

## LOST PAGES OF HISTORY: THE HANS DYNASTY OF SAHIWAL REGION

### Abstract

The paper aims to explore and highlight the rise and fall of the *Hans* tribe—one of the important tribes of India—which rose to power in Sahiwal region. The account is based upon official publications, oral history and the sources and information collected from the descendants of the tribe. *Hans* tribe was one of the prominent and old tribes of Mughal India. This tribe got prominence during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Alamgir and rose to power after his demise. Several villages of *Pakka Sidhar* region (District Sahiwal) were granted to Sheikh Qutab Hans in 1663 AD and a *sanad* (certificate) was also conferred upon him by Emperor Alamgir in this regard. The *Taluka* was named as Qutababad which was a fertile area and a source of handsome revenue to Mughal Empire as streams of *Para*, *Sohag* and *Dhaddar* flowed through its lands. The *Hans* tribe announced its independence during the downfall of the Mughal Empire and also became a threat to the *Kharals* of Kamalia who were also prominent in the region. The *Hans* rulers setup many small cities like Qutababad, Malka Hans, Pakka Sidhar, Kamir, Salim Kot Hans, Chak Shafi Hans and Qila Kot Qanongo. They also had good relations with the sufi saints of the time like Waris Shah and Bullhy Shah who visited and stayed with them. The Hans rulers retained their independence till the rise of Sikh rule in the Punjab.

This article is an amended version of the paper presented by the author in 2<sup>nd</sup> International Archaeology Conference, 21-23 January 2011, organized by National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research (NIHCR), Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

*Hans* tribe is one of the important tribes of Mughal India who had its influence especially in the Sahiwal region. The tribe claims to be of *Qureshi* origin<sup>1</sup> which was called ‘Hans’ after the name of Hazrat Hani Bin Arwa who had practically supported Hazrat Muslim Bin Aqeel (R.A) during his visit to *Koofa* before the incident of Karbala. Hazrat Hani Bin Arwa was martyred by Abaidullah Ibn-e-Ziyad before the incident of *Karbala* due to his open criticism upon Yazid and his support to Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.).<sup>2</sup> After the incident of Karbala, the tribe of Hazrat Hani Bin Arwa migrated from Iraq to Afghanistan and then to India<sup>3</sup> and some of them settled down in District Hassar<sup>4</sup> and others came to *Pakka Sidhar* in Sahiwal district.<sup>5</sup>

During the reign of Mughal Emperor Alamgir, Sheikh Qutab Hans—a learned member of the Hans family from *Pakka Sidhar*—served as the *Ataliq* (teacher) of some of the nobility in Delhi. In this way, Sheikh Qutab Hans obtained some prominence and influence in the court of Emperor Alamgir. In

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\* Dr. Kamran Aziz Khan, Sr. Headmaster, Govt. High School 34/EB, Arifwala, Distt. Pakpattan, e-mail: [khanka73@yahoo.com](mailto:khanka73@yahoo.com)

1663, a *sanad* (certificate) was conferred upon him and he was granted several villages in the Sahiwal district as a *Jagir* (state) which was named as *Taluka Qutab Abad*.<sup>6</sup> Sheikh Qutab setup a town as the headquarter of his state in the name of *Qutab Abad* between the *Sohag Para* (a stream) and the Multan-Delhi road<sup>7</sup> about 17 kilometres away from Pakpattan city. Some part of the deserted site of this town may still be seen which rapidly has been converted into agricultural land in the near past.



**Figure 1: Deserted Site of Qutab Abad**



**Figure 2: Deserted Site of Qutab Abad**

*Taluka Qutab Abad* was too fertile so was a source of handsome revenue for the Mughals as three streams—*Sohag, Para and Dhaddar*—flowed through this state. Emperor Alamgir founded a new *Pargana* in the name of Alamgirpur by attaching *Tapa Hansan*—an important site of the state of Sheikh Qutab Hans and some parts of the *Deg Ravi Pargana* where the Kharrals of Kamalia were the most prominent.<sup>8</sup> This generated a new scuffle in the region between the Hans and Kharral tribes. Alamgirpur was situated at the bank of the old bed of Bias River and later on was renamed as *Azeem Wala* and now a days it is known as *Kamir*. After the death of Emperor Alamgir, the Mughal Empire was in grievous downfall. The Hans tribe gradually got prominence and eventually announced its independence from the Mughal Empire in 1764 under Muhammad Azim Hans and founded its state in the name of '*Tappa Hansan*'<sup>9</sup> which was the part of *Pargana Alamgirpur* during the days of Emperor Alamgir. The Hans dynasty gradually became a threat to the Kharals of Kamalia who called Kamar Singh<sup>10</sup> for help against the Hans. The Hans also had a war of supremacy with the Diwans of Pakpattan.<sup>11</sup> The Hans state was attacked by Sikh invaders in 1767 and the chief of the Hans clan, Muhammad Azim was killed in the attack. He was buried in Azim Wala (Kamir) and his brother Muhammad Hayat succeeded him.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 3: Grave of Muhammad Azim Hans at Azim Wala (Kamir)**

In the meantime, the water sources of Hans state dried up hence it faced a deficit in the revenue which fastened the downfall of the tribe. According to the oral account of the local people, the Sikh rulers gave *Chak Shafi Hans* to the ex-accountant of the Hans family, Mohri Raam after the downfall of the Hans tribe and evicted them from there.<sup>13</sup>

The archaeological aspect of the Hans dynasty is also very interesting. They setup many small towns and forts in their state during the days of their supremacy. These towns included *Qutab Abad, Alamgirpur, Pakka Sidhar, Malka Hans, Salim Kot Hans, Chak Shafi Hans, Qila Kot Qanongo*.



**Figure 4: Remains of Fort at Kot Qanongo**

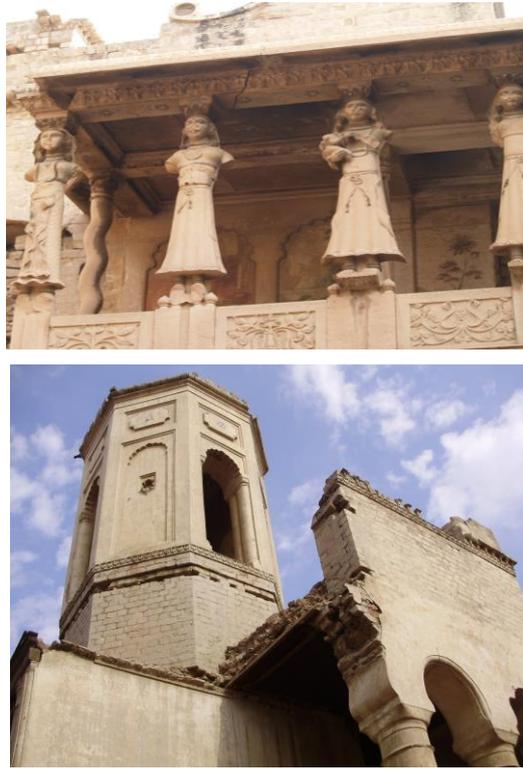
The town *Alamgirpur* was renamed as *Azim wala* when Muhammad Azim Hans announced his independence in 1764. Later on this town was again renamed as '*Kamir*' after the name of his grandson, Muhammad Kamir.

The oral accounts show that Hans rulers built some tunnels (the underground passages). Two tunnels were built from the fort in *Pakka Sidhar* to the forts in *Malka Hans* and *Chak Shafi Hans*. These passages had the capacity to allow the transfer of army ammunition from one city to another. In the same way a tunnel was built in *Chak Shafi Hans* from the houses of the nobility to a nearby well in order to give the ladies a safe passage to the well.



**Figure 5: Entrance of the said Tunnel at Chak Shafi Hans**

In Malka Hans there is a grand *Mander* (the place of worship for Hindus). It is said that the Hindus of the area had built this *Mander* as a substitute of the *Mander* destroyed by Sultan Mahmood Gaznavi at Somnat.<sup>14</sup> This is a huge building and most of its parts are still present.



**Figure 6 & 7: Parnami Mandar at Malka Hans**

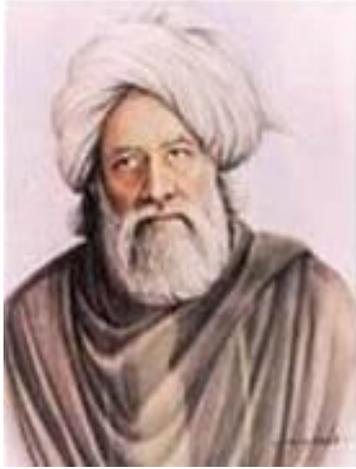
The buildings of *Manders* at *Malka Hans* and *Pakka Sidhar* show the religious tolerance of the Hans rulers. According to the record of Hans family, Muhammad Azim Hans had also built a garden in Azim Wala (Kamir) at the bank of Bias River which was known as *Naulakha Bagh*<sup>15</sup> but no remnants of this garden could be found.

The Hans ruler had also very good relations with the Sufis and saints of the time. Waris Shah—who is called the Shakespeare of Punjabi language—came to Hans state and stayed over there in *Malka Hans* where he completed his famous book '*Heer Waris Shah*'. He wrote about the prominence of the two tribes of the region in his famous book '*Heer Waris Shah*' as:

*Kharal, Hans Da Mulak Mashhoor Malka Jithy Sher Kita Yaran Wasty Main.* (The land of the Kharals and Hans is famous where I wrote my poetry for the friends)



**Figure 8: Waris Shah and the Mosque at Malka Hans**



**Figure 9: Bullhy Shah**

Bullhy Shah was another important sufi poet who used to visit his friend Waris Shah at *Malka Hans* and one of his disciples, Haji Hans at Azim Wala (Kamir). The Hans tribe also claims to be the descendent of Hazrat Baba Muhammad Panah who was a great saint of the time. He was buried in Kamir in about 1820 AD.<sup>16</sup> An annual festival of Hazrat Muhammad Panah is celebrated on 31 March every year being the largest festival of Sahiwal district.

## Note & References

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- <sup>1</sup> The record obtained from Revenue Department, Government of the Punjab (Record of 1929-30) shows 'Hans' family at one place as the sub-cast of Rajpoots and a sub-cast of Jaats at some other place but the descendants of the family don't accept it and declare it a clerical mistake. Interview with Mian Muhammad Bashir Hans, Chichawatni Distt. Sahiwal. According to Sir Denzil Ibbetson the Hans tribe had claimed to be the Qureshi origin in 1883. See Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes* (Lahore: Government of the Punjab: 1986), 209. The same information may also be noted from *Gazetteer of the Montgomery District 1883-84* (Lahore: Government of the Punjab, 1884), 67.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Mian Muhammad Bashir Hans, Chichawatni Distt. Sahiwal.
- <sup>3</sup> During its migration from Afghanistan to India, the tribe stayed over in Kaghan valley. A place between Lala Zar and Lake Saiful Malook is still famous in the name of 'Hans Gali'.
- <sup>4</sup> The Hans tribe settled down at a place in District Hassar in the Eastern Punjab which now is a city known as 'Hansi'.
- <sup>5</sup> This area is situated to the north-west of Pakpattan city.
- <sup>6</sup> *Gazetteer of the Montgomery District 1883-84*, 28.
- <sup>7</sup> This road was built by Sher Shah Soori in the mid of 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- <sup>8</sup> *Gazetteer of the Montgomery District 1883-84*, 29.
- <sup>9</sup> Allah Baksh Tariq, *Tarikh-i-PakPattan* (History of PakPattan) (PakPattan: Al-Farid Academy, 1994), 98.
- <sup>10</sup> He was a prominent leader of the Nakkai family of Gugera.
- <sup>11</sup> The Diwans of Pakpattan are the successors of Baba Farid ShkarGanj and had a state near Pakpattan. After the down fall of Mughal Empire, the Dewans also announced their independence in 1757 under Dewan Abdus Subhan. For details see *Gazetteer of the Montgomery District 1883-84*, 32-3. Also see Tariq, *Tarikh-i-PakPattan*, 99-100.
- <sup>12</sup> Unpublished record of Mian Muhammad Zakir Hans (Kamir), Distt. Sahiwal.
- <sup>13</sup> Oral statement of Muhammad Sharif s/o Ghulam Muhammad (an aged man of *Chak Shafi Hans*).
- <sup>14</sup> But this statement seems not to be realistic as there was no town here during the time of Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi.
- <sup>15</sup> Unpublished and hand written record of Mian Ghous Hans recovered from his son Khizar Hayat Hans (Kamir), Distt. Sahiwal.
- <sup>16</sup> The record of the Revenue Department, Government of the Punjab (Record of 1929-30) also supports the claim of the Hans family as Muhammad Panah was the grandson of Muhammad Kamir Hans and the great grandson of the Muhammad Azim Hans.