

GHULAM SHAH KALHORA AND RELATIONS WITH KUTCH

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Kalhora's rise to power from obscurity to lime-light was a stroke of environmental changes in the world. From 1480 AD started the Little Ice Age in the world, in which temperatures fell down in the plains of Sindh and in the Himalayas and similar drops world over, Consequences of this were migrations world over, search for new lands, establishment of new empires, exploitation of poor people and backward nations, suppression of nationalities and use of force to dominate, such as the world had never seen before on global scale. The great migrations to new world as well as to Australia, New Zealand and sparsely populated countries, caused competition between the Portugese, the Dutch, the French, the Italians, the Germans and the British, all Europeans then in ascendancy. The drop of temperatures caused invasion of ice into fertile lands in Europe and ruination of pastures in the Central Asia and Iran. In this article we are limiting out-selves to migrations from Central Asia to South Asia, with Sindh as a case under study. The pastures in the Central Asia could no longer support the domesticated animals and thereby the men, who after forty years (1480-1520 AD) struggle among them-selves in Central Asia, moved to the South-Asia with determination to capture it at all costs. Mangols (Mughals) moved to Delhi and their own cousins and relative from the Central Asia and Iran to Sindh and northern India. And as Little Ice Age advanced in time, more people there, were displaced to be accommodated in Sindh and Hind. The process was to continue up to 1680 AD, when to accommodate these immigrants Aurangzeb invaded Muslim Shia states in South Asia. The immigrants had to be despotic, ruthless and unsympathetic to the conquered people, whom they were to displace in all important government functionaries and towns. Definition of Mughal was he who by Divine Right was to rule in various capacities in the Government. He was to be fair in color, having no local wife and children, not knowing local languages, and determined to recover taxes by force and invariably at the point of sword. Sindh was conquered by Arghoons and Tarkhans from Sammas who had their own tradition, culture, 'bhyat' or brother-hood as method of governing and, as an example existing in Kutch up to 1948 AD, moderation and promotion of local culture. Their own moderate religious standards based on Sufi teachings, language, literature and traditions were different from those of conquerors.

Sammas were opposed to Pan-Islamism, as they had not welcomed Mehdi of Jaunpur only a quarter of century before they lost Sindh to Arghoons.

There was cultural conflict between the Central Asians and South Asians. Arghoons got all urban areas vacated and in their place they brought their own people including Ulamas, Sufis, Kazis, businessmen and administrators as Jagirdars. Sammas with help of most of tribes of Sindh retailed. This was the first time in the history Sindh that local people joined together to fight the invaders as local Sindhis, instead of individual tribes, for one hundred and seventy five years on a united front. So much was the resistance that Mughals called Samma tribes as “Qoom-i-Haramzadgan” and they were mercilessly butchered, their properties set to fire and their animals killed. The governor of Sehwan had ordered that a bullock cart load of Samma’s heads may be brought to him daily. Such was extent of massacre. Sammas were not alone and were supported by most of Sindh’s tribes. The hatred of Mughal officers against local people reached such a limit that local tribes for survival called themselves descendents of Arabs and Iranians. The Little Ice Age reached its worst in 1665 AD, when income from Thatta Sarkar fell to twenty percent of what it was in 1600 AD. By this time Mughals had lost control over most of Sindh and local tribes were collecting taxes and looting at will. One hundred seventy five years fighting had turned Sammas into unorganized fighters without central leadership and although it was their struggle that brought collapse of Mughal power in Sindh, they could not lead it to victory. The first prominent anti-Mughal role was played in a small area of Dadu district by Panhwars, who initially had collaborated with Mughals, and had called themselves descendents of Bibi Halima the nurse of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (p.b.u.h), but even as peaceful citizens, who paid taxes regularly, they were attached by the governor of Sehwan just before 1634 AD and they under their chiefs, Musa, Isa and Daud attacked Sehwan. Defeated the governor and looted the treasury. Since then they assumed leading role, and around 1665 AD they seem to have occupied areas between Sehwan and Kamber. Although they paid annual tribute to governor of Multan, they lacked local sanctity, which by this time was given to genuine or pseudo Sufis, who during one hundred years, supported by Mughals, to reduce influence of orthodox Mulas, had gathered power and common men could easily rally behind them. Kalhoras were such, but pseudo Sufis. They were a local tribe and not Abbasids as claimed, but had fought Mughals and many of them were executed for their rebellions. Their sacrifices put them in lime light and so the leadership. Fakirs as they called themselves had large number of disciples from Seraiki speakin, Baloachis of D.G. Khan and Muzaffargarh areas, which during this period were hyper-arid and people were willing to sacrifice their lives for decent living, if it could be guaranteed. Kalhoras ensured this and fought Mughals with troops provided by these disciples, first defeating Panhwars and then Mughals.

In 1701 AD, they were accepted as local governors by Mughals and gradually occupied the whole Sindh by 1737 AD.

They were master canal builders and in a short span of 50 years, they built and renovated about 700-900 canals taking off from the river Indus irrigating twenty two lack acres, while population rose to thirty lack people around 1750 AD. The weak point of the whole system was that Baloach tribal heads were given Jagirs with nominal taxes. Only a few local Sindhi leaders were made zamindars and responsible for paying taxes and the common Sindhi was made tenant cultivator of Baloachi Jagirdar or Sindhi Zamindar. Jagirdars maintained army, established law and order, provided justice in rural areas and also maintained canals. They even had in their jagirs, zamindars who had to pay taxes to them. Maintenance of armed forces by Jagirdar, to be supplied to the Kalhora rulers was the weakest link in the whole chain of Kalhora's ability to govern independently and as sole authority.

In 1739 AD Nadir Shah attacked Delhi defeated Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah, who ceded areas of Sindh, west of Indus and Nahar Sagra (Western Puran) to him. He summoned Noor Muhammad Kalhoru to see him in Kabul, which the latter avoided and in turn took a flight to Umerkot, to be chased and exacted heavy amount of cash, jewels, library and imposition of annual tax by Nadir Shah. The British who were on their way to begin to capture dwindling Mughal empire only eighteen years later, were observing. In their opinion as reported by Frazer in 1746 AD, Noor Muhammad Kalhoru was so powerful that had he put up battle, he could have defeated Nadir Shah. Why did he not fight? It appears that he suspected that Baloachi chiefs could easily change the master and have better deal with Nadir Shah. That Noor Muhammad remained defeated, dejected and worried about future of his dynasty is reflected by his will. Kalhoras had realized mistake of creating Baloach Jagirdars, but kept silent over the issue for too long resulting into their own massacres. What was to follow after Noor Muhammad's death, is evident from Baloachi chief's power to install any one from among the Kalhoras as ruler.

Hydrological changes such as Sindh had never witnessed ever before, in the course of the Indus, started in 1756 and by 1758, the river established itself along the present course below Hala abandoning old course via, Shahdadpur, Oderolal, Nasarpur, Shaikh Bhirkio, Tando Muhammad Khan, Matli, Talhar, Badin, Kadhan, Lowari, Rahim Ki Bazar and Koree Creek. The river thus abandoned ten lack acres out of twenty two i.e., 45% area, and establishment of new canals on new course could take twenty five years under leadership of persons like Yar Muhammad and Noor Muhammad Kalhoras, a task not easy and not fully under-taken until by the British one hundred years later and

resulting into loss of ten lack acres, allowing fifteen lack people, who were thus displaced to die of hunger. Quick solution was not in sight.

Ghulam Shah thought of annexing Kutch, but it is doubtful if any scientific information on Kutch's capabilities to compensate loss of ten lack acres was available to him. Kutch is at the best semi-arid, hilly country with no rivers and good soils. It is rocky pasture land measuring 7,616 square miles or 12261 square kilometers and population is nomadic. The population is Jareja Sammas from Sindh and also Memons of Sindh who migrated to Kutch due to Arghoon's high handedness. The 25% population is Juts or pastorals and they are Muslims and the tribes Bhil, Menghawar, Kolhi, Oad, Gurgula all untouchables, all Sindhis, and considered low caste by Hindus, but accommodated by Muslims, Jareja Sammas were Hindus who ruled Kutch from 1148 to 1948 AD, a period of 800 years. The balance population was Hindu or Jain. They spoke Kutchi which is a dialect of Sindhi like Utradhi, Wicholi, Lari and Thareli. The relations of Kutch with Sindh broke down in 1536 AD after death of Jam Feroz the last ruler of Sindh, in Gujarat. Ghulam Shah made three expeditions on Kutch, between 1762-1765 AD, not fully knowing that Kutch almost entirely cut off from India by Rann, Little gulf of Kutch, on the Arabian sea, was on the whole treeless, barren, rocky land with ranges of hills, isolated peaks, deeply cut river beds, but rich pasture land, with no permanent rivers but only rain-fed ones, holding pools of water at places for people and cattle to drink. Wells were sole source of irrigation in Kutch and were regularly poisoned in case of invasion.

Nadir Shah ceded Kalhora territories of Sibi-Kachi to Khan of Kalat and the northern district to Daudpotras in 1740 and imposed on Kalhoras Rs.20 lacks as tribute. Two sons of Noor Muhammad Kalhoro were kept as hostages.

In 1747 AD, Nadir Shah was murdered and Ahmed Shah Abdali established himself at Afghanistan claiming suzerainty over Sindh. Nonpayment of tribute brought Ahmed Shah in person to Sindh in 1754. Noor Muhammad fled to Jaisalmir, Diwan Gidumal succeeded in appeasing the invader, but son Noor Muhammad died at Jaisalmir and was succeeded by his elder son Muradyab Khan. Three years later nobles and chiefs mostly (Baloachi sardars) replaced him with Ghulam Shah, ignoring the choice of Ahmed Shah Abdali. The latter thus infuriated gave "Sanad" to Attar Khan a hostage at his court and when he came to Sindh the nobles and chiefs being afraid of Ahmed Shah, transferred their allegiance to him and Ghulam Shah had to flee to Bahawalpur. Attar Khan's incompetence caused withdrawal of nobles support and Ghulam Shah came to occupy the seat of Sindh again.

Chaotic conditions in Sindh, lead Rao of Kutch to plan an expedition against Thatta and was assured help both by Peshwa and Gaekwar, as reported by

Gazetteer of Kutch and even Ahmed Shah agreed with Tulsidas an envoy of Rao of Kutch, due to non-payment of tribute by Kalhoras. This infuriated Ghulam Shah, who invaded Kutch and according to Tuhfatul Kiram, mounted his expeditions as under:

- (a) 09-04-1174 AH to 22-07-1177 AH (December 1760 – January 1764 AD), Ghulam Shah took fort of Sindhri, plundered towns and villages within 24 miles of Bhuj, took sea ports of Busta and Lakhpat, which were ceded by the Rao under a treaty.
- (b) In 1178 AH (1764-65 AD) he again invaded Kutch, took the town of Moru on his way. Rao applied for peace and treaty was concluded. Rao of Kutch gave daughter of his cousin Wesuji in marriage to Mian Ghulam Shah, who returned Busta, Lakhpat and other areas to Rao.
- (c) About end of 1188 AH (early 1775 AD), Mian Sarfraz Khan, attacked Kutch, took fort of Bajham, but Rao received him well and therefore Mian returned back via Nagar Parkar.

The three accounts differ from other accounts related by B.B.Mirchandani in J.S.H.S Vol-VIII (1944) and Journal Indian History. These in brief are:

- (a) Ghulam Shah asked East India Company's (E.I.Co) agent at Thatta, Mr. Erksine, to get one or two armed vessels for invasion of Kutch alleging that according to his information Rao of Kutch had already approached E.I.Co., for help and was even promised the same. The company politely refused stating that in matters of disputes between local states, as per their policy, they maintained neutrality.
- (b) Ghulam Shah had already marched on Kutch before receiving the above reply but the Company noted that on 18th November 1762 AD he had taken fort of Sindhri.
- (c) On 10th January 1763 AD, Company's agent reported that Ghulam Shah was retreating without any engagement with forces of Rao and had taken two or three forts of inconsiderable importance and it was reported that Rao had consented to pay a large sum of money. He was back in Sindh on 30th January 1763 AD. The expedition in Kutch lasted less than two months. E.I.Co., thought that there could be fear of Ahmed Shah ruler of Afghanistan, who was not paid the tribute and this was the reason of quick return of Ghulam Shah.

- (d) Ghulam Shah marched towards Kutch again in 1764 AD but did not leave border of Sindh. It was due to frequent incursions of Kutchis into lower parts of Sindh in Dingey's (small boats) and they had plundered several villages. Ghulam Shah's march resorted to peace. He did not march further for fear of Ahmed Shah Abdali and remained on frontiers of southern Sindh. It is known that up to 1762 AD, a branch of river Indus (western Puran or Phuleli) discharged into the sea via Koree Creek but the river Indus having changed the course, to the present and having abandoned 10 lac acres, the only course for Ghulam Shah was not to allow water from this minor branch to flow to Kutch, but to use the same within the country. Kutchis being deprived of water to irrigate their rice fields near Lakhpat may have attempted to rob small villages in Sindh near the old channel of east or west Dhoru Puran on which a bund was constructed by Ghulam Shah in 1763 AD.
- (e) Having paid the tribute and settled with Ahmed Shah he was awarded D.G. Khan and Multan for about 5 years. On 18th January 1765 AD he marched on Kutch, but the company does not give any results of that sortie.
- (f) In October 1766 AD Ghulam Shah planned another invasion of Kutch on a large scale and asked the Company to lend him two gun-men. The company agents at Thatta feared that if he succeeded, in subduing Kutch, he will immediately throw off his allegiance to Afghanistan, and Pathans will retaliate by attacking Sindh. This will affect their trade, specially the sale of woenss, for which Afghanistan was a suitable market. This invasion was abandoned for distribution in his own country.
- (g) In April 1768 AD Kutchi forces attempted invasion of lower part of Sindh but were repulsed by Ghulam Shah's forces. It appears that settlement was arrived at between Rao and Ghulam Shah and resulted in marriage of Ghulam Shah with daughter of Rao's cousin. It should be pointed out that among Jareja Sammas of Kutch, the ratio of males to females as the British observed was 8:1 and they were killing the girl babies by different methods. The Rajputs were bringing up girls of lower class in their harems and giving them away to conquerors under pressure as their own daughters. This was being done for many centuries. The other story is that of Rushbrook Williams, connected with Punja and local intrigues also repeated by Ghulam Rasul Maher in Tarikh-i-Kalhora. It has no weight for invasion of Kutch by Ghulam Shah, when his own country, was in shambles due to half of the country, having been deserted by the Indus through the change of its course.

- (h) After death of Ghulam Shah his son Sarfraz Khan succeeded him. He had serious troubles at the court but in 1775 AD, he marched on Kutch, took route to Khavda and Sumrasar, intending to march on Bhuj, but for unknown reason, he led his army to Chobari and Kanthkot and married daughter of the Thakur, levied fine at Adhoi and other places and returned to Sindh.

It is known that Kutch being pastoral like Thar of Sindh or Baluchistan could neither be subdued easily, nor could taxes be recovered from them, except by local chiefs. In case of invasion, they would abandon area, poison wells and could not be subdued by Mahmud Begra or Mughals. Feroz Shah's army perished there. Ghulam Shah and his advisors had no knowledge of Kutch's past. Invasions were failures. These incidents show that invasions of Kutch by Kalhoras or invasions of Sindh by Kutchis were of no serious consequences either to Kutch or Sindh, except attempts at plunder by invaders. In brief they were to cut off social relation between two groups of Sindhis. Credit of uniting the present Sindh, up to Sibi and Dahadhar goes to Kalhoras. By using diplomacy they could have won over Kutch rather than cut it off by invasions.

Kutch's Memons were either businessmen and or in cloth making trade and were urban. They were to suffer the most in case of any invasions. In 1761 AD one year before Ghulam Shah's invasion, a Kutchi ship, owned, operated and manned by Kutchis themselves, reached London. It was a challenge to European marine power. Ghulam Shah's invasion and looting of urban areas caused setback to rising marine power of South-Asia for ever, a tragedy for the whole of South Asia. It is also known that Kutchis were pirates and they charged large sums of money from Europeans, and even Nawab of Thatta paid Rs.12,000 – 14,000 to pirate Raja Rana settled on a swampy island in Indus Delta in 1756 AD to clear sea of Sangani pirates (probably Kutchis).

The hydrological changes brought by the river, led to shifting of a number of Kalhora capitals in next 14 years. Their capital Khudabaad (8 miles south of Dadu) up to 1754 AD was shifted to Muradabad (near Nasarpur in 1757 AD) then Khudaabad-II (2 miles north of Hala) and in 1760 to Shahpur (4 miles west of Nasarpur). Finally in 1768 to Hyderabad. These are four major changes of the capital out of many. These hydrological changes and shifting of capitals must have led to instability and conquest of Kutch was considered the solution to annex new territories, settle displaced Baluchi Jagirdars, but these invasions did not resolve the problem of one million acres of land turning into waste by hydrological changes. The booty collected by the chiefs under leadership of Mir Bahram may have helped a few individuals but due to reduction of area under cultivation people were dying due to lack of food, famines, malnourishment and diseases and no solution was sought.

Ghulam Shah Kalhoro having good relations with Ahmed Shah Abdali, was first assigned D.G. Khan and then Multan in 1765 and 1766 respectively for a short time. It may have resolved his problem of finance and building new capital at Hyderabad, but main problem of displaced land and people continued. He was lucky not to have faced uprising of Baluchi chiefs. May be Kutch invasions kept them in check for a while, but it erupted like a volcano after his death in 1772 AD.