

## **Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials**

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**Subject: History**

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**Paper Title: History of the Marathas (1630-1818)**

**Unit: I Rise of the Maratha Power**

**Module Name: Civil Administration of Shivaji**

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### **Notes**

#### **Civil Administration of Chhatrapati Shivaji**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

Shivaji was not only a military genius but also an administrative genius par excellence. Like the French monarch Napoleon Bonaparte after him, he was a great builder and organizer of civil institutions which greatly conduced to the success of the movements initiated by him. These institutions enabled the Maratha country to pass almost unscathed through stress and strain which overwhelmed the Maratha state soon after his death and helped to reassert its independence after a twenty- year struggle against the forces of Aurangzeb.

Indeed, Shivaji was a despot but he was an enlightened despot, who had the good of his people at his heart. The administration was carried out in accordance with the ancient Hindu principles of polity as embodied in the Sanskrit treatises. A shrewd statesman that he was, he introduced improvised institutions in the country so as to promote the wellbeing of his people and give stability to his kingdom. It may be noted that the institutions that he created were all the outcome of his own genius without any guide or example before him.

##### **CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION**

In the task of administration Shivaji was assisted by a council of eight ministers, the famous *Ashrapradhan Mandal*. The council had grown out of the set of four heads of administrative departments provided to him by his father when he had visited Bangalore

sometime in 1642. As his kingdom expanded, he made additions to it, till the number stood at eight.

The *Ashtapradhan Mandal* was not a cabinet in the true sense of the term. Like Louis XIV of France and Frederick the Great of Prussia after him, Shivaji was his own prime minister with all the reins of administration in his own hands. The ministers were no more than his secretaries with no power to dictate his policy. Yet unlike Aurangzeb he left them sufficient initiative to work out the details of the policy initiated by himself and seldom interfered with their day to day work. Though their function was purely advisory, Shivaji never reduced them to the status of clerks as did Aurangzeb. That explains why Shivaji's administration could function smoothly and uninterruptedly even during his long absences. The council functioned at the will of the *Raja* and had no independent existence apart from him. No doubt the Peshwas position was superior than that of other ministers, but this was because he was closer to the king's person and enjoyed more of his confidence, the other ministers were in no sense his subordinates.

### **ASHTAPRADHAN MANDAL**

#### ***Peshwa or Mukhya Pradhan or Prime Minister***

His principle duties were to supervise the general administration of the kingdom, to keep peace among other officers so as to promote harmony in administration and to represent the king in his absence. His annual salary was 15,000 hons.

#### ***The Amatya or Mujumdar or Finance Minister***

He had to look after and check all accounts of public income and expenditure and keep the king constantly informed of the finances of the kingdom. His annual salary was 12,000 hons. The other ministers received 10,000.

#### ***Mantri or Waqianavis or the Chronicler***

He was a kind of Home Minister and not a mere chronicler as Jadunath Sarkar would have us believe. In his capacity as a chronicler he had to keep a day to day record of the king's doings and activities as also of important incidents and happenings. He was to keep a watch over king's invitation list, meals, companions etc. so as to guard against murder plots.

#### ***Sachiv or Shuru Navis or Superintendent***

It was his duty to see that all royal letters were drafted in the proper style and to write the words '*shuru shud*' which means here begins at the top of each letter. Annaji Datto was Shivaji's famous *Sachiv*.

#### ***Sumant or Dabir or Foreign Minister***

He was the king's advisor on foreign relations and on the questions of war and peace. It was his business to collect intelligence about foreign states and pass it on to the king. He had to receive and dismiss envoys from foreign states and maintain dignity of the state abroad.

### ***Senapati or Sarnaubat or Defence Minister***

He was in Charge of recruitment, organization and discipline of the army. Though the *Sarnaubat* or commander in chief of the Cavalry was made the *senapati*, the commander-in-chief of the infantry was not. Hambirrao Mohite was Shivaji's *senapati* at the time of his coronation.

### ***Pandit Rao or Danadhyaksha or Religious head***

His duty was to select and reward learned Brahmins on behalf of the king, to decide religious questions and caste disputes, to punish impiety and heresy and to order penances. He was the judge of Canon law, the royal almoner and censor of public morals all rolled into one.

### ***Nyayadhish or the Chief Justice***

He headed the department of justice and tried both civil and criminal cases according to the Hindu law. He endorsed all the judicial decisions specially about right to land village headship etc.

Besides, there was a class of *Sabnis* who drew up the pay bills, *Chitnis* who wrote replies to all diplomatic letters, *Karkhanis* who were the store keepers and several others. Under Shivaji there was no distinction between civilians and the military. Everybody except the *Panditrao* and *Nyayadhish*, had to fight whenever called upon to do so.

## **PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

Shivaji's kingdom was divided into four provinces and each was placed under a governor of proven ability

**Northern Province** - included the territories of Dang, Baglan, the koli country south of Surat, Konkan north of Bombay and Deccan plateau south of Poona. Moro Trimbak Pingle, the Peshwa was placed in charge.

**Southern Province** – It included the territories of Konkan south of Bombay, Sawantwadi and north Canara post. It was placed under the overall charge of Annaji Datto.

**South Eastern Province** - It included Satara and Kolhapur districts of Deccan plateau, the districts of Belgaum and Dharwad to Kopal, west of the Tungabhadra river in Karnataka. Dattaji Pant was placed in charge of this province.

**Karnatak-Jinji** – The recently conquered lands extending from the Tungabhadra opposite Kopal to Velhore were organized into a separate province. It was held by an army of occupation.

Though these provinces were placed under overall charge of the ministers, the actual administration was carried out by district officers called the *Subhadars*, assisted by an establishment of *Mujumdar*, *Hawaldar*, *Chitnis*, *Phadnis*, *Potnis* and other clerks, appointed by the Central authority. Shivaji took special care in appointing district officers.

The provinces were called *Prants*, which were further divided into *Taraf* or *Mahal*. The lowest unit of administration was the village which managed its own affairs under the *Patil*, *Kulkarni* and the *Chougula*. Shivaji did not disturb the village Government but expected from them loyal services for the peace and order he assured them.