

MCQ Question · mcqquestion.com

Administrative and Revenue Terminology of the Delhi Sultanate

Free · Share

Administrative and Revenue Terminology of the Delhi Sultanate

Diwan: a government department in the Delhi Sultanate. Four of them split money, soldiers, words, and faith between separate officials.



Tughlaqabad Fort, built in 1321 CE as a Delhi Sultanate capital. Photo: Shannon.Mathew, Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).

At a glance

The four departments, in one table

01
Revenue

Diwan-i-Wizarat, headed by the wazir.

02
Military

Diwan-i-Arz, headed by the Ariz-i-Mumalik.

03
Correspondence

Diwan-i-Insha, headed by the Dabir-i-Khas.

04
Religious Affairs

Diwan-i-Rasalat, headed by the Sadr-us-Sudur.

KharajThe general land tax on all cultivated land, sometimes up to half the produce.
JizyaA tax on non-Muslim subjects, paid for state protection and exemption from military service.
UshrA lower-rate tax on Muslim landowners: one-tenth of produce, or one-fifth if artificially irrigated.
Khalisa land Territory under the Sultan’s direct control, its revenue bypassing the Iqta system.

The four departments

Must Know

Who ran each department, and what did each one do?

The Delhi Sultanate's central government ran through four main departments. **The wazir headed the Diwan-i-Wizarat.** He tracked land revenue collection and kept records of state income and expenditure. The Ariz-i-Mumalik headed the Diwan-i-Arz. He recruited soldiers, branded army horses, and kept war provisions ready.

- The Dabir-i-Khas headed the Diwan-i-Insha. This department drafted and sent royal letters, to other rulers and to the Sultanate's own officials.
- The Sadr-us-Sudur headed the Diwan-i-Rasalat, overseeing religious grants and endowments. This post was often combined with that of the Qazi-ul-Quzat. He was the Sultanate's chief judicial officer.

Did the central treasury keep all the revenue this system collected?

Not entirely. Land revenue was often assigned to nobles through the Iqta system. Nobles held this land for military service. So revenue did not always reach the central treasury.

Core revenue terms: Kharaj, Jizya, Khams

Must Know

What were the three most tested revenue terms?

Kharaj was the general land tax on all cultivated land. Rates varied by ruler and period, sometimes reaching as much as half the produce. **Jizya** was a specific tax on non-Muslim subjects. In exchange, it bought state protection and exemption from military service. **Khams** was a fixed one-fifth of war booty. The state claimed this as its own share of any campaign's spoils.

Are there variant terms worth knowing alongside these?

Two related terms sometimes come up alongside these three. Kharaj-i-Muwazzaf referred to a fixed cash assessment, as opposed to a variable produce-share rate. Kharaj-i-Muqasama referred to the more common produce-sharing arrangement itself.

Ushr, Zakat, and Khalisa land

Good to Know

How did Ushr and Zakat differ from Kharaj?

Ushr was a distinct, lower-rate parallel tax that applied specifically to Muslim landowners. It was one-tenth of produce on naturally irrigated land. On land needing artificial irrigation, it rose to one-fifth. Zakat was a wholly separate religious obligation on Muslims. It was set at 2.5 percent of wealth above a minimum threshold called nisab. Collectors

used it for charitable purposes. This was a fixed, standard rate. That made it quite distinct from the variable land-produce rates of Kharaj and Ushr.

> **Quick check 1.** Q1. True or False: Ushr and Kharaj were just two names for the same Delhi Sultanate land tax. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

What made Khalisa land different, and why did Alauddin Khilji expand it?

Khalisa land was territory under the Sultan's direct control. Its revenue funded the royal court directly. It did not pass through a noble's own Iqta grant. Alauddin Khilji deliberately expanded Khalisa land around Delhi. He did this to reduce his own reliance on nearby Iqta assignments. That gave the throne a more secure, independent income base close to home.

> **Quick check 2.** Q2. True or False: Khalisa land's revenue went directly to the Sultan, bypassing the Iqta system. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Chroniclers and the circle of justice

Good to Know

What sources describe this system, and what are their limits?

Persian-language histories called tawarikh are a major source for Delhi Sultanate administration, alongside inscriptions and coins. Secretaries, poets, and courtiers wrote these texts. Their authors lived mainly in

Delhi and rarely visited villages. They often wrote for a Sultan's rich rewards. This led them to favour an "ideal" social order based on birthright and gender.

What was the "circle of justice"?

Thirteenth-century writer Fakhr-i Mudabbir described a "circle of justice." Soldiers need salaries. Salaries need peasant revenue. Peasants pay only when a just king keeps them prosperous. This idea gave tawarikh authors a direct reason to advise rulers toward honest governance. Injustice was framed as a threat to the army's own pay. It was not just a threat to the peasantry.

Legacy

Great to Know

What does this four-department design tell us about the Sultanate's administration?

The four-department structure carefully separated money, soldiers, words, and faith into distinct chains of command. No single official handled everything. That kind of specialisation marks a developed bureaucracy for its era. Revenue terms also split cleanly along religious lines.

- Money: Diwan-i-Wizarat, under the wazir, ran revenue and finance.
- Soldiers: Diwan-i-Arz, under the Ariz-i-Mumalik, ran military affairs.
- Kharaj and Jizya: these applied quite differently to Muslims and non-Muslims.
- Ushr: this applied to Muslim landowners specifically. The tax system itself became a record of the state's own religious categories.

Did this vocabulary outlive the Delhi Sultanate?

Much of this terminology outlived the Delhi Sultanate itself. Later Indian administrations, including the Mughals, kept using Kharaj, Jizya, and related terms. They adapted an existing revenue vocabulary rather than inventing a new one from scratch. Alauddin Khilji had already added new departments on top of this base structure. These included a Diwan-i-Riyasat to control market prices. Another, the Mustakhraj, recovered unpaid revenue arrears. See The Khilji Dynasty and Alauddin's Reforms.

Remember: Kharaj, Jizya, and Ushr each applied to a different group, defined partly by religion. A revenue register was, in effect, also a religious and social register. That overlap is exactly why exam questions keep testing these terms against each other.

Exam Edge

What the PYQs keep testing

CAPF (ACs) 2017 asked which pairing of a revenue term and its meaning was NOT correctly matched. The four terms were Khalisa, Mauza, Inam, and Jagir. The trap: a Mauza is simply a basic revenue village, not "rebellious territory."

One real question worth studying

Quick Q&A

Which department handled land revenue, and who led it?

The Diwan-i-Wizarat, led by the wazir. This department tracked land revenue collection and kept records of state income and expenditure.

How did Jizya differ from Kharaj?

Kharaj was the general land tax on all cultivated land. Jizya was a separate tax on non-Muslim subjects. In exchange, it bought state protection and exemption from military service.

Why did Alauddin Khilji expand Khalisa land around Delhi?

To reduce his own reliance on nearby Iqta assignments. This gave the throne a more secure income base close to home.

Did this administrative vocabulary survive the Delhi Sultanate?

Yes. Later Indian administrations, including the Mughals, kept using Kharaj, Jizya, and related terms rather than inventing new ones.

🔗 Related Topics

- **All Medieval History Articles**
- **The Iqta System**
- **Sayyid, Lodi and Sultanate Administration**
- **Feroz Shah Tughlaq**
- **Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq**
- **Muhammad bin Tughlaq**
- **The Khilji Dynasty and Alauddin’s Reforms**

✅ MCQ on Delhi Sultanate Administrative Terminology

🎲 More Medieval History Practice

Practice MCQs

1. The Ariz-i-Mumalik headed which department, responsible for recruiting and paying the army?

A. Diwan-i-Arz

B. Diwan-i-Rasalat

C. Diwan-i-Insha

D. Diwan-i-Wizarat

See answer ↓

2. Why did Alauddin Khilji create Khalisa land directly around Delhi?

A. To reward loyal muqtis with extra Iqtas

B. To settle a dispute between two rival muqtis

C. To fund the construction of Alai Darwaza alone

D. To reduce his own reliance on Iqta assignments near the capital

See answer ↓

3. In Delhi Sultanate revenue terminology, what did khams refer to?

A. A charitable tax on wealth

B. A land tax on Muslim landowners

C. A tax on non-Muslim subjects

D. The state's one-fifth share of war booty

See answer ↓

4. What was the standard rate for zakat, the religious wealth tax on Muslims, distinct from land-produce taxes like kharaj and ushr?

A. One-fifth of war booty

B. 50% of produce

C. 10% of produce

D. 2.5% of qualifying wealth above a minimum threshold

See answer ↓

5. How did Khalisa land differ from land assigned out under the Iqta system?

A. Khalisa land could only be held by Muslim landowners

B. There was no real difference between the two

C. Khalisa land's revenue went directly to the Sultan, bypassing the noble class

D. Khalisa land was reserved exclusively for religious institutions

See answer ↓

6. What distinguished ushr from kharaj under Delhi Sultanate land taxation?

A. Ushr applied specifically to Muslim landowners, at a lower rate than kharaj

B. Ushr applied only to war booty, not land

C. Ushr was collected exclusively in Bengal

D. Ushr and kharaj were simply two names for the exact same tax

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The Ariz-i-Mumalik headed the Diwan-i-Arz, the military department, recruiting soldiers and maintaining war provisions. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** Alauddin Khilji created Khalisa land near Delhi, kept under direct state control, to reduce his own reliance on Iqta assignments in that area. ↑ Q2
3. **D.** Khams was one-fifth of war booty, claimed by the state as its share of any campaign's spoils. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** Zakat was set at 2.5% of qualifying wealth above a minimum threshold (nisab), a fixed rate distinct from the variable land-produce rates of kharaj and ushr. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** Khalisa land's revenue funded the royal court and household directly, bypassing the noble class entirely, unlike Iqta-assigned land which supported nobles in exchange for military service. ↑ Q5
6. **A.** Ushr was a lower-rate parallel tax applying specifically to Muslim landowners, one-tenth of produce on naturally irrigated land or one-fifth on artificially irrigated land. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2

Curated by Arsalan Zuberi · mcqquestion.com

Scan to read online

https://mcqquestion.com/articles/administrative-and-revenue-terminology-of-the-delhi-sultanate/