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Research Article

Provincial Mints as Instruments of Empire: State Formation and Economic Integration in Mughal India (A Case Study of Suba Bihar, 1580–1707)

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Abstract

This study examines the operation of provincial mints (*dar al-darb*) in *Suba* Bihar during the classic period of the Mughal Empire, spanning from the administrative reorganizations of Akbar in 1580 to the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. Traditionally, Mughal numismatic history has focused on the central mints of Delhi, Agra, and Lahore as the primary drivers of imperial monetization. By analyzing the administrative, fiscal, and economic functions of the mints at Patna and Rajmahal, this paper argues that provincial mints were not merely mechanical replicas of the center, but active instruments of state formation and economic integration. The establishment of a unified, high-purity tri-metallic currency system the silver *rupiya*, gold *muhar*, and copper *dam* served a dual purpose: it facilitated the extraction and transmission of agricultural surplus from the fertile Bihari hinterland to the imperial treasury, and it integrated regional agrarian markets into the expanding Indian Ocean commercial network. Drawing upon contemporary Persian chronicles such as the Ain-i-Akbari and Akbarnama, alongside English and Dutch factory records and extant numismatic evidence, this study demonstrates that the expansion of monetization in Bihar fundamentally transformed the region's economic landscape. The proliferation of Mughal coinage progressively displaced localized barter networks, standardized transactional practices across diverse markets, and reduced regional transaction costs. More significantly, the integration of Bihar into a uniform monetary regime strengthened fiscal extraction, facilitated commercial expansion, and reinforced Mughal authority over a strategically sensitive and politically volatile frontier. By linking monetary circulation with processes of state formation, the paper argues that coinage functioned not merely as an economic medium but as a crucial instrument of imperial consolidation and governance.

Keywords

Mughal Empire, Suba Bihar, Provincial Mints, Numismatics, State Formation

1. Introduction

The expansion of the Mughal Empire in the late sixteenth century was as much an administrative and fiscal triumph as it was a military conquest. When Emperor Akbar institutionalized the imperial administrative structure in 1580, dividing his vast domains into twelve subas (provinces), he confronted the monumental task of integrating vastly disparate regional economies into a centralized, coherent policy. Viewed

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through the lens of political sociology, this transition demanded that the empire shift away from a reliance on mere *despotic power* the top-down capacity to arbitrarily extract resources via military intimidation toward what Michael Mann conceptualizes as *infrastructural power*. For Mann, infrastructural power represents the logistical capacity of the state to routinely penetrate civil society, institutionalize its presence, and coordinate socio-economic relations across its territory. Central to the expansion of this infrastructural power was the creation of a standardized, uniform currency system. Historians such as Irfan Habib [1] and Shireen Moosvi [2] have highlighted the highly centralized nature of the Mughal currency system. Under the policy of free minting, merchants, officials, and sarrafs (money changers) could bring bullion or foreign coins to the imperial mint (dar al-darb) and have them converted into Mughal coins by paying a small minting fee (mahsul-i dar al-darb) [3]. However, this focus on the central minting system has often overlooked the important role of provincial mints, which acted as localized structural engines that helped strengthen Mughal authority and integrate regional economies into the empire.

This article offers a comprehensive case study of the provincial mints within Suba Bihar from 1580 to 1707. Strategically situated along the fertile Gangetic corridor, Bihar occupied a crucial geopolitical niche. It served as the gateway to Bengal and the eastern frontiers, a major hub for high-value agrarian commodities (particularly saltpeter, opium, and textiles), and a region notorious for its turbulent local chieftains (zamindars) [4]. By exploring the establishment and operation of the Patna mint, this paper demonstrates how the Mughal state utilized localized monetization as a form of infrastructural penetration to advance state formation, streamline revenue collection, and weave regional economic networks into the larger imperial and global commercial systems of the seventeenth century.

2. The Geopolitical and Economic Landscape of Suba Bihar

To understand the importance of imperial mints in Bihar, it is necessary to examine the province’s geographical and economic significance. Bihar was formally established as a suba (province) in 1580 after Akbar’s successful campaigns against the remaining Afghan forces led by Daud Khan Karrani [5]. The region was known for its rich agricultural production and occupied an important position in regional and long-distance trade networks.

Suba Bihar occupied a strategic position within the Mughal Empire's overland and riverine trade networks [6]. Situated along the Ganges River trade corridor that connected North and Central India with Bengal, Bihar functioned as a crucial commercial intermediary. The provincial mint (Taksal) at Patna played a vital role in monetizing regional and long-distance trade by supplying standardized Mughal currency. Patna was also linked to European trading factories and local merchant guilds engaged in the production and export of valuable commodities such as saltpeter, opium, and textiles [7]. Through its integration with the commercial networks of Suba Bengal, Bihar facilitated the movement of goods from the interior of the subcontinent to the ports of the Bay of Bengal, thereby connecting inland markets with the Indian Ocean and wider global maritime trade system. Consequently, Bihar served not only as an administrative province but also as a significant node in the economic and monetary infrastructure of the Mughal Empire.

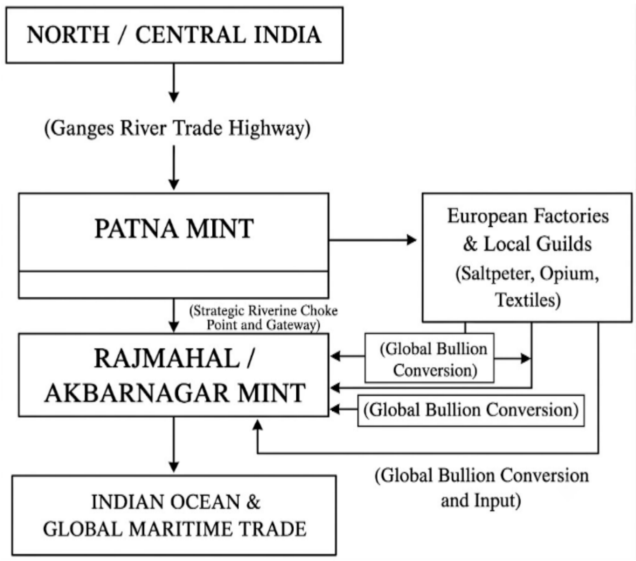

Figure 1. *Mint Network in Bihar province under Mughal (1707–1857).*

The Ganges River acted as a natural trade superhighway, connecting the upper-Gangetic plains with the deltaic ports of Bengal. Patna, the administrative headquarters of the suba, rapidly evolved into one of the premier commercial emporiums of early modern South Asia. By the early seventeenth century, foreign travelers like Ralph Fitch (1586) and Peter Mundy (1632) lauded Patna as a bustling metropolis overflowing with merchants from Central Asia, Persia, Armenia, and later, agents of the English and Dutch East India Companies [8].

Bihar’s economic vitality rested on two closely connected pillars: a strong agrarian economy and a flourishing commercial sector [9]. The fertile alluvial plains of the Ganga basin produced abundant harvests of rice, wheat, pulses, and sugarcane, making agriculture the foundation of the provincial economy. This high level of agricultural productivity generated a substantial agrarian surplus, which provided a stable source of land revenue (*mal*) for the Mughal state [10]. The steady flow of revenue from the countryside enabled the imperial administration to sustain its military establishment, support provincial governance, and maintain administrative control over eastern India. As a result, Bihar emerged as one of the most prosperous and revenue-rich provinces of the Mughal Empire.

3. Trade Expansion, Currencies, and Imperial Integration

Alongside its agricultural wealth, Bihar occupied a prominent position in regional and international commerce. The province was renowned for the production of high-quality saltpeter, a crucial ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder and a commodity that was in great demand among both Asian and European powers [11]. Bihar also produced premium opium and a variety of cotton textiles, including fine calicoes, which were traded extensively across the subcontinent and overseas markets. These commodities attracted merchants, bankers, and foreign trading companies, particularly to commercial centers such as Patna. The expansion of trade increased the circulation of money and linked Bihar to wider economic networks stretching from North India to Bengal and beyond [12]. Consequently, the province's growing commercial activity created a strong demand for standardized coinage and efficient monetary institutions, highlighting the importance of imperial mints in facilitating trade, taxation, and state control.

However, integrating this wealth into the imperial core was highly problematic. The internal hinterlands of Bihar were dominated by recalcitrant, semi-autonomous *zamindars* (such as the Ujjainiyas of Bhojpur and the chieftains of Kokra) who frequently resisted imperial taxation [13]. Furthermore, prior to 1580, the region was saturated with a confusing medley of degraded regional currencies left behind by the Delhi Sultanate, the Suris, and the independent Sultans of Bengal [14]. For the Mughal state to effectively harness Bihar's wealth, it had to eliminate this monetary chaos and replace it with a reliable, state-controlled medium of exchange.

4. Institutional Framework of the Mughal Provincial Mint

The establishment of the imperial mint at Patna was the administrative mechanism deployed to achieve this monetary homogenization. The Mughal mint system operated on the principle of open or "free" minting, meaning the state did not monopolize coin production; rather, it regulated the quality and standard of coins while allowing any domestic or foreign entity to mint bullion [15]. The internal hierarchy of the Patna mint mirrored the central mints described by Abu'l-Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* [16]. The smooth functioning of the *dar al-darb* depended on several key specialized officials: The administration of a Mughal mint was organized through a hierarchy of specialized officials who ensured the efficient functioning of the mint and the maintenance of imperial standards. At the head stood the *Darogha-i Dar al-Darb* (Mint Superintendent), usually a high-ranking imperial officer (*mansabdar*), who exercised overall administrative control and ensured compliance with imperial regulations concerning weight, purity, and coin production. Assisting him was the *Sairafi* (Assayer or Sarraf), who examined the quality and fineness of incoming bullion and foreign coins to determine the amount of pure metal available for re-minting [17]. The *Amin* (Umpire or Arbitrator) supervised transactions and safeguarded fairness between mint officials, merchants, and state regulations, particularly in matters relating to weights and minting charges. Financial records were maintained by the *Mushrif* (Accountant), who kept detailed accounts of bullion received, coins produced, and duties collected by the state [18]. Quality control was entrusted to the *Chashnigir* (Tester), who carefully examined and tested metal alloys before coins were struck, ensuring that the final product met the prescribed imperial standards. Together, these officials formed an integrated administrative structure that guaranteed the reliability, uniformity, and credibility of Mughal coinage.

The state sustained the mint's operations by levying a matrix of fees collectively known as *mahsul-i dar al-darb*. This included charges for refining (*dar-al-shafa*), die-cutting (*hakkaki*), and a state seigniorage tax [19]. The Patna mint achieved great prominence because of its exceptional structural consistency. Numismatic evidence demonstrates that from the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb, the silver *rupiya* minted at Patna consistently adhered to the imperial standard, maintaining a weight of approximately 178–180 grains and a silver fineness exceeding 96 percent [20]. This remarkable consistency reflected the Mughal state's strict regulation of minting practices and its commitment to preserving the integrity of the currency [21]. As a result, Patna's coinage earned a reputation for reliability and purity, gaining widespread acceptance among merchants, bankers, and state officials. The trust inspired by this high-quality currency facilitated commercial exchanges across the Gangetic valley and beyond, significantly reducing transaction costs, minimizing the need for repeated assaying, and promoting the smooth flow of long-distance trade within the Mughal Empire [22].

The Rajmahal mint came into existence between 1592 and 1595 when Raja Man Singh, the Mughal Viceroy of Bihar and Bengal, selected the strategic town of Agmahal as his provincial capital. Situated on the western bank of the Ganges River, the site commanded the Teliagarhi Pass historically known as the *"Key to Bengal"* which made it a crucial geopolitical choke point for controlling the eastern frontier. Man, Singh renamed the fortified city Akbarnagar in honor of the emperor and immediately established an imperial mint (*Taksal*) to signal that the independent Afghan Sultanate of Bengal was dead. While its operations slowed down in 1610 when the administrative capital was temporarily shifted to Dhaka to fight maritime pirates, the mint entered its golden age between 1639 and 1660 under Prince Shah Shuja, who restored Rajmahal as the seat of government, causing coin production to peak before its official closure around 1661 under Emperor Aurangzeb. [23]

Administratively, the Rajmahal mint served as a potent instrument of Mughal state formation, transforming military conquest into permanent bureaucratic control. By continuously striking coins (*Sikka*) stamped with the titles of the reigning emperor, the mint visually projected imperial sovereignty across a volatile frontier routinely prone to rebellion. It effectively dismantled the economic autonomy of defiant local chieftains by suppressing archaic, debased regional currencies and enforcing the uniform tri-metallic standard dictated by Delhi. Furthermore, this localized currency hub allowed the Mughal state to rapidly convert regional revenues into standardized, high-purity silver rupees, which were vital for paying administrative staff, maintaining garrison troops at the fort, and provisioning the riverine war fleets necessary to defend the eastern provinces.

Economically, the mint functioned as a transformative engine that integrated the regional agrarian wealth of Bihar and Bengal into global commercial networks. Operating under the Mughal "open-minting" policy, it served as the primary destination for European trading companies, such as the English and Dutch East India Companies, who brought massive inflows of American silver bullion to be melted down and coined into legal tender. This continuous injection of silver provided the precise liquidity required for Akbar's cash-based *Zabt* revenue system, enabling regional peasants to sell their grain at river ports, convert it into standard rupees, and pay their land taxes directly to the state. The massive scale of this monetary conversion attracted the elite banking house of Jagat Seth, who established a powerful presence beside the mint, utilizing the fresh coinage to issue *hundis* (bills of exchange) that tied the markets of eastern India directly to the central imperial treasury. [24]

5. Monetary Policy, Free Minting, and Imperial Standardization

One of the principal reasons for establishing an imperial mint in Bihar was to enforce the Mughal Empire's standardized tri-metallic currency system and integrate the province more effectively into the imperial economy. Through the Patna mint, the Mughal state ensured the regular production and circulation of gold, silver, and copper coinage according to uniform imperial standards. This monetary standardization facilitated taxation, expanded commercial transactions, and strengthened state control over the province's rapidly growing economy [25].

The highest denomination in this system was the Gold *Muhar*, generally weighing around 170–175 grains. Although minted in relatively limited quantities at Patna, it played an important role in high-value transactions, imperial gifts (*nazrana*), diplomatic exchanges, and the accumulation of elite wealth [26]. The Silver *Rupiya* formed the backbone of both regional commerce and state finance. Produced in large quantities by the Patna mint, the *rupiya* became the principal medium of exchange for trade, revenue payments, and commercial transactions [27]. *The Mughal Empire*. A distinctive feature of Mughal monetary policy was its sophisticated management of coin quality and depreciation. Newly minted coins, known as *sikka* or *taza sikka*,[28] enjoyed the highest market value because they fully conformed to imperial standards of weight and purity [29]. As coins circulated and gradually experienced wear, they were reclassified as *chalani* (current coin) or *khazana* (treasury-acceptable coin), which could be accepted at a slight discount [30]. Once a coin's weight fell below the prescribed standard, it ceased to function as legal tender and was valued only according to its bullion content [31]. This carefully regulated system preserved public confidence in Mughal currency, minimized fraud and debasement, and ensured the continued reliability of coinage throughout the empire. Through the operation of mints such as Patna, the Mughal state successfully maintained monetary stability while facilitating the expansion of trade and revenue collection across eastern India.

This dynamic policy had far-reaching ramifications for Suba Bihar. It compelled merchants, European corporations, and local agrarian brokers to routinely channel their older currencies and imported foreign bullion back into the Patna mint to convert them into high-value *sikka* rupees [32]. This policy ensured that the provincial market was never choked with debased specie, providing an enduring foundation of price stability that fostered commercial trust.

6. The Mint as a Fiscal Conduit: Monetizing Revenue Extraction

The operational schedule of the Patna mint was deeply intertwined with the fiscal calendar of the Mughal state. Under the *zabt* system, the comprehensive revenue assessment framework refined under the supervision of Raja Todar Mal, Akbar's renowned finance minister, land revenue (*mal*) was systematically assessed in monetary terms on the basis of measured landholdings and the average agricultural output of the preceding ten years [33]. Unlike earlier practices that often relied on payments in kind, the Mughal state increasingly preferred and in many instances required the payment of revenue in silver coin [34]. This policy linked agrarian production directly to the monetary economy and made access to currency an essential requirement for cultivators.

The growing demand for cash revenue brought about a profound transformation in the rural economy of Bihar. Peasants were compelled to market a larger portion of their agricultural produce in order to obtain the silver coinage needed to meet their fiscal obligations [35]. As a result, local barter-based exchanges gradually gave way to monetized transactions, while village economies became increasingly integrated into regional market networks [36]. Merchants, money changers, and grain dealers assumed a more prominent role in facilitating the conversion of agricultural surplus into cash, thereby stimulating commercial activity throughout the province [37]. This process of market expansion and monetization not only strengthened the Mughal revenue system but also increased the circulation of imperial coinage, reinforcing the importance of provincial mints such as Patna in sustaining Bihar's economic integration into the wider Mughal Empire.

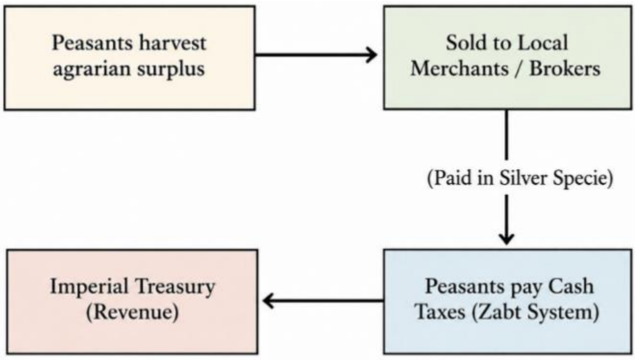

Figure 2. *Agrarian Surplus, Market Exchange, and Revenue Flow under the Mughal Zabt System.*

7. Revenue Liquidation and Imperial Integration

Under this monetized revenue regime, peasants could no longer satisfy their fiscal obligations merely by surrendering a portion of their harvest to local officials. Instead, they were compelled to sell their agricultural surplus to intermediaries such as *beparis* (brokers) and merchant capitalists, who purchased these goods and paid for them in silver coin. The silver thus obtained enabled cultivators to meet the state's revenue demands, while the collected taxes flowed into the provincial treasury. In turn, tax officials accumulated large quantities of diverse coinage, including worn, foreign, and non-standard coins circulating in the region [38]. To maintain the integrity and uniformity of the monetary system, this accumulated specie was periodically sent to the Patna mint, where it was assayed, melted, and re-struck into standardized imperial rupees (*sikka* or *khazana*), thereby ensuring a reliable currency supply for taxation, trade, and state administration [39].

The provincial mint thus functioned as a giant fiscal funnel, converting the raw agricultural energy of Bihar into highly mobile, standardized state wealth. This liquified wealth could then be easily transmitted to the central imperial treasury or redirected to fund the empire's distant military campaigns, such as Aurangzeb's decades-long wars in the Deccan [40]. Furthermore, the mint played an essential role in subjugating the rebellious regional *zamindars*. When local chieftains were broken militarily by the *Subahdar* (Governor) of Bihar, their tributary payments (*peshkash*) were calibrated in imperial rupees. The mandatory conversion of their plundered local treasures into standardized Patna coinage served as a potent, tangible symbol of their integration and submission to the Mughal state [41].

8. Economic Integration: Connecting Regional Markets with Global Trade Networks

During the seventeenth century, the significance of the Patna mint increased considerably as Bihar became more deeply integrated into regional and global trade networks [42]. This expansion was driven largely by the growing European demand for Indian commodities, particularly saltpeter, which was a vital ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder [43]. Trading companies such as the English East India Company (EIC) and the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) became major purchasers of Bihar's saltpeter, while also engaging in the trade of opium, cotton textiles, and other valuable products [44]. As international demand for these commodities grew, Bihar emerged as an important center of commercial activity, linking inland production zones with global markets [45].

Since European merchants possessed few manufactured goods that were attractive to South Asian consumers, they financed their purchases primarily by importing large quantities of silver bullion, Spanish dollars, and Japanese silver [46]. However, foreign coins were not generally accepted as legal tender in Bihar's markets [47]. To purchase saltpeter, textiles, and other goods from local producers, European traders first had to convert their bullion and foreign specie into standardized Mughal rupees. The Patna mint played a crucial role in this process by assaying, refining, and re-minting imported silver into imperial coinage that conformed to Mughal standards of weight and purity [48]. In doing so, the mint served as a vital bridge between global flows of precious metals and the regional economy of Bihar, facilitating trade, increasing the circulation of currency, and strengthening the province's integration into the wider commercial world of the early modern era.

9. The Operational Friction of Foreign Trade and Global Integration

The records of the English factory at Patna (established permanently in the 1650s) and the Dutch factory at Kanjalihati provide dense documentation of their heavy reliance on the Patna mint. This process was complex and fraught with systemic friction:

Table 1. *Key Dynamics of Bullion Conversion and Mint Operations at the Patna Mint.*

Dimension	Description / Dynamics
The Sarraf Monopoly	Europeans rarely dealt with the mint directly; they sold bullion to indigenous sarrafs who managed the refining and minting process at Patna [49].
The "Sikka" Premium	*Sarrafs* leveraged the state's *sikka* policy, demanding steep discounts on foreign silver while charging high premiums for fresh Mughal rupees [50].
Seasonal Delays	During peak trade seasons, the Patna mint became severely bottlenecked. Delays in stamping coins could stall European procurement for months, threatening their shipping schedules in Hugli and Balasore [51].

To avoid the costs, delays, and administrative procedures associated with converting foreign bullion into Mughal currency, the English and Dutch trading companies frequently sought special privileges from the provincial authorities of Bihar and the Mughal imperial court. They repeatedly petitioned the *subahdars* and imperial officials for direct access to the Patna mint on favorable terms, hoping to speed up the conversion of their imported silver into rupees and reduce transaction expenses [52]. In some cases, they even requested permission to establish their own coin-stamping or minting facilities, which would have allowed them to process silver independently and conduct trade more efficiently.

The Mughal state, however, consistently rejected such demands. Imperial authorities regarded the right to mint coinage as a fundamental symbol of sovereignty and an essential instrument of fiscal control [53]. Allowing foreign merchants to issue or stamp their own coins would have weakened the state's authority over the monetary system, reduced its ability to regulate currency standards, and potentially diminished revenue earned through minting fees. By refusing these requests, the Mughal administration ensured that all imported bullion passed through officially sanctioned mints such as Patna, where it could be carefully assayed, taxed, and converted into standardized imperial coinage [54]. This policy not only protected the integrity of the Mughal currency system but also reinforced the empire's control over trade, taxation, and the circulation of money within its territories.

The enormous quantities of global silver flowing through the Patna mint had a profound impact on Bihar's economy and society. The continuous influx of bullion increased the circulation of money, stimulated commercial activity, and contributed to a gradual rise in prices in many local markets [55]. As trade expanded and monetary transactions became more common, indigenous bankers, money changers, and merchant families acquired greater economic influence and social prestige by facilitating the movement of credit, currency, and goods across the region [56]. At the same time, even the most remote rural communities became increasingly integrated into wider market networks. Peasants who produced grain, saltpeter, textiles, and other commodities were no longer participating solely in local exchanges; instead, their economic activities became indirectly connected to global commercial circuits. Through the operations of the Patna mint and the expanding trade in Bihar's exports, the province was linked to an international network that stretched from the silver mines of Potosí to the commercial centers and battlefields of Western Europe, illustrating the deep integration of Bihar into the early modern global economy.

10. Discussion

The case of the Patna mint demonstrates that provincial mints in the Mughal Empire were far more than institutions for coin production; they functioned as critical instruments of state formation, fiscal consolidation, and economic integration. While traditional scholarship has often emphasized the centralized nature of the Mughal monetary system, the experience of Suba Bihar reveals that imperial authority was exercised through a network of strategically located provincial mints that translated central policies into local realities [57]. Through the regulation of coinage, enforcement of monetary standards, and facilitation of revenue collection, the Patna mint became an indispensable mechanism through which the Mughal state extended its authority over a politically fragmented and economically diverse frontier province.

The establishment of a standardized currency regime played a decisive role in strengthening Mughal sovereignty in Bihar. Prior to Mughal consolidation, the region witnessed the circulation of multiple currencies inherited from the Delhi Sultanate, the Sur rulers, and the Bengal Sultanate. Such monetary diversity created obstacles for taxation, commerce, and administrative control. By introducing uniformly regulated gold, silver, and copper coinage, the Patna mint eliminated much of this monetary fragmentation and integrated Bihar into the wider imperial economy [58]. The authority to define weight, purity, and legal tender status remained firmly in the hands of the state, making coinage a visible expression of imperial power. In this sense, the mint functioned not merely as an economic institution but also as a political symbol of Mughal sovereignty.

The findings also highlight the close relationship between monetization and revenue extraction. The Mughal state's preference for cash taxation under the *zabt* system transformed the economic structure of rural Bihar. Peasants were increasingly compelled to participate in markets in order to obtain silver currency required for revenue payments [59]. Consequently, agricultural production became more closely linked to commercial exchange, while village economies were integrated into broader regional networks of merchants, money changers, and financiers. The Patna mint served as the institutional center of this process by ensuring a stable supply of standardized currency and by converting diverse forms of bullion and coinage into acceptable imperial money [60]. Thus, monetization was not merely an economic development but a deliberate fiscal strategy that enhanced the state's capacity to mobilize resources.

At the same time, the mint played a crucial role in consolidating Mughal authority over local power structures. Bihar's history during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was marked by the resistance of influential *zamindars* and regional chieftains. The requirement that tribute payments, land revenue, and official transactions be conducted in imperial coinage subjected local elites to the monetary authority of the state [61]. The conversion of locally accumulated wealth into standardized Mughal currency symbolized the incorporation of regional power holders into the imperial order. Therefore, the mint contributed not only to fiscal integration but also to the political integration of Bihar within the Mughal Empire.

The study further demonstrates that provincial mints occupied a strategic position at the intersection of regional and global economic processes. The rapid expansion of European trade in the seventeenth century generated an unprecedented influx of silver bullion into the Indian subcontinent. Through the operations of the Patna mint, this foreign silver was absorbed into the Mughal monetary system and transformed into standardized rupees suitable for local circulation [62]. The mint thereby acted as a critical intermediary connecting the agrarian and commercial economy of Bihar with the broader circuits of global trade. The province's producers of saltpeter, textiles, and opium became indirectly linked to international markets, while the Mughal state benefited from increased monetary circulation and commercial growth.

The refusal of Mughal authorities to grant European companies independent minting privileges further underscores the political significance of monetary control. By insisting that all bullion pass through officially regulated mints, the state preserved its monopoly over currency production and prevented foreign merchants from acquiring an autonomous monetary presence within the empire [63]. This policy reflected a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between coinage and sovereignty. Control over minting enabled the Mughal administration to maintain currency quality, collect minting revenues, and reinforce the legitimacy of imperial authority in both domestic and international trade.

Ultimately, the experience of Suba Bihar illustrates that provincial mints were foundational institutions in the construction and maintenance of the Mughal imperial order. They facilitated the extraction of agrarian surplus, standardized commercial transactions, integrated regional markets, and connected local economies to global flows of bullion and trade. The Patna mint thus exemplifies how monetary institutions functioned as instruments of governance, enabling the Mughal state to transform territorial conquest into durable administrative control and economic integration. Far from being peripheral establishments, provincial mints constituted essential pillars of imperial power, linking state formation, fiscal administration, and commercial expansion in early modern South Asia.

11. Conclusion

Between 1580 and 1707, the experience of Suba Bihar demonstrated that provincial mints were fundamental instruments of Mughal governance, extending far beyond the basic production of coins. The Patna mint played a pivotal role in strengthening imperial authority by enforcing a standardized monetary system, facilitating efficient revenue collection, and integrating the province into the wider administrative framework of the empire. Through the circulation of reliable and uniform coinage, the mint drastically reduced transaction costs, enhanced commercial confidence, and directly supported the operation of the *zabt* land revenue system. By successfully converting agrarian surplus into monetized revenue and ensuring a steady flow of high-quality currency, the institution enabled the Mughal state to exercise tight economic and political control over both rural agrarian societies and regional markets.

Simultaneously, the mint functioned as a crucial economic bridge that linked Bihar's regional economy with wider imperial and global trade networks. By absorbing foreign bullion and converting it into standardized Mughal currency, it facilitated the rapid expansion of high-demand regional commodities such as saltpeter, opium, and textiles, while seamlessly connecting local producers to international circuits of exchange. Far from being a isolated manufacturing facility, the Patna mint served as an essential vehicle for state formation and economic integration. Ultimately, the monetary stability it provided formed a critical foundation of Mughal power in eastern India, reinforcing the overall stability, prosperity, and longevity of the empire.

Abbreviations

VOC	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie
EIC	English East India Company

Author Contributions

Anshuman Suman: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Resources

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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