

Biradari and Power in Punjab: A Case Study of District Khushab

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Abstract

Biradari has been an important element in the political power game in Punjab. It not only functioned for building social structure but also as a political entity that plays a role as a variable in the power politics. This paper will endeavour to introduce major biradaris of district Khushab. The part played by the influential groups of these biradaris for holding political power will be discussed. Khushab witnessed the influential people of three major biradaris - Tiwana, Awan and Baluch – who were playing significant role in the politics of colonial as well as post colonial Khushab. This paper will highlight how the kinship became a tool for getting economic, political and ideological resources which led to the superiority of some elites who could gain political power with the manoeuvring of these resources. Along with the introduction of the biradaris of Khushab their tactics, strategies and style for power politics will be analyzed. The paper will be a qualitative case study of the politics Khushab during colonial and post-colonial period. The outcome of the study will be the expression of significance of kinship in the politics of Punjab.

Keywords: Biradari system, Khushab district, Power, Punjab.

Introduction

‘Khushab’ is combination of two words ‘*khush*’ and ‘*Aab*’. These words were uttered by *Sher Shah Suri* (founder of the Sur Empire and ruler-king of India from 1540 to 45) who stayed for sometime in Khushab. The sweetness of the water of this area inspired him to name this region *Khush-Aab*, now Khushab. The areas of Khushab have been the recruiting sites for the British army. Local *biradaris* were strong enough to support the colonial rule. They fought against Sikh Raj and accepted their obedience as well.

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The Tiwanas

Tiwana Biradari is one of the most important *biradaries* of Khushab that participate in the politics. It has its roots in Central India and originally *Tiwanas* were *Rajputs*. The *biradari* got its name from the forefather of the *biradari*, *Raja Tiwana*, sixth forefather of the *Tiwana baradari*, who was one of the children of *Kiran Chanddar* of *Bansi* family.

As the Sikh religion flourished the Tiwanas became Sikh by religion but latter on they embraced Islam in Pakpattan. Afterwards they settled in the Doab of the river Sutluj and Jhelum. Some of the Tiwanas moved from region to region to get settled. They reached Darya Khan, occupied Thal, established Thatha Tiwana, brought under their control Wagha, Chahana, Sheikh, Bali, Ghallu, Mahuta, Angra, Jora, Kichi, Moya and Awan nations. They fought with Baluch. They lost many areas to Baluch people including Munkeera, Hyuderabad, Layyah, Kot Sultan, Kot Addu, etc.

Economically Tiwanas were landlords and raised livestock as well for earning and well-being. Tiwanas were excellent sword fighters, tent-paggers and horse riders. They were feudal lords. They inhabited Khushab and Sargodha.

In the area of Sargodha, Mitha Tiwana and Noor Pur Thal were main places of Tiwanas. Here the Tiwanas fought with Sikhs during the period when Sikhs were losing to the British. Tiwanas were loyals to the British Raj. Malik Khan Muhammad Tiwana was defeated in his areas of Mitha Tiwana and Noor Pur Thal and these strongholds of Tiwanas were taken by the Sikh Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. Malik Khan Muhammad, with support of others, invaded Nawab Mankera and occupied the whole area. Such battles and invasions remained the sequence of hegemony over these areas.

In Shahpur, Tiwana baradari was led by Roy Udder. He had three sons. They were Sadhoeri Khan, Bukhari Khan and Shehzada Khan. Shehzada Khan was the ancestor of Sir Khizar Hayat Tiwana. Another Aali Khan was one of the early Tiwanas who had been leading the baradari and was known for his good manners.¹

Malik Fateh Khan Tiwana stood shoulder to shoulder with the British forces against Sikhs. His son Fateh Sher Khan joined hands with Major Edward at Multan in the events of 1857 war. He defeated Sikh garrisons. He captured regions from Mittha Tiwana and Sahiwal (District Sargodha) along with his uncle Malik Sahib Khan.

“Malik Fateh Khan Tiwana and his son Fateh Sher Muhammad Khan fought successful battles against Sikhs in Sargodha area and snatched Mitha Tiwana from them. Malik Saheb Khan, Uncle of Sher Muhammad Khan worked under the supervision of Edward and in the fight of Chachran near Jhawarian defeated Sikhs along with small army. He also displayed heroic qualities in the last war Chelianwala near Gujrat and Killed Ram Singh with his own hands. Tiwanas obtained a lot with the British support. After the accession of Punjab they were permitted to collect the tax of the area of Mitha Tiwana and Noor Pur Thal.”²

One of the reasons for joining hands with British Raj was to save themselves from the Sikh domination. Sahib Khan also paid services to the British by suppressing the rebels of the 14th Infantry in Jhelum. Fiefs and pensions were awarded to them in recognition of their services. Malik Fateh Sher Khan was given the title of “Khan Bahadur” and his son Fateh Sher was given an opportunity to be educated at Aitchison College, Lahore. He was also awarded 30,000 acres in Khushab and 1500 acres in Jhelum.

“Various villages were given to Sher Muhammad Khan and Fateh Sher Khan as fief and they were also given Rs.5000/- and Rs.3240/- for the whole of their life while Malik Sahib Khan received Rs.480/- per annum. Sargodha and particularly Shahpur has been silent in the war of Independence of 1857. Tiwanas were the influential lords of the area and there has been complete peace and calm due to these flatterers of British and there was no revolt.”³

Umar Hayat Tiwana, son of Malik Sahib Khan, was educated at Chiefs College Lahore. He then served the British in 1901-02 in the war of Sumali and in 1904 in the Tibbat mission. He was an appointed member of Punjab Legislative Council in 1906 and in 1908. He was made a member of the Imperial Legislative Council for four years. He also served as member of Indian Legislative Council for four years. He was again appointed as member of Indian Legislative Council in 1929. He served that council for thirty years and won the title of Nawab for serving the council for so long.

Umar Hayat Tiwana’s son Malik Khizar Hayat Tiwana rose to the leadership of Unionist Party after the death of Sir Sikandar Hayat. He rendered his services as Chief Minister of Punjab from 1937 to 1942. He was also Prime Minister from 1943

to 1947. He was the leader of the Unionists and posed challenges to Muslim League one after the other.⁴

Malik Fateh Khan's sons Malik Alam Sher Khan and Malik Ahmad Khan Tiwana and son of Malik Sher Bahadur Khan Tiwana were the significant figures of Tiwana baradari of the area of Khushab which was tehsil headquarter at that time. Malik Ghulam Muhammad Tiwana was the Khrsh Nasheen of Hamoka, Khushab while Khan Muhammad Tiwana and Sahib Khan Tiwana were inamdars of Khushab. They were the leaders of the Tiwana baradari and prominent political figures of their region.⁵

Tiwanas served their areas on socio-economic fronts. Their serving style remained feudalistic as they took interest in charity institutions to provide donations and other facilities to the poor. Umer Hayat Tiwana initiated the documentation of the marriages of Muslim Couples.

The Awans

Awan baradari is another important biradari in district Khushab. Awans are settled in central, Northern and Western Punjab. Khushab is an important district of Western Punjab. People belonging to this biradari or caste believe that their ancestors were a clan of Banu Hashim of Arabian Peninsula. They were the descendants of Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib. They migrated to other lands. History presents them as descendants of Qutb Shah of Herat in Afghanistan. He served for Sultan Mehmood Ghazni. He was a Hashemite and father to six sons. While in Sultan Mehmood's service, they were given the title of 'AWAN' or 'supporter' by the Sultan. Qutb Shah Family settled in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, etc. His sons settled in areas like Chenab, Tirah, Golera, Khewra, Bajara, Jand and Dhudial. Awans were included in the list of martial races by the British. They constituted a significant part of the British Indian Army. They were active part of the contingents of Indian soldiers who had been on the frontlines with British forces in World War I and II.

It was not only their martial nature which attracted British Planners to include Awans in the ranks of their army in the Sub-Continent, their high social standing in baradari was the Prime factor for their selection. Professor Tan Tai Yong notes that:

"The Choice of Muslims was not merely one of physical suitability. As in the case of the Sikhs, recruiting authorities showed a clear bias in favour of the dominant landowning tribes of the region, and recruitment of Punjabi Muslims who limited to those who belonged to tribes of high social standing or

*reputation the “blood proud” and once politically dominant aristocracy of the tract. Consequently, socially dominant Muslim tribes such as Gakhars, Janguas and Awans, and a few Rajput tribes, concentrated in Rawalpindi and Jhelum districts in the northern salt range tract in the Punjab, accounted for more than ninety percent of Punjabi Muslim recruits”.*⁶

Awans were not only significant for British Raj because of their martial nature, they were spiritually very prominent in their regions as in Khushab. Qutb Shah was famous among masses as “Alf Shah”. Presently soot valley, salt range areas and other parts of Khushab are their majority regions. In colonial times, they had been living at the North of that desert of Khushab. They were present in a number of villages as well. They were farmers, industrialists, miners and soldiers of Pakistan Armed Forces. Their spiritual leaders were Mian Mehr Ali Awan of Amb Mauza, Malik Alam Sher of Kund, Malik Mukkarab Khan and Mian Muhammad Awan of Kufri Mauza of Khusahab. They are Kursi Nasheens of their areas. This status does facilities their political interests.⁷

Awans participated electoral politics from 1970 when Malik Karam Bakhsh Awan contested against Pakistan People’s Party candidate. In next elections in 1977, Awans were on the PPP’s page, got their representative elected and then his membership declared void on rigging charges.⁸ In 1985 non-party elections pitched Awans against each other.⁹ Malik Muhammad Naeem Khan Awan emerged successful against Malik Karam Bakhsh Awan. So this baradari got represented by two families, i.e., Maula Bakhsh Awan family and Malik Muhammad Naeem Khan Awan family.¹⁰

The Baluchs

Baluch are the third significant baradari in Khushab. They were nobles as they were descended from Hazrat Amir Hamza (RA), uncle of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and settled in Aleppo, Syria. They were forced to leave that settlement by the King of the Sasanid dynasty, Anoshervan. They went Alborz Mountains and Qazvin to Kerman, finally reached Makran.

Baluch history has multiple episodes of migration, contracts with other ethnic and religious communities, services for Sultan of Oman as soldiers and also surrenders. They were taken over by the Brahvi advance who, with the support of Turks in the 17th century and expelled from the Kalat valley. They found their abode in the mountains of Sulaiman and along the Indus bank three

great Baluch leaders found exclusiveness by occupying three areas as their Deras. They were Ismail Khan, Fateh Khan and Ghazi Khan. They established Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan and Daryakhan. Mir Chakar Khan and Mir Jalal Khan were Baluch rulers and leaders. Mir Jalal Khan was represented by his sons; Rind, Lashar, Hoolth and Korai. They pioneered four main Baluch tribes. Jalal Khan's daughter happened to be the pioneer of the Jatoi tribe.

The Baluch in Punjab are distinctive in that they are different in all aspects from the Baluch of the province Baluchistan. They do have contacts and blood relations with the Baluch tribes in Baluchistan.¹¹ Jat baradari played an important role in transforming Baluch of the Punjab through inter-marriages and cultural change in their norms, mores and even clothes has taken roots. They are now mostly Siraiki speaking persons, traditional Muslims and sturdy agriculturalists. Baluch tribes are present in following districts of Punjab and Sindh.

Table 1: Baluch Tribes in Punjab

S.No.	Baluch Tribe	Districts
1)	Rind, Jatoi, Korai	Multan, Muzaffargarh, Rahimyar Khan, Sahiwal, Sargodha.
2)	Gopang, Dasti	Muzaffargarh.
3)	Hoti	Jhang, Multan, Muzaffargarh
4)	Gurmani, Khushik, Gishkauri, Pitafi	Muzaffargarh, Rahimyar Khan
5)	Mazari	Jhang, Muzaffargarh, Mianwali, Jhang, Kashmore.
6)	Jalbani	Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur

Recent Baluch history presents this baradari as one of the dominant identity in Khushab. This biradari in Sikh rule held an area of about 30,000 acres in only Khushab. In 1866 during British Raj, Sardar Bahadur Khan Baluch was courtiers. They were cavalry personnels, lumbardars and Headman in this district.

Baluch in Khushab are the landowners. They are dominant and leaders in many villages of the area. Jamali and Leghari Baluch are rich ones and landlords here. Land and capital earned from land are the best sources of both income and power for the Baluch. Sardar Bahadur Khan Baluch and Sardar Muhammad Ameer Khan Baluch served the British Raj and were awarded prizes and titles between 1866 and 1917. They became lumbardars

and headmen in the service of the colonial rule. They were also appointed as 'Honourary Magistrates'. They preferred to pay compensation instead of recruiting Baluch for the British Indian Army. They, however, won patches of land, *murabas* from their British masters and cultivated. This land added to their power and prestige. They were not *Kursi Nasheens* and opted to remain in the political limelight to acquire and exercise power.

Baluch served the British rule as "Durbari" or the courtiers in 1860s. They were nominated as *lumbardars* in Khushab in those days. Their elders were awarded titles and "inams" in recognition of their services to the British rulers. Sardar Allahjawaya Baluch was brother of Sardar Fateh Khan Baluch and became a member of Municipal Committee of Khushab. It was the first time for any Baluch to be nominated in any committee and district board. Sardar Bahadur Khan Baluch was *lumbardar* as well. British gave him the title Sardar. He was also an Honourary Magistrate in 1909. He was an elected President of Khushab Municipality. His biggest credit was his refusal to recruit Baluch youth for the British to take part in World War-I. He instead paid 18000/- as compensation.

In post independence period, this baradari has been playing significant political role. The political leadership of this baradari in Khushab was consisted of four most important personalities including Sardar Shuja Khan Baluch, Sardar Sharif Khan Baluch and Naveed Haider Khan Baluch. Noorpur Thal was the birthplace of Sardar Shuja Khan Baluch. He was a law graduate from the University of Punjab. He entered into politics in 1979 and elected as member of District Council Sargodha. Those elections paved the way on Non-Party basis to politics for new aspirants in large numbers. The other significance of those elections including of 1983 was that local groups, *biradaries* and local elites became dominant in the power away from the influence of the political parties. When political culture was revitalized in 1989, the post zia elections, leaders from the baradari columns occupied spaces in the elected bodies more smoothly and easily than political workers. It is said that Sardar Shuja Khan Baluch was not an active person in the development arena. He was instead a political manager and formed a group under the title of Baluch Group and acquired political significance in Khusab.

When Khushab was declared a 'District', the Baluch took another turn to influence and get authority in politics. Sardar Shuja Khan Baluch, Haji Sharif Khan Baluch, Khan Muhammad Baluch and Naveed Haider Khan Baluch played their political roles.

Sardar Shuja entered into politics in 1979 and successfully began his career in local government as member of district council Sargodha. He was elected MPA in non-party elections of 1985 and was elected MNA in 1993 and 1997.¹² Last election he contested as an independent candidate was of 1993. He joined PML (N) in 1997.¹³ Haji Sharif Khan's entrance was also through local elections in 1979 and 1983. He became Nazim in 2002 from Urban Khushab. However he could not succeed in provincial politics.¹⁴

In 2001, local government elections, Baluch baradari won 6 seats of Nazims and Naib Nazims in 6 union councils of Khushab. The Nazim elected were:

Table 2: Baluch Nazims in Khushab Union Councils in 2001

UC No.20	Khushab	Dildar Hussain Baluch
UC No.20	Khushab	Khan Muhammad Baluch
UC No.48	Noorpur Thal	Sardar Abbas Khan Baluch
UC No.49	Noorpur Thal	Sardar Ali Hussain Baluch

In the 2005, Nazims from Baluch baradari were:

Table 3: Baluch Nazims in Khushab Union Councils in 2005

UC No.18	Sandral	Muhammad Ayub Khan Baluch
UC No.20	Khushab	Sardar Shafqat Khan Baluch
UC No.21	Khushab 3	Muhammad Muneer Khan Baluch
UC No.22	Khushab 3	Khan Muhammad Baluch
UC No.28	Girot	
UC No.46	Kahtwan	Akhtar Hussain Baluch
UC No.48	Jura Kalan	Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan

Muhammad Iqbal Khan Baluch was the only Naib Nazim from Chak 59 MB.¹⁵ The proximity of the Union Councils points out that the area of influence of Baluch baradari in Khushab is restricted to certain localities. The baradari remained to the Union Council level politics. They remained away from Zila or the Tehsil politics.¹⁶

The Qureshis

Qureshi is also an important baradari in district Khushab. They are concentrated in the areas of Kadi and Jhelum Valley. Qureshi people are respected for the social, economic and political

connections as well as spiritual ones. Tiba Qaim Din is the native village of this baradari. This baradari has often been in direct conflict and competition to other baradaris, especially Tiwana baradari before independence. Tehsil Khushab in the Sargodha District was the area of dominance of Qureshis. Their landholdings were in Kadi and Jhelum valley. They were declared Kurshi Nasheen and Lumbardar by the British Raj. Pir Sattar Shah Qureshi was the Kurshi Nasheen in Mauza Pail of Khushab. He was also made Inamdar.

In 1937 elections Muhammad Hayat Qureshi conceded defeat from the opponent candidate. Qureshi baradari supported Hayat Qureshi. In 1951 and 1956 elections, this baradari could not muster up enough support to become significant electoral victors. Their candidates became union councilors in 2001 and 2005 elections in 4 union seats. The successful were Mrs. Alam Khatoun from UC 11 Khushab, Mazhar Hussain from UC 25 Jauharabad, Razia Khatoun from UC 31 Mitta Tiwana and Sultan Bibi from UC 43 from Noorpur Thal.¹⁷

The Bandials

Bandial biradari, fifth important biradari of Khushab, had been absent from the political scenes in pre-partition period. It remained insignificant for the British Raj. They were neither Durbari, nor lumbardars nor Inamdars. Bandials were not landlords. They were businessmen and employed ones in various capacities. In Basic Democracy system, Malik Khaliq Dad Khan Bandial was elected as member of provincial assembly.

In non-party elections in 1985 Bandial baradari kept itself away from electoral process. No candidate of the baradari could win in 1990 elections. Baradari remained away from 1993 and 1997 elections.¹⁸ In 2005 Elections, Fateh Khaliq got elected as Nazim and Malik Khuda Yar Bandial as Naib Nazim from the union council of Quidabad. In local government elections, in 2011, Malik Karam Elahi Bandial was elected as Nazim of Quidabad and Saleemullah as the Naib Nazim.¹⁹

The Gunjials

Gunjial baradari is also a business class family. Similarly to Bandials, the Gunjials were neither Durbari, nor lumbardars and not Inamdars in British era. This baradari is wealthy but not because of agricultural land but due to its fortunes through business in Saudi Arabia. This baradari is also famous for its spiritual significance. Pir Syed Ali Shah, Pir Syed Anwar Ali Shah,

Pir Syed Fakhruddin Gillani and Pri Syed Ghulam-ud-Din Gillani are few saints from the Gunjial city. This baradari took part in electoral politics but got defeated in 1985, 1988 and 1990. Malik Saleh Muhammad Gunjial motivated Saleh Muhammad Gunjial who opened the doors of electoral success for the baradari in 1993 elections.²⁰

Conclusion

Tiwana, Awan, Qureshi, Bandial and *Gunjial* are five biradarries which are active in the politics of the areas of Khushab district. Several members of these biradarries have been in politics at different times and place. The chiefs of these biradarries drove the politics of the area for their interests and ideological as well as public interests remained neglected. The circulation and interchange of the winning candidates in these biradarries has proved the role of the biradarries in the politics of the area that today constitutes the district of Khushab. The candidates of these biradarries kept on consolidating their position in the elections whether they were held on party basis or non party basis. They often changed their party affiliations but their position in the politics did not get affected.

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