

22 SEPT

Q) Make a comparative review of the agrarian reforms of Alauddin Khalji and Sher Shah Suri. (20M).

Ans) The land revenue was the most important source of revenue for the medieval kingdoms. While Alauddin Khalji introduced his agrarian reforms for land revenue in early decades of 14th century, Sher Shah Suri introduced it in mid-16th century. Khalji's reforms are known as Masahat system and Suri's reforms as Zabti system.

MASAHAT

- Land revenue was assessed and collected at individual peasant level, with no role for intermediaries.
- Land revenue was fixed at 50% of total produce, along with other taxes like Ghazai and Charai.
- Privileges of intermediaries like Haq-i-Khoti, Kislat-i-Khoti were taken away. They had to pay their own revenue as well, along with taxes.
- ~~For~~ Land revenue could be paid in cash ^{or} Kind, but 50% of land revenue was taken in kind from Doab region.

ZABTI

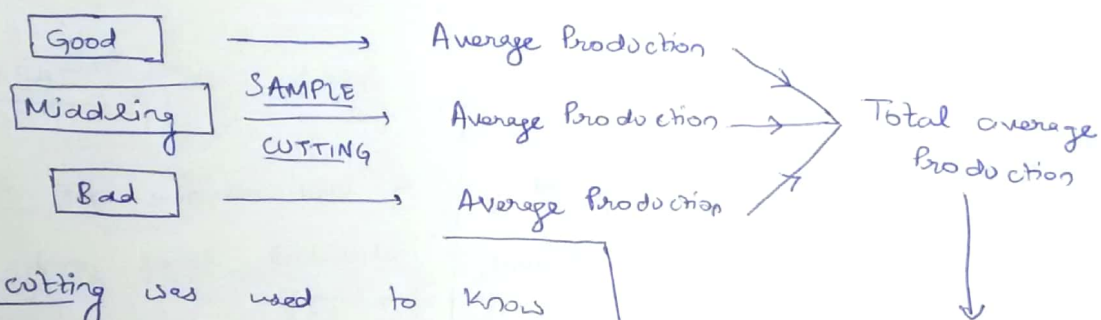
- Land revenue was assessed at individual level, and collected at village level.
- Fixed at 1/3rd of total produce. Additional taxes were Emergency tax in case of help for crop failures.
- Land revenue was collected from village headmen and Patwaris, who were entitled for 10% of revenue as their share.
- Paid in both cash ^{or} Kind, but cash was more preferred.

- Measurement of land was done with unit: 1 bigha = 20 biswa.

- Bigha and Biswa continued, with Gaj-i-Sikandari as unit, lower than biswa.

Moreover, Zabti system of Sher Shah Suri had many more unique elements as well:

- Land was surveyed on basis of Good, Middling and Bad; and revenue was the average of all three productions.



- Sample cutting was used to know the average production of agriculture field.

- Official Price list was maintained, which were the market prices prevailing at Capital, known as Rez. It was used to convert land revenue to cash.

- Taccavi loans were provided to farmers in times of crop failures and even land revenue was remitted.

- Cultivation was also encouraged by land revenue holidays.

- Peasants were made to sign Kubuliyat to accept their responsibility for revenue, while a Patta was given to them

in return for their services.

In consequences as well, both the systems failed to raise the standards of farmers. While the treasury of Khalji was always full, but the fear of land revenue among farmers was such that they even sold their wives and children to pay it. Agriculture got stagnated, and Masahat system put heavy burden of taxes on farmers.

Similarly, Zabti system was more favourable for farmers with more good land, while losses were faced by those with more bad land. It also resulted in more corruption due to intermediaries, Swai's continuous campaigns, distant official price list etc.

It was both of their efforts, which were further modified by Akbar during Mughal rule.