nikitin's observation on the Bahmani society.

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28.9 LET US SUM UP

To sum up we saw how the **amiran-i sadah** gradually succeeded in carving out an independent Bahmani Kingdom. In their formative phase, they were constantly at war with the Vijaynagar; Malwa and Telingana rulers. We have also seen how the clashes between the Afaqis and the Dakhnis ultimately led to the decline of the Bahmani Sultanate. As for the administrative structure, we do not find it much different from that of the Delhi Sultanate with the exception of designations and nomenclatures and Mahmud Gawan's reforms concerning the measurement of land.

28.10 KEY WORDS

Afaqi: (literally 'Universal'; from *afaq*); Newcomers (from Iran, Iraq and Transoxiana)

Amiran Hazarah: nobles of one thousand

Chaudhri: see Block 5

Dakhni: old Deccani nobility

Darwesh: muslim hermit; saint

Iqlim : provinces

Inam: revenue free grants

Jangam: head of the Lingayat sect

Karkun: see Block 5

Khanqah: Muslim monastery

Khassakhel: bodyguards of the Sultan

Malik-ut tujjar : prince of merchants

Mir naib: viceroy

Moorish : Muslim

Mutasarrif: see block 5

Shiq: administrative unit similar to that of a district

Shiqdar: holder of shiq

Silahdar: incharge of the armour

Tarafdar: provincial governors

Wakil: see block 5

Wall : provincial governor; **Iqta** holder

28/11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sec. 28.2
- 2) (i) revenue collectors and military commanders (ii) Bahauddin Gurshasp
(iii) Tungabhadra Doab (iv) Rajahmundry
- 3) See Sub-sec. 28.3.1, 28.3.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 28.4
- 2) See Sec. 28.4, 28.5
- 3) See Sec. 28.5, 28.6

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sec. 28.7
- 2) (i) ✗ (ii) ✓ (iii) ✗
- 3) See Sec. 28.8

EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POWERS: THEORIES

Social scientists differ greatly over the reasons for the emergence of regional powers. Joseph E. Schwartzberg highlighted certain geopolitical and ecological factors behind the instability that marred the Sultanate period.

According to Schwartzberg:

"The key to this progressive decline in the average size and duration of major powers appears to lie in the secularly increasing degree of **serious competition** which major powers had to face from other major powers of comparable strength. Hence there was a long range tendency towards a **rise in the frequency and intensity of wars** between or among major powers throughout the Sultanate period. This would have resulted in increasing instability within the power system as a whole and seriously inhibited the growth potential of all states within the system."

By medieval period, in fact, settlement over the best available agricultural land seems to have almost been completed; this led to intensive agriculture; that in turn gave way to greater intensity of settlement *vis-a-vis* population growth and population pressure. The latter two factors helped greatly in increasing the strength of the army in both ways—the fighting power as well as resistance power. Thus, according to Schwartzberg, geographical features made the conflicts inevitable and contributed to the emergence of regional states.

Richard G. Fox, Bernard Cohn and K.N. Singh have interpreted the emergence of regional powers in socio-political-anthropological model where kinship, clan and lineages were the main organising factors. For Richard Fox, such groups, though served as guarantor or the preserver of the political authority, were also prone to frequent rebellions which led to fragmentation and weakening of the central authority specially when the central control seems to be in doldrums. The Rajput clan-organisation is a glaring example. In Rajputana, these chiefs or **rajas**, organised on the basis of clan, used to control small principalities of the same lineages. You have already read in Unit 9 how closely the Rajput social organisation was knitted through clan, caste and lineages. Their area of influence could be through matrimony and migration of disgruntled sub-lineages. These 'unilineal kin-organisations' performed many political and military functions relating to revenue collection and maintenance of law and order. They used to get 'legitimization' by the state. The 'mandate' of the state was the 'mandate' of the kin allegiance. On account of this 'internal-cohesion' and 'external recognition', their position became so strong at the local level that neither the state nor the clan members could throw them off.

After Timur's invasion, the political vacuum created at the centre provided these chiefs or **rajas** opportunity to strike deep roots at the local level. Thus started internecine warfare throughout the 13-15th century between power centres trying to exploit the situation to their respective interests.

Nature of the Vijaynagar State

We have already discussed in Block 3 Section 8.3 various approaches—feudal, segmentary and integrative—with respect to the Indian polity during 8-13th century. Let us analyse the nature of the Vijaynagar polity within this model.

Segmentary State

Burton Stein regards the Vijaynagar state as a segmentary state (for its characteristic features see Sub-sec. 8.3.2). For him, in the Vijaynagar state, absolute political sovereignty rested with the centre, but in the periphery 'ritual sovereignty' (symbolic control) was in the hands of the **nayakas** and the Brahman commanders. The relationship of these subordinate units—segments—in relation to the central authority was pyramidally arranged. The more far removed a segment was from the centre, the greater its capacity to change loyalty from one power pyramid to another.

Feudal Model

Some scholars try to explain the character of the Vijaynagar state in the backdrop of feudal structure. They argue that the practice of giving fresh land grants to Brahmans

was an important factor which led to the rise of feudal segments. The frequency of such land grants enhanced the position of the Brahmins. As a result, they enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, possessed administrative powers and controlled revenue resources within their settlements. Scholars further argue that since the rulers of Vijaynagar proposed to protect Hindu dharma, it led to the emergence of new Brahmin settlements.

Further, the military need to expand into Tamil region created feudal territories under the control of **Amaranayakas** (warriors) and other high officials. **Amaranayakas** were hereditary holders of land. They paid tribute and rendered military service to the king (like the **samantas** of north India).

The vassals in turn started giving land grants to their subordinates, thus giving way to **sub-infeudation**. The large extent of the empire and the absence of adequate means of transport and communication made it necessary for the rulers to entrust power to these feudal segments for the governance of the empire. In the process of conquest and consolidation, recalcitrant chieftains were subdued and their territory distributed among new chiefs. Nevertheless, some old chiefs were also permitted to continue in the new scheme.

Other Interpretations

N.K. Shastri sees the Vijaynagar state in the light of essentially a Hindu kingdom performing the ideological (religiopolitical) role of the defender of Hindu culture against the Muslims of the Bahmani kingdom and its successor states. From this stems the theory of the militaristic character of the Vijaynagar state. For him, the Vijaynagar state was a war state.

WHY REGIONAL STATES COULD NOT ASSUME IMPERIAL STATUS?

Why these kingdoms remained confined to 'secondary' status and could not assume the 'Imperial' one? In Schwartzberg's terms, why they remained 'Supra-regional powers' and could not reach to the status of 'Pan-Indian powers'? There were certain geopolitical, structural and circumstantial factors behind this. Foremost is their peripheral location. States of Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajputana, Sind, Orissa, Assam and Bengal do not lie in the heartland of the empire to assume the central status. Mountaneous terrain also obstructed their smooth expansion. Kashmir's expansion was mainly obstructed by the inaccessible mountains. Similarly, the increasing aridity of the great Indian desert in the north-west obstructed the growth of Sind and Rajputana kingdoms. Though Malwa and Jaunpur were situated in the core and the most fertile plains, they had 'open-frontiers' surrounded by hostile states. Each state attempted to get control over their rich resources, so constant warfare was the main feature of the regional syndrome which hampered expansion.

Another problem was the paucity of revenue-resources which prevented them to maintain large armies to extend and consolidate their gains. They had very small area under their direct control whose revenue came directly to the state. They had to depend largely on 'intermediaries' or 'chiefs' for their income and supply of armed retainers. To add to this, the revenue collectors (intermediaries) had the tendency to evade taxation. Tributary chiefs also exploited every opportunity to rebel. You have already seen that the tributary chiefs residing on the peripheral area between Malwa and Gujarat

frequently changed sides—sometimes with Malwa, and sometimes with Gujarat as the opportunity arose. Increasing feuds of the Rajputs among their clan members was the main reason why the Rajput state could not assume the 'Pan-India' status. To add to this, unlike Gujarat and Bengal, other regions being land-locked (specially Jaunpur and Malwa), did not have opportunity to develop overseas trade and commerce which further curtailed their income and provided little scope for 'extra' resources required for expansion.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

Muhammad Habib and K.A. Nizami : *Delhi Sultanate*.

A.B. Pandey: *Early Medieval India and Later Medieval India*.

Ishwari Prasad : *Medieval India*.

T.V. Mahalingam: *Administration and Society under Vijaynagar*.

Nilakanta Sastri : *A History of South India*.