



THE PANJPAI RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER DURRANIS

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The Panjpai Relationship With the Other Durrani

Recently a question came up regarding the relationship within the Durrani Confederation. Specifically, there were reports that the Panjpai tribes (Alizai, Ishakzai, and Noorzai) were actually Ghilzai tribes that were incorporated (or incorporated themselves) into the larger, stronger Durrani tribes in approximately 1728 when Persia's Nadir Shah provided the Durrani tribes large tracts of previously Ghilzai lands by royal grant. The land grants were provided in appreciation for the Durrani service in the capture of Daghestan after these tribes were forced into Persian service following their rebellious actions when they attacked Mashed.

The confusion resulted from an analytical report prepared in Afghanistan for the British by an indigenous "think tank" called "The Liaison Office," or TLO, that prepared a series of generally accurate reports on Helmand's individual districts. It followed a similar assumption from Adamec that developed from a single source and the TLO report may be "circular" and based on the possible Adamec error.

The question was thought provoking and outlined a pattern of tribal behavior in which weaker tribes allow themselves to be incorporated into one that was large in return for gained prestige and increased protection.

Analysis:

- According to Muhamad Hayat Khan's *Afghanistan and Its Inhabitants*, the Alizai and Noorzai tribes were part of the Abdali (Durrani) tribes that were forced into Nadir Shah's service in 1728 and before the Abdalis were granted Ghilzai lands in the vicinity of Kandahar. He failed to mention the Ishaqzai in his history. The Alizai leader, Nur Mohammad Khan, was clearly mentioned as being a leader of the Abdalis in Nadir Shah's force that captured Daghestan and was rewarded with Ghilzai lands for their feat of arms.
- Ferrier included all five of the current Panjpai tribes in his second division of the the Abdalis in his book, *History of the Afghans*, that was apparently written in 1845 and translated into English in 1858.
- There may have been previous animosity between the Abdali tribes and the Ghilzai that predated the Nadir Shah's royal grant. The Saddozai (Popalzai) spokesman for the Abdali tribes, Allahyar Khan, asked that the Ghilzai lands "be made over to the Abdali" during the meeting with Nadir Shah. Based on this statement, it remains possible that the Panjpai tribes may have allied themselves with the Abdalis long before their period of service with Nadir Shah and the doubt cannot entirely be ruled out. In Pashtun culture, there is generally reason for a separation within a tribe or group of tribes and this may explain the separation of the Zirak and the Panjwai.
- The confusion over the origins of the Panjpai may have been created by the Adamec section "...it appears from the genealogical table given overleaf that no such division as the Panjpai ever existed..." and Adamec seems to have relied upon a single source for this information.
- While it is difficult to determine with any precision the actual origin of the Panjpai group of tribes, they were part of Nadir Shah's Abdali force that captured Daghestan. This occurred prior to the grant of Ghilzai lands and the five Panjpai tribes seem to be a part of the all important genealogical records of the Durrani Confederation.

- Conclusion: Panjpai tribes have been a part of the Durrani Confederation since before 1728 and probably before. There is a small chance that these five tribes may have been Ghilzai at one time, however, but long before the royal grant of the Ghilzai lands to the Durrani by Nadir Shah.

Historical Background:

About the end of 1728, Nadir Shah (Irani) [sic] taught the Abdali [Durrani] an unwanted lesson of subjection, notwithstanding which they soon after, under the leadership of Zulfikar Khan, older brother of Ahmad Khan, rebelled against their new conqueror, marched upon Mashed, and after defeating an army commanded by Nadir Shah's brother, laid siege to the city. When, however, the famous general, Nadir Shah, himself appeared in force, they raised the siege and fell back to their own country, closely pursued by Nadir Shah who soon appeared before the gates of Harat [sic]. With desperate energy the Abdali, thus pursued to their last stronghold, defended the beleaguered city, and when, after ten long months it surrendered, the enraged conqueror determined to signalize his success that should put an end to Abdali turbulence. He sent 6000 families into exile in various districts of Persia, scattered others to Multan and elsewhere, and forced great numbers to enter his army....

Nadir Shah had been eleven months engaged in the siege of Daghistan, when he was one evening eating in his tent, a ball struck the ground near and caused some dirt to fly into the dish before him. Seized with a fit of ungovernable fury (the Naderi temper is still a byword) the despot sent for the Abdali chiefs who were with his force and swore that unless the city was taken within 20 hours they should all pay the forfeit of their lives. Upon this Ghani Khan (**Alikozai**), Nur Mohammad Khan (**Alizai**), Haji Jamal Khan (**Mohammadzai Barakzai**), Khanu and Manu Khan (**Nurzai**) and the other leading Abdali gathered their fellows together, and at their head made a determined assault upon the city which, after an obstinate resistance, fell into their hands within the time specified. Nadir Shah, well pleased with their gallantry, promised to grant them any request they might make, and the assembled chiefs, putting forward Allahyar Khan (Saddozai) [Popalzai] as their spokesman (that same that afterwards met his death at Sabzawar), then asked that the ancient possessions of the tribe might be restored to them, that those sent into exile to Persia might be recalled, and that the lands then held by the Ghilzai might be made over to the Abdali. This boon was granted.

Source: Khan, Muhamad Hayat, Afghanistan and its Inhabitants, (1874), translated by Joseph Priestly, 1981, pp. 62- 63.

Indeed, it appears from the genealogical table given overleaf that no such division as the Panjpai ever existed. The Zirak division is again subdivided into Barakzais, Popalzais (or Fufalzais) and Alikozais, whilst the so-called Panjpai division is said to be subdivided into Nurzais, Alizais, Ishakzais, Khugianis, and Makus. Each clan contains several branches.

Source: Adamec, Vol. 5, pg. 142.

Abdel, the son of Tsera-Bend, the founder of this tribe, had only one son, named Teryn, who had two sons, Zirek and Pindja: from the first originated three tribes and from the second five.

The tribes that descended from Zirek are:

- (1) Koofdzye, more generally known as Popolzye
- (2) Barukyze
- (3) Alikiouzye

The tribes descended from Pindjpa are:

- (1) Isakzye
- (2) Alizye
- (3) Noorzya
- (4) Khaouganee
- (5) Makohee

Source: Ferrier, Joseph P., History the Afghans, (translated in 1858), pp. 8-9.

The distinguished service rendered by the Abdali tribe to Nadir Shah was now met with fitting acknowledgement. The lands lying west of Herat, and still held by the Durrani, were made over to them by royal grant. Besides this, the Ghilzai lands were also apportioned among them, the valley of the Arghendab falling to Ghani Khan and his clan of the Alikozaï, and the region of Dawar to Nur Mohammad and the Alizai, while allotment of the Barakzai was of inferior land.

Source: Khan, Muhamad Hayat, Afghanistan and its Inhabitants, (1874), translated by Joseph Priestly, 1981, Pg. 63.

Case Study:

The following newspaper report provides a record of a smaller tribe being absorbed into a larger tribe. It is very probable that this has occurred numerous times within the Pashtun tribes.

MIRAMSHAH: The Utmanzai tribesmen of North Waziristan Agency have declared Gurbaz tribe as part of Utmanzai.¹

A jirga of Utmanzai held here Monday, which was attended among others by Malik Rabnawaz, Malik Sherzada Wazir, Haji Pasham Din, Malik Sarwar Jan Wazir, Malik Toti Gul Darpakhel, Maulvi Abdur Rahman, Malik Abdul Qudoos, Malik Mamoor Khan Torikhel and Malik Shah Jehan Kabulkhel, said Gurbaz was a section of Dawar and Wazir and its elders would be included in any tribal jirga. "We have common customs and traditions and in 1960 tribal leaders including chief of Wazir Malik Khanadan, chief of Dawar Malik Sultan Mahmud Khan, chief of Torikhel Malik Sardar Habibullah and chief of Kabulkhel Malik Zaman Khan at a grand jirga held at Azad Mandi Bannu had decided that Gurbaz was a section of Utmanzai and it should be invited to any tribal jirga in the agency," said the participants.

They said in 1970s a sub-section of Gurbaz, Sherkhel was not only accorded Pakistan nationality but provided government jobs and other incentives. In 2004 another sub-section of the tribe, Bangi Daur was given nationality and other incentives.

They said Utmanzai could not ignore the 30,000 population of Gurbaz and it should be treated as part of Utmanzai.

1. The News International- Pakistan 7/12/2005

Case Study:

Individuals also adopt a tribal identity and it appears that Babrak Karmal, a communist president, may have adopted an identity.

“It is a custom in Afghanistan for a person of no ethnic significance to relate himself to the ethnic group into which he has been integrated. Not all Pashto-speaking Afghans are Pashtuns, and not all Persian-speaking Afghans are Tajiks.”

“Karmal’s family was believed to be Tajik, the second main ethnic group after the Pashtuns, because linguistically and culturally the family was Tajik and was integrated into the urban community of Kabul. But Karmal’s father did not say so and “would skillfully conceal his Tajik identity. In 1986 Karmal announced that he and his full brother, Mahmud Baryalay, were Pashtuns. He said so because they were the sons of a linguistically Persianized Pashtun mother of the Mullakhel section of the Ghilzays. But in the patriarchal society of Afghanistan, descent is traced only through the patriarchal line. Karmal should have stated that he was a Tajik if he was a Tajik. Karmal’s announcement was political in that he wanted to attach himself to the Pashtuns, but it confounded the issue of his identity. Karmal’s forefathers had immigrated from Kashmir to Kabul, as many Kashmiris had settled there over a long period of time. Kashmir was a part of the Afghan Durrani empire until its dissolution in 1818. This descent is reinforced by the fact that Karmal and his brother’s original names resemble the names of Indian Muslims. Karmal’s first full name was Sultan Hussayn, and his brother’s name was Sultan Mahmud; their father was named Mohammad Hussayn. The brothers changed their names to sound more like Afghan names.

The fact that Karmal’s ancestors had immigrated to Kabul, Karmal’s statement that he was a Pashtun, the fact that his father was not a Pashtun, and his father’s reluctance to admit that he was a Tajik—all these make it doubtful that the family was Tajik originally, although they were integrated into that group.”

Source: <http://www.afghanan.net/afghanistan/karmal.htm>.



UPDATE: 03 February 2009

Further review of the history of the major Panjpai tribes, the Noorzai, Ishaqzai, and Alizai shows that these Panjpai tribes have been closely associated with the other large Durrani sub-confederation since before the Durrani Confederation was formally created. For example:

- Animosity between the Ghilzai and Durrani began well before the selection of Ahmad Shah Abdali as the Durrani leader. According to Pakistani historians Dr. Sher Zaman Taizi (*Struggles for Liberation*) and Ganda Sing (Singh?) (*Ahmad Shah Durrani*), Mirwais Hotak, who later expelled the Persian occupiers of southern Afghanistan, supported the Persian governor of Kandahar, Uktnik Georgean, also known as Gorgin Khan, in a “ruthless suppression of an uprising of Abdalis [Durrani] in 1707.” According to Ganda Sing, “Having received an irreparable setback, the Abdalis receded into the background.”¹
- In *Da Ahmad Shah Baba Divan Ghuarchan* by Abdul Shakoor Rishad, the chief of the Afghan force serving under Persian Nadir Shah was Noor Muhammad Alizai Abdali.² In *Afghanistan and its Inhabitants*, Muhammad Hayat Khan provides a similar account with the Abdali chiefs Ghani Khan (Alkozai [sic]), Nur Muhammad Khan (Alizai), Haji Jamal Khan (Muhammadzai Barakzai), Khanu and Manu Khan (Nurzai) and the other leading Abdali....³
- Nadir Shah was assassinated in June, 1727 and Ahmad Shah Abdali began to rise to prominence within the tribes.⁴
- Following 20 years of conflict, the Abdali tribes came together in 1747 in a Jirga near Kandahar that resulted in the selection of Ahmad Shah Abdali as their leader. Included in the group that selected him as their leader were the powerful chiefs Mohabat Khan Popalzai, Moosa Khan Ishaqzai, and Nasrullah Khan Noorzai, men who were members of the tribal coalition that became the Durrani Confederation with the selection of Ahmad Shah Abdali as its leader.⁵

These examples show that for an extended period prior to the formation of the Durrani Confederation the tribes that key strongmen from the Alizai, Noorzai, and Ishaqzai tribes, most of the Panjpai Durrani, were closely affiliated with the Zirk Durrani. The leaders of the Noorzai and Ishaqzai tribes were named as members of the Jirga that selected Ahmad Shah Abdali as the Durrani leader. Given this history, it seems to be highly improbable that the Panjpai tribes were actually Ghilzai and not Durrani.

Combined with this history, the Mirwais Hotak’s Ghilzai drove the Abdali tribes from the vicinity of Kandahar in 1707 with the help of the Persian governor. These lands were returned to the Durrani only after the region was conquered by Nadir Shah’s Persian army, obviously before his death in 1727. The fact that Ghilzai held the formerly Durrani lands in the Kandahar region and this region was returned to Durrani that included Alizai, Noorzai, and Ishaqzai tribes also makes it highly unlikely that these three tribes were once Ghilzai and not Durrani.

1. Yunas, S. Fida, *Afghanistan: Jirga and Loya Jirga in the Afghan Tradition (577 A.D. to 1992 A.D.)*, Peshawar: The Aays, .D., pg. 24.

2. *Ibid*, pg. 25.

3. Khan, Muhammad Hayat, *Afghanistan and Its Inhabitants*, translated by Joseph Priestly, pg. 62.

4. *Ibid*, pg. 63

5. Yunas, *Op. Cit.*, pg. 24.

