

trol over the Mirza and Kabul. Where the first expedition ended in military defeat, the second had better luck. Ultimately, however, the occupation that it spawned also ended in failure. The emperor's irritation at Mir Muhammad Khan Atga, his pro-consul in Kabul between 1564 and 1565, for failing to maintain imperial control is palpable even thirty years later when Shāikh Abul Fazl blames the Mir for allowing the Mirza's affairs to reach the point of "sedition" (*fasād*) and then making matters worse by abandoning his post in the face of pressure from Mirza Hakim.⁶² The debacle of 1565, followed as it was by the Mirza's invasion of the Punjab in 1566, might have persuaded Akbar to reinvade Kabul. Yet, the emperor chose not to. Why not? Was it because he was confronted by an Uzbek rebellion in Hindustan? Was it because he was marshalling his military resources for an assault against Rajasthan? Was it because Akbar felt that long-term control over Kabul was a losing proposition as long as Mirza Hakim was alive? Or, was it because the emperor no longer viewed the Mirza as a serious threat? All of the above may explain Akbar's caution—except for the last! In fact, Akbar was anything but indifferent to the Mirza's military and political threat.

In 1566, Akbar tightened imperial control over the adjoining region of the Punjab. He thus recruited or re-employed these *qamindars* (local nobles) to hunt for the Mirza and to undertake a *qamargha* hunt against his opponents.⁶⁴ Around the same time, he ordered his architects and engineers to begin strengthening the walls of the capital, Lahore, and improving the roads and river crossings within the region. These infrastructural projects signaled a newly assertive imperial authority across the northwestern parts of the Mughal Empire.

⁶² Shaikh Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. 2, 243.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 278.

⁶⁴ Mughal hunting expeditions often served the same purpose as present-day live-fire military exercises. Besides forcing large-scale units of men to coordinate their actions, hunts were an occasion for individuals to sharpen and prove their military skills in conditions that roughly simulated combat. For excellent synopses, see M. Azhar Ansari, "The Hunt of the Great Mughals," *Islamic Culture* 34 (1960): 242-253; and H. Hargreaves, "Mughal Hunting Parties," in *Punjab Revisited*, ed. Ahmad Saleem (Lahore, 1996), 248-252. Akbar would engage in a similar *qamargha* hunt after pre-empting another planned invasion of the Punjab by Mirza Hakim in 1577-78. Shaikh Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. 3, 241. According to the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, a reliable contemporary source, this particular hunt was one of the largest of Akbar's reign engaging as it did the energies of tens of thousands of people. Cited in Shaikh Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, English trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (reprint Delhi, 1998), footnote 2, 416.