A study of Social Conditions in Sind Under Ghulam Shah Kalhora 1761—1772

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THE KALHORA as a dynastic force rose very gradually to predominate. They did not disappear in a sudden debacle.The nature of their vague and indeterminate rise will be obvious to those who considers the general features of the Moghal period. As rulers Kalhora may be said to date from 1736, but members of their tribe had been prominent in Sind affairs for at least half a century before that date. Similary the Kalhora were not swept away in 1778 by a coup d'tat of Mir Bijar Khan Talpur resulting in the defeat and death of Ghulam Nabi Kalhora. They continued to survive as a disturbing influence till the very end of the eighteenth century. The object of my article is not to describe in detail the history of Ghulam shah Kalhora but merely to indicate its salient characteristics with special reference to the social history of sind during the period from 1761 to 1772. Kalhora were a Sindh tribe of obscure origin of the type that is now classed as Jamot I that is non-Baloach original inhabitants of the Indus vally, settled in a portion of upper Sindh in the area that now forms part of Larkana and sukkur districts. They were the first Sindhi dynasty to wield permanent power since the fall of the Samma and the builders of Thatta, who had ruled Sindh for two hundred and thirty years before the advent of Arghuns and the Turkhans from central Asia. Their popularity was strengthened by the peculiar character of their reputation as holymen, descendants of sainted mendicant, a kind of being who has always made a very vivid appeal to the Muslim inhabitants of the lower indus valley.

In the year 1739 Nadir shah on his return from Hindustan to Persia invaded Sind, shut Noor Mohammad up in the fort of Umerkot and forced his submission, granting him pardon on his promising to pay a tribute of twenty lakhs of rupees. As security for the payment of the Tribute he took with him the vanquished Kalhora's three sons, Ghulam Shah, Murad yab and Uffar Khan as hostages to his court, where they remained for several years.2 In1747 Nadir Shah was assassinated and these three sons held as hostages at the Persian court returned to sind. These for the death of Noor Mohammad from 1756 to 1758 Sind was in pitiable condition of unrest which did not terminate until Gnulam Shah finally emerged the victory in 1758 at the very time while the East India company were endeavouring to establish their second Factory in Sind. The troubled conditions of Sind at this period, (1754-58) was merely typical of what was happening elsewhere in most parts of India in the end Ghulam Shah Kalhoro became the Prince of Sind, but he was forced to acknowledge the sovereignty of Ahmed Shah and pay a yearly tribute to Kabul. Durng this unhappy generation not only were the Kalhoro fighting amongst themselves but they were also engaged in a complicated political game with Pathans, Kalat, Cutch and the chief of Kukrallo presumably a Sammo of the lower delta of the Indus who had somehow managed to retain a little petty authority of his own. Once established on the throne of Sind, Ghulam Shah the most capable of the Kalhora, did a little to restore some kind of order to the disturbed countryside.

The first venture of the East India company in Sind was launched in 1635, this time was selected in order to preserve peace between Britishers and Portuguese. Had the company any chance of doing successful business at Laribunder the port of the Indus, Delta, and Thatta, the capital of Sind and very rich and imposing emporium of commerce in the seventeeth century. During all this time the Slnd factory at Thatta and its out post at Laribunder continued to

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1. See Census of India 1931 Vol: viii p p. 495
2. For a slightly different version see Goldsmith, historical memiors on Shikarpur p.p. 17/18.

flourish In a modest way. When the factory was disbanded in 1662, the cause of winding up of its affair was the lack of profits in trading due to the unsettement and turmoil in the Moghal dominion during the unrest that coincided with the five years of Aurangzeb's reign.

In 1758 the East India company again entered the field of Sind commerce. Conditions then were very different from what they had been in 1635 and 1662. Sind no less then the rest of India was in confusion. The Kalhora brothers were fighting amongst themseives for a supremacy which fell at length to Ghulam Shah Kalhora, and Afghans, Sikhs and Marhtas were at each other's threats in the plains of the Punjab. The lure which drew the company to sind in the midist of the turmoil was the chance of obtaining a monopoly in salt petre, with two minor objectives, one to sell woolen goods to the armies of Afghanistan, the peoples of central Asia and residents of the northern plains of India, and the other to transport some of the excellent cattle of Sind to Bombay for sale. The instructions given by the court of Directors at Bombay castle on 12th December, 1758 to George Bourchier, charged with the duty of opening trade in Sind are very clear. postans has described the opening of the trade relations between the company and the ruler of Sind. The connections he states, "of the British Indian Govt: with Sindh had its origin in A.D. 1758 when Ghulam Shah Kalhora on the 22nd September of that year granted a 'parwannah' or order to Mr. Sumption of the company's service for the estnblishment of a factory in the Sindhian territories, with a view to the encouragement of trade between the Indian territories and Sindh: and added to this permission certain immunities and exemptlons from customs which were in those days considered of great value····The various officers and customs of revenue are diverted in these documents to charge no more than one and half percent half percent duty above the market price on all goods purchased by the British agent for export and to levy on importation only one half of that paid by other merchants."

The company of 1758 was a very different affair from the Board of merchants it had been in 1635. It was a powerful corporation

supported by the English Parliament, wealthy and well disciplined, with a regular establishment of covenanted officers possessed of fleets of armed merchant men manned by soldiers and sailors. From 1758 till 1775 the company maintained its factory in Sind, with its head office at Thatta and its out post in Shahbunder, and during the reign of Ghulam Shah Kalhora it was most propserous. The exessess, however of their sensate and blood thirsty tyrant Sarfraz Khan Kalhoro which ended in his deposition and civit war ruined all prospects of successful commerce and the factory was with drawn. Thus the east India company in Sind maintained its establishment there for twenty-seven years in the seventeenth century, and for seventeen years in the eighteenth century. The second English factory in sind was established in a period of civil war between Ghulam Shah and his brothers and was given up because of the commotion consequent on the mal-administration of Sarfraz Khan Kalhora which made utterly impossible any settled trade of the kind the company desired, For only a short period during Fhulam Shah's reign can the factory be said to have prospered. Some time the company was also always being tempted to intervene in matters quite unconnected with trade. Thus Ghulam Shah Kalhoro desired them to lend ships for an expedition against Cutch and help him to recover his alleged property from a trader in Gujrat. Ghulam Shah Kalhoro granted a parwana on 22nd September 1758 for the Destablishment of this faetory. This parwana was followed on IIth ecember 1758 by an other order conferring further privliges. The contents of these two parwanas (order) have been described by the Postans. He states that the permission were granted with a view to the eccouragement of trade between lhe Indian territories and Sind. Added to the general permision were" certain immunities end exemptions of customs which were in those days considered of great vulue and which ceriainly proved on the part of Ghulam Shah Kalhoro an eanest desire to cultivate friendly relations with the British in India. It will thus be seen that Ghulam Shah Kalhoro went a long way to accommodate the company and had the country been really settled and peaceful and had there not been a continual conflict of material interest between the company, the Sind Government and the Pathans merchants in respect of the import and sale of woolen goods there was no reason why a flourishing trade should not have developed.

Hamilton mentions the leather-butter Jars capable of holding butter upto 320 pounds and keeping it fresh for a year. Withington speaks of the Sind shields and bucklers which were of superior quality. Linschten says: "The people of sind make ecellent and fair leather and cunningly wrought with silk of all colous, both flowers and personage; this leather in India is much esteemed to lay upon beds and tables instead of carpets". Mannucci also remarks that "Sind has much leathhr which is exported to Arabia and Persia". A European travellor noted approvingly the technique of the Sind village tanners. "As soon as hide is properly tanned and oiled it is dried in shades, the leather of Sind is some of the best in India and not inferior in softness and durability to that of Europe 3".

Sind has always been noted or the excellence of its fresh and salt water fish. Ain-e-Akbari says that the staple food in lower sind consists of rice and fish. Fish has always been esteemed as an article of Food. Almost every traveller in Sind has made reference to the adundance and the cheapness of fish in the market. Manrique describes the skillfull way in which Pallo (Chupea ilisha) was caught in the Indus by fishermen balanced on earthen ware pots, an industry carried on to this day in exactly the same way. Hamilton says that he got in Thatta the finest carp he ever saw or tested. Some of them weigh above twenty pounds weight and we have them alive in Thatta market" 4. The centre of the sea fishing industry was Karachi, and the coastal area. Fish oil was also extracted and used in boat building. Fresh water fisheries were also valuable. The modern sea fisheries of Karachi harbour and the Sind coast flourish on much the same times as the fisheries which supplied the articles of fish food exported in the days of the Kalhora.

During the Kalhoro times the chief industries were the manufacture of cotton goods, saltpetre and indigo, leather and fish. Oil pressing was anothor village industry, widely difused, the camels and bullocks turning the Ghan (oil presses). The potter's craft was

1. H.T. Sorley Shah Addul Latif of Bhit p.52.
2. Linschoten, Voyage to East Indies P.56.
3. Von Orlich Travels in India p, 101

equally primitive and can still be seen in sind exactly as it was in Kalhora days. The maing of glazed tiles was, however, highly skilful and the products were used to ornaments tombs and mosques, Building was unimportant as most of the houses and habitations were made of mud, sticks, grass or branches of trees Only in the largest towns like Thatta and for the tombs of holy men was the use of brick and stone much indulged in.

Thatta was still an important place during 1758–75 but it was already beginning to decline because trade was taking other channels with the rise of Karachi, Hyderabad and Shikarpur, the siltingup of the river mouth at shah Bunder and the decline in demand for Thatta and Sind goods caused by Britain's being able then not only to supply herself but to export cotton goods abroad. By this time Karachi was an important port, Hyderabad had a population of 35,000 and Shikardur was the centre of an indigenous banking organization that financed much trade in Sind, Baluchistan, Afghanistan and central Asia. Saltpetre occupied in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a vastly more important place in foreign trade. The production of the country was estimated upto 10,000 maunds annually. Ghulam Shah Kulhoro did grant such a parwana to the second factory, but he was always ready to allow native interlopers from Persian Gulf to trade in saltpetre. Crowe states that "There are many salt-petre grounds in the different parts of the country but mostly in the delta particularly about shahbunder and Aurangabunder. It may be mentioned here that in seventeenth century saltpetre was important as a main ingredient for the manufacture of gunpowder, but in the eighteenth century its usefulness extended for peaceful operations. Such as glass making, the sizing of cloth and the making dyies:

H.T. Sorley states [4] "It is impossible to exaggerate the important place irrigation in Sind has always played in the socio and economic scheme. Without this artificial aid of man the country

4. Hamilton op cit.

5. See the marine fisheries of Bombay Presidency.

could not have supported even the small population of Mughal and Kalhora days. Whatever may have been the condition or irrigation in Hindustan generally under the Delhi Empire mostly the writers say that irrigation was neglected the critical observations of Indian travellers are not true of Sind, where rainfall is scanty and never regular or sufficient to permit of un - troubled cultivation on rain water alone. There is quite satisfactory evidence to show that in Mughal and Kalhora times irrigation in Sind was inteligently conducted and that the disorder which harassed the land from time totims did not greatly interrupt the business of distributing water over the land by artificial channels. There is mention of a canal Act by Akber in 1568 for the digging and deepening of a canal to be called the Shaikh Nai. But Sind certainly received no benefit in this respect from the Mughals. The Sind canals-persian wheels and wells were constructed by the natives of the land without any assistance from the Empire of Delhi, which showed no interest in them at any time. But apart from this the inhabited Sind of past generations was not a hard and barren land yielding but grudgingly her gifts to those who tilled the soil and sought a livelihood. This was considered a sort of Arabia Felix with a quiet, industrious and intelligent people living in isolation from the rest of the Indian sub-continent."

The common people of Sind during Ghulam Shah Kalhoro lived in grass hut huts by the river or in the fields, the dwelling of twigs covered with a conical roof like a beehive as described by Withington or unsighly erections of mud. There were mud houses inhabited by the merchants, traders and the well off artisans in the larger villages and in Thatta were few superior buildings. Though we have no accounts of Kalhora days and the detailed evidence mostly dates from the times of the Talpurs.

There is little extant evidence of the rates of wages paid in Kalhora days in Sind. In Sind as elsewhere poor people then as in India thought in terms of copper coins and the revenue accounts were made up in "dams" at the rate of 40 to the rupee 2. Ordinarily

1. H.T. Sorley Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit p. 110.
2. Moreland believes that from 1627 onward the rupee was worth 30 dams or 60 pieces as against 40 dams under Akber.

labour of that time according to Faruki 3 were paid to three dams per day that is one twentieth of a rupee. Skilled workmen received Rs. 3 or 3 and half rupees per month one and half dams were suffient to prouide with daily substance. House hold servant. Rs. 2/- per month. Burton says of the Sind soldiery that the smaliest sum paid to foot man under native rule was about three and haif rupees per mensem, but some of the horsemen got the respectable salary of one rupee a day. Dr. James Durnes in 1828 encountered some Sindhi soldiers on guard and customs duty between Cutch and Sind says, "A few sindhi soldiers, not above eight or ten whose only place of residence is an open wooden shed and whose chief food is camel milk, are stationed at Leh (Near Runn of Cutch) to collect a tax on the merchants that pass and they are its only inhabitants." 4 Peasants and artisan did not make any money and could not save for followingreasons.The risk of uncertainly yield of crops, lack of industrial development, oveo population in comprises with the resources available and social customs which require heavy expenditure for special occasions. Despite the fact the wallet is empty. But despite all this he real burden on the peasant was the arbitrariness of the autocratic form of Govt: with its constant exorbitant demands.

The purity of coinage was maintained by the Mughal administration. The chief coins issued by Akbar were the Gold Mohar. the silver rupee and the copper dam. Akbar's rupee weighed 178 grams, the dam, (also called paisa or falus was a massive coin weighing 323 5 grams. The Gold Mohar of Akber was worth nine rupees. In addition to these coins, pagodas and Mahmudi's were also iu circulation. All these coins except possibly the pagoda were used in Sind:

Raverty's monumental work "The Mehran of Sind" endeavours to trace the wanderings of the Indus over Sind during historic times and is characterized by a wealth of contemporary evidence from all native sources, backed up by an extensive study

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3. Auroungzeb p. 492.

4. Burnes A visit to the court of Sind p, 23.

of the geography of the lower Indus plain. The old Sindhi system was to use the natural river channel thus formed, dig small water courses from them, excavate "Khuhadas" at which Persian wheels worked and make the utmost possible use by means of wheels and wells, of low-lying places where the flood water collected. Much cultivation was possible and even where the circumstances made irrigation impossible there were great expanses called the "Chhans" where grass and jungle scrub grew luxuriantly. nourishing the vast unmber of camels, buffaloes and bullocks which supported a large population and where the foundation of milk, curds and ghee business and of the leather and hide industries described by various travellers. Del Hoste mentions the following branches of the Indus, namely PURAN, NARA, ARUL, FULELI, GUNI, PINYARI, GANGRO, LAKHI, SITTA AND BAGHAR, DADAJI, NOOR WAH AND MIRWAH. Apart from these branches of Indus the waters of Manchher, Mirpur, Kinjhar and Makhi lakes were used for irrigation purpose. The peasantry class of Sind areand always have been happy go lucky people full af laughter and amusement and well able to extract from there ordinary life all the fund that was procurable within their means. The fondness of Sindhi for conversation and istening to songs and stories and in the whole heartedness with which the chief festivals of Muslims and Hindu accasions were celebrated, the two Fids Ramzan and Bakri of the former and Holi and Deewali of the later. The merriment and gaiety that prevailed during these festivals when money was spent freely and much display was made with new clothes. The beautiful songs of Shah Abdul Latif's called the "cotton spinner" is written round a background of Eid. Hamilton in 1699 speaking of Holi says that the "Populace kept a sight of the new moon in February which exceeded the rest in ridiculous actions and expenses. In this mad feast people of all ages and sexes dance through the streets to pipe, drum and cymbals. The women with baskets of sweetmeats on their heads distributing to every body they meet. The author of Tarish e-Tahiri writes," has several Eids for them the first Friday after the new moon they call the Sindhi Monday in each month a great day for making pilgrimage. The pleasure of visiting each other induces them to go in large parties taking with them abundance of sweet river water and food such as they can afford. The day is spent in

amusements and visits to the shrines. 1 When rain fell a sweet water tank on the makli hill, men and women of all classes, Hindus and Muslims crowded there from morning till night, cooked their meals and feasted. Carless in 1837 says that in most of the towns there were numerous dancing girls and that the only amusement of the inhabitants consisted in smoking copious hookah till they were intoxicated, while the women exhibited indecent postures before them. The people were happy and pleasure loving and indulged in a varieoty of health giving pastimes and relaxations. The better off were excessively fond of Shikar for which the country offered full scope in its abundance of small game. "Their horses says Hamilton are small but handy and swift. Deer, antelopes, hares and foxes are their wild games which they hunt with dogs. leopards and small furious creature called by them "Shoo goose" They have a store of peacocks, pigeons, doves, ducks, geese curlews, paotridges and plover free for any body to shoot 2.

But it would be unreasonable to believe that shikargahs did not exist in the days of Kalhora, who maintained an almost regal state. The Mohana and other river living people who possessed no guns with which to shoot birds, had developed a technique of their own by means of stick throwing, spears decoys and skilful method of catching duck by hand on the water. The Sindhi amble enabled horses to cover the ground at a good pace for considerable distance and bareback riding was also popular and very skillful. Horse and camel races were popular and made the occasion for betting and gambling under methods which had nothing to learn from the practice of the West. Kite flying, Kabutar bazi, betting on pigeons, cock fighting, Malh has claims to being the most popular sports of the country.

When Ghulam Shah took over reign of Government he followed a period of incessent contention between him and his two brothers Attar Khan and Ahmed Yar, till at length Ghulam Shah gained the

1. Elliot pp 272-4
2. Op bit.

mastery and was recognised as ruler of Sind by Ahmed Shah in 1761. Ghulam Shah proved to be the most capable and vigorous of the Kalhora chiefs. He was also masterful and aggressive in the high degree characteristics of his family and tribe. Having nothing further to gain, and no body else to put down in Sind, where to dispute his authority would now have been enact of rebellion against the sovereign at Qandhar, he turned his arms against Kutch. He invaded that province, winning on the first occasion in 1763 the desparately fought the battle of Jhara and on the second advancing nearly to the capital, and compelling the Rao to cede the ports of Lakhpat and Basta. His original intentions no doubt was to conquer and annex the province, but he was hardly prepared for the desparate tenacity of defenders, whose Rajput blood made them truly formidable when driven to extremity. He was therefore content with the honour of victories which were dearly won and with the slight acquisitions marking his prowess in foreign war. The events of his time which are of most interest now were the remarkable change in the course of the Indus, which took place 1758-59 and the founding of Hyderabad in 1768. Ghulam Shah decided to found the new and greater capital Hyderabad. He had previously built Khanut a mile south of old Hala in 1759-60, and later abandonend this place perhaps because it was in danger of being carried away by the river, he founded Shahpur in 1792-3. The expediency of establishing a capital in a position where it would be absolutely secured from the risks to which towns on the Indus bank are exposed must have been forcibly impressed on the mind of Ghulam Shah by the destruction of Muradabad, the capital founded by his elder brother Murad which was over-whelmed by a flood in 1756-7.

It is provable that this flood was either a consequence of the extensive changes in the river channels then begining in that part of the country, or that it was itself the principal case of these changes. In any case that district was evidently one that could offer no site promising the needful immunity from the danger of sudden destruction. On the other hand, the plateau of the Ganja takar lying far above the reach of the highest inundations, and with its rocky base now washed by the recently formed Phuleli satisled every condition of security and convenience. Here then the Kalhora

ruler decided to erect the fortress of his new capital on the site of the ancient "Nirun" which had then come to be known as "Narun Kafir" or Narun infidel time. "The old strong hold was now a ruin and its walls had sunk into shapeless heaps of rubish. The surrounding plateau had long since been chosen as the last resting place of certain Pirs or persons of of saintly reputation and in accordance with the religious point of view the spot had consequently become specially favoured burial ground. Ghulam Shah venerated Pirs then in the relics of old Nirun and on the spacious site then prepared he built the fortress which he named Hyderabad. This, the last and greatest of Kalhora foundations was begun in 1768 and became the Chief's residence in 1770. He was not destined to have a long tenure of it and on the lst August, 1772 he was suddenly attacked by paralysis aud on the following day he was dead. Popular opinion attributed his fate to the wrath of the saints whose graves he had desoarated in building his capital.

Ghulam Shah was the last representative of Kalhora strength of character and governing ability. He had a full share of Kalhora ruthlessness but his strong hand was felt every where throughout the country,