

HISTORICIZING PUNJABI HEROES: FOLKLORE, RESISTANCE AND ANTI-COLONIAL MEMORY IN COLONIAL PUNJAB

DR. WASIF LATIF

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, PUNJABI GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY, LAHORE. wasiflatif@gcu.edu.pk

DR. SAEED AHMED BUTT*

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, HISTORY GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY, LAHORE. saeedbutt@gcu.edu.pk

DR. SYED GHAZANFAR HUSSAIN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, PUNJABI BABA GURU NANAK UNIVERSITY, NANKANA SAHIB,
syed.ghazanfar@bgnu.edu.pk

SUBAH SADIQ

PHD SCHOLAR, PUNJABI INSTITUTE OF PUNJABI AND CULTURAL STUDIES, ORIENTAL COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB, LAHORE. subahsadiqwattoo@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Historical accounts of colonial Punjab have been pieced together from British records, military correspondence and administrative reports, and the voices of the colonisers have been privileged over the local experiences and indigenous voices. In Punjabi folklore, alternative historical narratives celebrate the fight of the region's heroes against political domination, the struggle for communal autonomy, and the spirit of courage, justice and sacrifice. Folklore helps historicize Punjabi heroes and preserve anti-colonial resistance during British rule in Punjab (1849–1947). The study critically evaluates oral traditions, folk ballads (vars), legends, qissas and collective memory alongside colonial archival sources using historical analysis, folklore studies, memory studies and postcolonial historiography. The paper shows how oral traditions have preserved resistance narratives that colonial historiography often omitted by studying Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal, Dulla Bhatti and other Punjabi heroes. Folklore reveals social values, political aspirations and collective memories that shaped Punjabi anti-colonial consciousness, according to the study.

KEYWORDS: Punjabi folklore, Punjabi heroes, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal, anti-colonial resistance, colonial Punjab, collective memory, oral traditions, subaltern history, postcolonial historiography, historicizing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to its strategic importance in British Indian Empire, colonial Punjab has a unique place in South Asian history. After Sikh Empire was annexed in 1849, Punjab was one of the most important administrative, military and agricultural areas of British Empire. Land ownership, canal irrigation, taxation, military conscription and social and political power. (Talbot, 1988) were all affected by colonial policy. Colonial administration introduced modernism and development, yet it also led to discontent in the region regarding land revenue collection, limitations on traditional authority and state encroachment on rural life. There are oral accounts of localized resistance which emerged from these tensions in Punjab. British sources such as records, gazetteers, intelligence reports, military correspondence and administration documents have been the primary sources for Colonial Punjab. While these sources offer helpful insights into governance, law and politics, they may not necessarily capture the experiences of indigenous communities, but rather the interests and biases of colonial administrators. (Dirks, 2001) Therefore, there was a deemphasis of many local leaders, village movements and day-to-day resistance as criminal disturbances instead of political resistance. This is a balance that is questioned by postcolonial historians who emphasize the importance of colonial archives as only one part of historical knowledge. The focus of Subaltern Studies has been on recovering the voices of marginalised communities from political discourse of elites. (Guha, Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society, 1982) Historical research has demonstrated that oral traditions, rituals, commemorations, songs and folklore complement written historical records and help to maintain alternative perceptions of the past. (Halbwachs, 1992) The Pakistani province of Punjab is a good example of it. Hero figure has been commemorated through a variety of elements such as vars, dhadi performances, qissas, folk songs, proverbs, and seasonal festivals in

both rural and urban communities. These are oral traditions that help to define regional identity in terms of stories of courage, sacrifice, justice and resistance. Some heroes are based on historical figures such as Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, some are legends. They exhibit the ways in which communities develop historical meaning beyond archives. Heroes form crux of Punjabi culture. The bravery, solidarity, protection of oppressed and defiance of unjust authority: These are the attributes of *Dulla Bhatti*, *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral*, *Jagga Jatt*, etc., who are regional warriors. Oral performances have passed on their accounts, interpreting historical events according to political and cultural changes. Due to his leadership in 1857 Sandal Bar uprising in Punjab, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral has garnered scholarly attention. His British administrative record describes him as a “rebellious tribal chief who defied colonial government, but Punjabi folklore celebrates him as a valiant champion of local autonomy and a martyr fighting against foreign rule. Traditional speech is recognized now as a reflection of a community's collective memory and a means of understanding their community's lived past.” (Portelli, 1991) Folklore conveys cultural values, morals, justice, identity and resistance as well as chronological facts. Therefore, one has to adopt methods of archival history, folklore, anthropology, memory and cultural history for study of Punjabi heroes. Scholars have long been debating between folklore and history. The written tradition of historical writing that was common at the time distrusted oral traditions, as it was prone to embellishment, selective remembrance and symbolic interpretation. Oral historians have demonstrated that memory is a source of history because it reveals the memory, reinterpretation and transmission of past by society through generations. Such historical consciousness is found in Punjabi folklore. Oral poetry, ballads and local stories carry with them local perceptions of oppression, social relations and regional loyalties and moral evaluations of political authority that do not exist in colonial archives. This is corroborated by recent memory research. Halbwachs (1992) states that collective memory is socially constructed by reinterpreting the past to address issues of present. In this context, (Assmann, 2011) separated living generations' communicative memory from cultural memory, preserved by rituals, literature, monuments and folklore. This article examines how heroic stories in Punjabi culture have contributed to retention of resistance narratives following an absence of witnesses.

Colonial resistance in British India could take form of military rebellion, peasant uprisings, tribal resistance, religious organization and daily defiance. The historiography of nationalism has been dominated by major political structures and urban elites, though local organizations of resistance have received less attention, although they did help to create regional political consciousness. (Guha, 1983) Anticolonial resistance against land, taxation, customary rights, and colonial government's encroachment upon governance of rural areas was all too common in Punjab. There were occasional instances where Chiefs, tribal leaders and village communities resisted British rule with arms or refused to cooperate. Official histories often ignored such incidents, however, oral history glorified local heroes who defended communal dignity and justice. These individuals became cultural icons via collective memory. Moral courage, sacrifice, loyalty and resistance to oppression were not only the theme of military battles, but also of folk songs and heroic tales.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1. Theoretical Framework:

In this study, a start has been taken to analyze historicization of Punjabis heroes with help of folklore studies, oral history, collective memory, subaltern studies and postcolonial historiography. This framework assumes that oral traditions, culture and collective memory help to recall, pass on and reconstruct history. The study looks at these complementary lenses to investigate how Punjabi folklore preserves anti-colonial memory and in turn critically to weigh the historical importance of this folklore. There has been ongoing debate between folklore and history in the humanities and social sciences. The classical positivist historiography was based on official documentation, governmental correspondence and archival material. Oral traditions were deemed to be unreliable since they change over time, and symbolic motifs are used. But, folklore research in 20th century took a turn for the worse. Folklore is not only a fact: it is now regarded as a product of a society's historical awareness, cultural attitudes and collective identity. (Dorson, 1972) Folk narratives, heroic ballads, legends, proverbs and oral poetry capture the community's narratives and values, as well as exemplars and principles of justice and resistance. Oral tradition plays a significant role in the lives of the Punjabis as they were uneducated in the rural areas. Ballads (vars), dhadi performances, qissas, and village storytelling maintained for generations political conflict, social change and heroic sacrifice. Folklore is an integral part of the cultural record and should complement documentary history. Though most recent folklore theory focuses on traditional stories as dynamic documents rather than static history. Every generation decides to take up the stories of heroes and make them relevant to their times while keeping their core values of courage, justice, solidarity and resistance. This is a continuous phenomenon which is the reason why Punjabi heroes are still culturally relevant after their history.

Academic acceptance of oral history challenged the assumptions of historical evidence. Oral history is a democratic process of historical scholarship, as demonstrated (Thompson, 2000), who demonstrated that it engaged with ordinary people and marginalized communities in the process of construction of historical knowledge. Oral testimony is

important because meaning, emotion and interpretation of historical events are evident from the testimony, according to (Portelli, 1991) Oral inaccuracies can be historically significant in that they reflect a community's memory of past. The point of view is significant as far as colonial Punjab is concerned. British administrative documents recorded priorities of taxation, policing, military recruitment, stability of political regime. Thus, local resistance movements were often seen as criminal disturbances, tribal unrest or law-and-order issues rather than social and political issues. Therefore, Punjabi oral traditions reveal local motivations, perceptions of injustice, and interpretations of communal resistance. The methodology of oral history is also under critical examination. Memory may be selective, narratives embellished and symbolic elements meld with history. Consequently, historians should consider oral sources and other sources as well as archival and archaeological sources and contemporary sources all of which should be compared. Another important theoretical basis for this study is collective memory. Collective memory differs from personal memory as it refers to "socially shared understandings of the past" which shape communities, nations and cultures. Maurice Halbwachs states that memory is social because it is remembered in families, religious groups, education, and culture. Some events in history are kept alive in communities to strengthen its identities and values. The reconstruction is continuous instead of passive preservation of memory. (Halbwachs, 1992) Halbwachs' legacy was continued by Jan Assmann (2011), who made the distinction between communicative and cultural memory. Communicative memory is passed on via interpersonal communication from one generation to next. Cultural memory is maintained through texts, rituals, monuments, ceremonies, songs, folklore and commemorative practices. Punjabi heroics are a reflection on cultural memory. When eyewitnesses were lost heroic ballads and oral narratives kept alive resistance, sacrifice and communal leadership. Cultural memory plays a crucial role in understanding the popularity of Punjabi heroes such as Rai Ahmad Khan Kharwal and Dulla Bhatti. Their historical significance is not measured by their military accomplishments or by written accounts. State narratives and collective memory can sometimes clash. Colonial governments tended to define resistance movements as criminal acts to justify colonial rule. In folk memory, these events were frequently re-interpreted as moral acts of resistance against oppression. This research has been influenced by Subaltern Studies School established by Ranajit Guha in 1980s. Subaltern Studies scholars were not happy with colonial history and elite nationalist discourses, which neglected peasants, tribal communities, rural leaders, women and other marginalised groups. (Guha, Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society, 1982) Guha felt that colonial archives were biased against natives. The use of oral traditions, folklore, vernacular literature, local customs and community memories are all appropriate sources for reconstructing ordinary people's political consciousness. Alongside organised national movements, local resistance or daily defiance and regional leadership should be taken into account. It is a theoretical approach that sheds light on Punjabi heroes. Folklore leaders were rarely given political positions in colonial documentation, and frequently were perceived as rebels or criminals or landlords. In Subaltern Studies, historian Dipesh Kumar highlights historiographical problems by examining difference between archive's characterization and popular memory. Shahid Amin's seminal study demonstrated the implacability of local memory and its tendency to challenge a state's version of itself. His research revealed that significance of political events can be influenced by popular memory, and that there exists no evidence of history. (Amin, 1995) This insight to Punjab helps historians to look at folklore not as an adjunct to historical interpretation but as a key component of it. Postcolonial historiography is a critical analysis of production of knowledge by colonial regime and how this knowledge continues to inform study of colonial societies. Edward Said's 1978 argument on Orientalism describes how colonial scholarship frequently represented colonized peoples as deserving of imperial rule as tools of political manipulation. (Said, 1978) These insights have been applied to colonial archives as documents reflecting administrative agendas, ideological underpinnings and political authority. Nicholas Dirks asserted that the colonial rule altered indigenous institutions and kinds of knowledge they produced, influencing the nature of historical writing. (Dirks N. B., 2001) The categories used in census, ethnographic surveys, criminal tribe laws and district gazetteers were not based on social groups, but on colonial administrative interests. As a result, historians need to be critical of indigenous views and of archival documents. In colonial Punjab, official history termed resistance leaders rebels, outlaws or disorderly. In Punjabi folklore, these figures are often depicted as protectors of the community and guardian of justice. In this way, post-colonial historiography prompts historians to engage in comparative study instead of taking archive materials and folklore at face value. Chronology, administration, and political events are revealed in colonial records; indigenous values, morals and cultural meanings are uncovered in folklore. The use of these sources enhances and enriches interpretation of past. Through study of folklore, heroic stories can be seen as a means of maintaining cultural values, while through oral history, lived experience and community testimony are identified as important to history, collective memory has ability to reconstruct past, subaltern studies can provide us with alternate voices from dominant historical canon, and postcolonial studies can challenge knowledge production by examining colonial record.

2.2. Literature Review

Historiography of colonial period has changed over a century. The early history has been composed by British administrators and military officers as well as colonial ethnographers to record government, maintenance of political

stability and justification of imperial rule. Administrative reconstruction requires a district gazetteer, settlement reports, intelligence records and official correspondence, all of which embody colonial ideology. Local leaders were much more likely to be considered rebels, tribal agitators, or criminals than political figures reacting to significant social and economic shifts. Historians challenged colonial narratives since independence. J.S. Grewal (Grewal, 1998), David Gilmartin (Gilmartin, 1994) and Ian Talbot (Talbot, 1988) demonstrated how land administration, canal colonization, military recruitment, and government by bureaucracy transformed state of Punjab during colonial rule. The research in areas of state-building and rural society revealed impact of colonial policies on altering the existing power relationships and emergence of new power relations and resistance mechanisms in countryside. These studies helped to enhance the knowledge of colonial Punjab using written archives. Local histories, local legends and local folktales that captured local impressions and memories were overlooked. This imbalance suggests need for a more inclusive regional history by incorporating documentary sources and indigenous cultural narratives, as suggested by recent scholars.

Punjabi folklore was studied by different scholars such as folklorists, anthropologists, linguists and literary scholars for its richness and diversity. The heroic ballads (vars), dhadi performances, qissas, folk songs, riddles, proverbs and seasonal festivals serve as a record of several centuries of cultural heritage. Oral traditions differed from written chronicles because they enabled generations to "recreate" history in response to shifting social and political climate. Oral folklore was not history, as was believed by classical folklore. (Dorson, 1972) Interdisciplinary viewpoints extended this, as folklore represents historical awareness and a community's collective identity. Heroes tell of past events and values such as justice, honour, sacrifice and authority. Punjab has a lot of folkloric applications in social side. Preserving the autonomy of defenders, regional dialects, ethics and solidarity. Heroes are the embodiment of generations' ideals and military achievements. The study of folklore has been integrated with performance in field. Heroic stories have new meaning in village assemblies, cultural festivals, religious celebrations and schools. These shows uphold Punjab's valorous spirit.

Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is a well known Punjabi hero due to his written and oral legacy. Kharral became powerful in Sandal Bar war of 1857. In British records, he is portrayed as a chief of the tribes who stood up to colonial rule and colonial administration and in Punjabi folklore, he is remembered as an early champion of freedom of indigenous communities. There are conflicting views among historians on their portrayal. He encouraged rebellion and administrative chaos—colonial officials considered it to be security and governance. Kharral is a good man who stood up and was murdered, exposing wider issues of justice, land, communal autonomy and foreign rule. There are numerous heroes in Punjabi folktales who have both a historical and a legendary past besides Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. Dulla Bhatti, Jagga Jatt and other regional heroes stood against injustice, kept vulnerable communities safe and upheld local traditions. Most scholars have agreed that one should not apply contemporary standards of documentary verification to these figures. Punjabi symbols are the sign of courage, generosity, honor and community responsibility. They are found in books, folk songs, festivals, theatre and film as reminders of historical memory and cultural identity.

The studies of memory reveal that communities tend to maintain heroic stories to ensure identity formation. (Assmann, 2011) (Halbwachs, 1992) Punjabi heroic folklore is capable of bringing together religions and regions. The heroes can come from a particular community but their values go beyond sectarian boundaries. They do not lose their meaning as history. History has a way of shaping politics in future. Posthumous legends create values, regional identities, and historical imaginaries. Memory studies have greatly influenced anti-colonial resistance interpretations. Rather than in form of military campaigns or political institutions, scholars examine commemoration in form of oral histories, education, literature and monuments in order to understand how societies remember colonialism. The collective memory is flexible and responds to social needs, as suggested by (Halbwachs, 1992) and (Assmann, 2011). This theoretical approach has historians looking to question why some historical figures become icons and others fade. The heroes of Punjab altered perspectives of justice, sacrifice and resistance in culture and were remembered for historical events. Oral history research suggests that memory should not be evaluated by accuracy of facts remembered. (Thompson, 2000) (Portelli, 1991) The oral histories and documentary sources reflect evolving social understandings, rather than only inaccurate history. This implies that Punjabi folklore has historical experiences, which are not available in archives. The incorporation of folklore, oral history and memory studies into South Asian history has increased in interest. Oral traditions are becoming valued historical sources in analysis of them in tandem with their documentary sources. There is a focus on performance and digital preservation and involvement of community in cultural preservation in folklore studies. Folklore is more of a process than a collection of stories for more people. The heroic tradition is passed on through literature, music, television, internet and public celebrations in Punjabi culture of Pakistan and India.

2.3. Research Gap:

The scholarship in Colonial Punjab is increasing but it is not completed. Most history-based research is in colonial administrative documents and folklore is treated as literature or anthropology. Secondly, the study of individual Punjabi heroes tends to be archival or folkloric without comparing. Third, folklore theory and oral history, collective

memory, Subaltern Studies and postcolonial historiography are not usually examined in combination. Heroic narratives have not received much attention and they play a role in shaping regional identity, in preserving historical memory and in challenging representation of resistance from colonial forces. Finally, study of memory and of oral traditions are popular, but not many studies have connected Punjabi heroic oral traditions to anti-colonial memory debates. There is a need for more research on folklore, historical awareness and postcolonial identity.

3. Colonial Punjab; Historical Context of Resistance:

Search for Punjabi heroes in a profound change that occurred after British annexation in 1849, in order to understand its significance. Colonial rule brought in a change in governance, agrarian relations, military structure, revenue collection and local authority. These changes were opposed and supported by different social groups. Some Punjabi elites embraced colonial administration while others viewed it as a challenge to customary rights, political autonomy, socio-economic system of the society. Heroism, such as Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal, needs to be viewed in context of colonial restructuring and local reaction.

3.1. The Punjab Annexation and British Rule:

After Anglo-Sikh Wars of 1849, EIC came to rule Punjab directly. With downfall of the Sikh Empire, Punjab became a strategically important province of British India. Punjab was a significant military and political force in the imperial scenario because of its close geographical location with Afghanistan and Central Asia. (Talbot, 1988) The Henry Laws, John Law and even provincial officials were looking for political security in terms of centralisation, codification of law and expansion of bureaucracy. Administration, revenue settlements, policing, judicial systems, and communication systems were reorganized to centralize colonial power. The canals, roads, telegraph lines and railways helped to stimulate the economy and to facilitate administration. These changes empowered state and undermined customary institutions that supported power of village headmen and tribal chiefs. Colonial administration and indigenous political structures clashed due to governance changes. Ian Talbot (Talbot, 1988) and David Gilmartin (Gilmartin D., 1988) state that rule of British was successful and that there was a political surveillance system in place. These enabled colonial administration to monitor local communities such as never before, through ethnographic knowledge, census operations, land surveys and intelligence gathering, which enhanced imperial powers and state's intervention in rural territories. The agriculture of colonial Punjab got transformed. The rural society was agricultural and British administrators appreciated it for political stability and financial wealth. The government of colonies was largely concerned with land administration. Revenue settlements shaped standardization of land measurement, ownership and taxation which contributed to administrative efficiency. Such reforms made the land rights clear and they also structured those rural communities under control of state. Customary land use and authority were slowly integrated into the bureaucracy under the colonial regime. The most significant change in economy may have been due to canal colonization in late 1800s and early 1900s. Land that had not been farmed was converted to productive farms through irrigation. Canal colonies had beneficial effects on agriculture, commercial farming and provincial economies. (Gilmartin D., 1994) Some developed better than others when it came to the canal. Colonial administrative priorities, military service, and political loyalty determined irrigated land access. Irrigation led to social stratification and competition in rural areas. It had a positive impact on agricultural production for many cultivators while others viewed it as a reaffirmation of colonial land and water control. Environmental historians assert that canal colonization altered the ecological systems, settlement patterns and rural livelihoods. Local community-colonial state relations changed, resulting in political negotiation and resistance. Colonial Punjab was a social mosaic of pastoral tribes, agricultural villages, tribal confederacies, urban commercial centres and religious institutions. Political organization and local authority was defined by tribal affiliations in many areas including Bar areas of central Punjab. Leadership was legitimate through political office, kinship, customary law, mediation and community interests. Tribal chiefs would act as intermediaries between locals and politicians. They were not bureaucrats, they were men of power based on reciprocity. Early British administrators saw the practical value of working with local leaders. As more and more control was centralized, many traditional authorities forfeited their political independence. Traditional governance was restricted by reforms in revenue, policing, administration and justice. Collaboration and conflict became more difficult as a result of these changes. Local elites became part of the colonial administration via district governance and recruitment to military. Others protested against autonomy violations. There are various reactions from Punjab, which cautions against stereotyping loyalty and anti-British sentiment.

3.2. 1857 Punjab Revolt:

The 1857 Revolt is at heart of British India's history. Politically, Punjab was more complex than northern and central Indian states in which there were large-scale rebellions. British rule prevailed over most of province and they recruited Punjabi soldiers to put down rebellions. History in the colonies was ascribed as Punjab's stability because of British loyalty. Additional studies revealed regional, community and political differences in responses. (Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, 1983). There was no province-wide rebellion like that in Delhi, Kanpur or Lucknow, but there was some localised resistance. The political programs were not motivating factor for these movements; they were instead fueled by regional grievances. Land rights, administrative intervention, customary

authority, and colonial expansion were all part of 1857 upheavals. Localized resistance is best shown by Sandal Bar. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was a leading Punjabi figure and one of revolters against colonial rule. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was the son of the influential tribe of Sandal Bar of Central Punjab. History says that 1857 upheaval put a strain on tribal-colonial relations. British also increased administrative control, spied on important chiefs and squashed rebellion, which led to an increase in political tensions. According to colonial reports, Kharral rallied local supporters to challenge British rule. In September 1857 he died in battle while attempting to put an end to activities. Rebellion and security were responsible for establishing administrative order, according to official records. There are a number of variations of Punjabi folklore. In heroic ballads and traditional tales, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is a man of bravery and courage who fought against foreign rule with unequal forces. A courageous chief, who saved his people, perished. These various memories are not mutually exclusive, as stories indicate. Local values such as justice, courage, and community are recorded in folklore, chronology, military operations and administrative responses are recorded in colonial documentation. This study features a significant degree of discussion between these sources. The struggle of Punjabis against colonialism did not stop at war. Historians today have come to understand tax evasion, non-cooperation, concealment of resources, protection of fugitives, rumors, and indigenous cultural practices as instances of resistance, according to James C. Scott's everyday resistance. One of the most significant cultural weapons of resistance was folklore of Punjab. Alternative stories were maintained by poetry, oral stories and heroic songs contesting colonial rule. Where there was no political resistance, these traditions celebrated local heroes as agents of justice, not criminals, as an occasion for moral criticism of the imperial rule. Memories had to be passed on, through *dhadi* tradition. Public chanting of bravery, sacrifice and resistance deepened sense of community identity and historical consciousness. These performances are a historical and political commentary with culture.

4. Punjabi Heroes in folk tradition:

4.1 History and Folklore: Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral:

The life of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral (1779-1857) is the only one that is described in colonial archives and oral tradition in central Punjab. Folklore has immortalized Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, a historical actor, as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance. He was a pioneer in rewriting history through collective memory, which defies politics. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was a member of the influential pastoral and agrarian Kharral tribe of Sandal Bar, Jhang, Okara and other nearby districts which were later part of Faisalabad. Prior to British annexation, this area had tribal authority which rested on kinship, custom and community negotiations. Leaders respected military power, mediation of conflict, protection of resources and social cohesion. Following annexation of Punjab in 1849, British government brought in new systems of government. The revenue settlements, police reforms, monitoring of chiefs and increasing judicial administration deprived indigenous chiefs of autonomy. (Gilmartin D. , 1988) While local elites tolerated colonial rule, there were clashes between customary authority and colonial rule through the bureaucracy. These tensions rose during 1857's unrest. Relatively stable in terms of stability with a few districts rising in Punjab, compared to other northern Indian provinces. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was the leader of the anti-British movement in Sandal Bar. Colonial writing reveals he opposed expansion by the colonists; he persuaded nearby tribes to join him in opposing expansion. British officials saw these activities as endangering provincial stability and dispatched troops to quell local resistance. The research suggests that Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was killed in a battle near Gogera on 18 September 1857. His demise led to a lessening of local opposition and colonial government regained control. Official reports thus highlight a successful operation for the restoration of order. Colonial records are important sources for Sandal Bar resistance history. Colonial administrative reports, military letters, intelligence records and district gazetteers mention Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. He was a rebel chief, insurgent or public peace disturber, from imperial legal and political point of view. The use of such terms is ideologically charged. Postcolonial historians contend that colonial archives were not produced in context of indigenous histories, but in order to justify imperial rule. (Dirks N. , 2001) Of course, military and police saw armed rebellion as 'administrative and military uprising against legitimate government'. The local motivations, communal grievances, and cultural resistance practices were overlooked in colonial reports, which emphasized numbers, military engagements, arrests, casualties and administrative control. As a result, significance of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral in his context is not fully captured by archival records. The larger methodological challenge is for colonial historians. The content of administrative records is the government's interpretation and local memories can vary from the history.

According to Punjabi folklore, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is a different character. He is said to be a courageous defender of his homeland who did not succumb to the foreign rule. Heroic ballads, oral poetry, village narratives and *dhadi* performances focus on values of bravery, honor, sacrifice and patriotism. In these stories, Kharral revolts against the demands of the colonists, which endorse cultural disregard of tribal autonomy and Kharral's dignity. His opposition is not military, it is moral, against foreign domination, against indigenous justice. The heroic legends of Punjabis focus on moral values rather than political issues, allowing such portrayals. That's because folklore surrounding his death is important. There is no depiction of his last battle in terms of defeat, rather in terms of martyrdom, courage and steadfastness as conveyed by oral traditions. Many stories relate death as proof of heroism, because giving up one's

life for good of community is the greatest form of leadership. Folkloric art has survived. The memory of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is celebrated in central Punjab through folk songs, annual celebrations, local poetry, educational forums and regional history. The continuity highlights that history remains pertinent in the collective memory, outside of political debate.

In story of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, from tribal leader to folk hero, history and folklore merge together. Heroism in the sense of military or political achievements is not the only criteria in Punjabi oral tradition. Heroes represent moral values that communities wish to impart. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral Folktales promote courage. Oral narratives emphasize courage in the presence of strong opponents, whether political or military. Heroism inspires future generations; it does not just tell about how battles were fought. Another attribute is the sense of community responsibility. Kharral was a defender of his tribe and community. It is not about someone stepping in, but about an integrated leadership. Thirdly, story is a tale of resisting injustice. Folklore is moralistic in its approach to colonial authority, not administrative. Justice outweighs loyal revolt or rebellion according to the law. Last but not least, sacrifice provides foundation for heroic memory. Those who died for a greater purpose will be remembered for their ethics and culture. These themes illustrate moral as opposed to chronological understanding of history found in folklore. According to Maurice Halbwachs' Collective memory theory, memory is reconstructed by the society by using the modern social framework, like in case of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's memory. (Halbwachs, 1992) Heroic stories change from one generation to next to reflect political, cultural, and educational changes, but they maintain courage, honor and resistance. In this process, cultural memory shines a light as Jan Assmann (Assmann, 2011) will explain. Oral performance, folklore, literature, local commemorations, monuments and regional historical consciousness all serve as a means of preserving Kharral's memory. He is remembered in culture of Punjab since 1857. Importantly, collective memory evolves. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral has been linked to many interpretations in modern world, such as anti-colonial struggles, national identity, and regional heritage. Such interpretations may be related to political issues at the moment, but historical memory creates public memory of the past. The archives and oral history need to be handled with care to historicize Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. Colonial archives validate chronology, administration, military activities, and official perspectives. These records show imperial governance institutional priorities. The community's interpretation, values and sense of history can be embellished with symbols, poetic imagination, and adaptation of narratives in folklore. Recent oral history and memory studies suggest these types of evidence are complementary. (Thompson, 2000) Documentary evidence, eyewitness accounts, folklore, artifacts and local customs can be used to help make history. By adopting this method, historians can clearly separate between events that they can prove in history and events that are symbolized, both of which produce a historical understanding. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is a cultural and historical hero in this interdisciplinary approach. The actions he took can be reconstructed from the archival sources; his legacy can be traced in folklore and collective memory. These sources show moralization of political resistance by local communities. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is an architect of Pakistani history, culture and identity. His colonial resistance in Punjab is growing in recognition by university, historical, literary and cultural institutions. His story is featured in historical monographs, folk literature, on television, in educational curriculum and in commemorating Punjabi culture. But historians have to discriminate between history and commemoration. Oral narratives need to be taken into account together with historical documents and contemporary accounts in order to understand collective memory. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral demonstrates that documentary, oral and collective memory immortalises Punjabi heroes. Punjabi folklore retains the moral and moralistic elements of anti-colonial resistance. The combination of archives and folklore offers a richer and more inclusive understanding of colonial Punjab than either one can offer.

4-B. Dulla Bhatti and Construction of Punjabi Folk Hero:

This situation is the same in construction of Punjabi folk hero. Abdullah Bhatti, known as Dulla Bhatti in Punjabi folklore, is a symbol of resistance, social justice, and popular morality. His life under Akbar has influenced Punjabi culture. Dulla Bhatti is a good example of Punjabi hero historicization and folklore, resistance and collective memory, beyond politics. According to historical records, Dulla Bhatti was Sandal Bar Bhatti Rajput. The Mughal rule was opposed by family and his father, Rai Sandal Bhatti was executed. It was after these events that Dulla Bhatti gained fame as a rebel against state and protector of local communities. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's colonial records from 19th century convey more information about his activities than Dulla Bhatti's. The majority of historical data is derived from subsequent chronicles, local customs and folk tales. His life story is both real and notional, as it was passed down orally over centuries. Despite these constraints, it is established that Dulla Bhatti was one of the great leaders of region who was against dominance of State and for the rights of marginalized people. He is historical for his political activities and his contribution to the maintaining of Punjab folklore. In Punjabi folklore, *Dulla Bhatti* is the protector of peasants, women and the poor. In folk tales, he is for redistribution of elite wealth, for the help of the weak, for resisting arbitrariness. He has been likened to Robin Hood, but historical and cultural differences need to be taken into account. Probably, its most renowned story is Dulla Bhatti's protection of *Sundri* and *Mundri*. He allegedly saved them from being exploited, organized their marriages and protected ceremonies. During Lohri, kids sing about his generosity and bravery. This tradition lives on because of preservation of ethics and history in folk. Story beats history. The tales of

Dulla Bhatti are about justice, compassion, communal responsibility and resistance to oppression. Despite opposing imperial rule, Punjabi folklore gives more importance to moral leadership as compared to military victory. He is a hero for defending the weak, fighting injustice and placing community above personal interests. This separation elucidates Punjabi heroism. If the heroes defeat powerful opponents, they seldom get rewards for that victory. They come to signify cultural ideals of ages. The values of bravery, generosity, honour, hospitality and assistance to weak are the key values of oral literature of Punjabi people. *Dulla Bhatti's* reputation is not only due to politics. His legacy is cultural values of ethical leadership and social responsibility. Historical memory of folklore is a part of teaching justice and community solidarity. The heroic continuity and diversity of Punjabi is reflected in personalities of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral and Dulla Bhatti. Although separated in time by three centuries and in politics, both figures underwent change folklorically. Both leaders were anti-central government leaders. *Dulla Bhatti* was against Mughals and Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was against British Colonialism. In each instance, heroes stand up against oppression in folklore. Secondly, both were community leaders, not military commanders. The authority of folklore relies in sacrifice for the group, care of ordinary folk and in protection of customary values. Third, their memory demonstrates oral history preservation. Politics of time did not affect either hero. As soon as social and historical context changed, stories were transferred to future generations in an adapted form that made them relevant to context. There are several differences, however. There is no modern documentation and Dulla Bhatti's story has become a legend. Detailed historical reconstruction is possible in many colonial records in archive of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. The difference between archival history and folklore highlights the importance of considering multiple sources. Lohri's Dulla Bhatti is a manifestation of Jan Assmann's cultural memory concept (Assmann, 2011) The communicative memory can function with live witnesses, whereas historical consciousness is conveyed through rituals, songs, festivals, literature, and symbolic practices that span many centuries. Lohri is a seasonal festival, which preserves history. Listening to music about Dulla Bhatti gives courage, generosity and resistance to future generations. Political changes do not fade away the heroic memory. 'Collective memory' by Maurice Halbwachs is another concept that is relevant. People who respect group values are celebrated in community. (Halbwachs, 1992) The story of *Dulla Bhatti* represents the moral values of Punjab such as protecting weak, opposing injustice and boldness. In historiography, Dulla Bhatti questions symbolic representation and reconstruction of history. The miraculous, dramatic and poetic legends were regarded by positivist historians as impediments to objective history. Modern scholarship is complex. Despite apparent conflicts between symbolic narratives and documentary evidence, oral historians feel they should be taken into account. (Portelli, 1991) Historians should question why stories were told and why communities would preserve them and what their social value was. Folklore represents historical consciousness, not facts. This demonstrates Dulla Bhatti's symbols are of historical importance. Punjabi society has made justice, generosity and vulnerable communities its priorities for social change for the long-term. The stories illustrate community perspectives on legitimate authority and ethical leadership, even if they cannot be substantiated. An interdisciplinary set of recent studies is interested in Dulla Bhatti, using folklore, memory and postcolonial historiography. The study of oral performance, literature, ritual and public commemoration is meant to place historical individual in context of legend of hero rather than to separate two. The study of folk literature is now less in the realm of folklore and more in realm of historical record, as history in South Asia has advanced. With development of historiography in South Asian context, folklore is now accepted as a source of history along with documentary sources. From literature to theatre, cinema to education and even digital media, Dulla Bhatti's legacy is alive and thriving in society. Comparative studies indicate that memory of Dulla Bhatti is connected to the regional identity, indigenous traditions and cultural heritage. His story reflects values of communal solidarity, social justice and resistance against arbitrary power that have been deeply embedded in Punjab psyche.

4.3. Jagga Jatt and Other Regional Heroes in Punjabi Collective Memory:

Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral and *Dulla Bhatti* are important figures in Punjabi history and folklore but they belong to an oral tradition of heroes. Many local heroes were celebrated in Punjabi folklore who embodied values of their communities in their social, political and moral lives. Jagga Jatt (Jagat Singh Virk), Jeona Morh and other tribal leaders exhibit Punjabi heroism outside the battlefield. This includes, but is not limited to, justice, generosity, vulnerable protection, communal leadership and anti-oppression. These heroes illustrate how folklore enables the Punjabi society to navigate identity, legitimacy and resistance. *Jagga Jatt* (Jagat Singh Virk) was a popular figure of Punjabi folklore in late 19th and early 20th century colonial Punjab. Jagga Jatt was born under colonial rule, whereas here Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral fought against the colonial rule in 1857. His legend grew with increase of state power, commercialization of agriculture and rise in wealth gap between wealthy landlords and impoverished rural communities. The reputation of Jagga Jatt is formed by oral traditions, folk songs, theater and popular literature, since there is not much historical documentation. According to folk lore, valiant outlaw fought against the exploitative landlords, corrupt officers and oppressive local elites in order to assist destitute villagers. As Eric Hobsbawm (1969) points out, some outlaws are heroes in rural communities because they are fighting for justice. (Hobsbawm, 1959) Comparative insights can be gained from application of Hobsbawm's concept to Jagga Jatt but it needs context. In Punjabi mythology, crime is not encouraged. Rather, Jagga Jatt's actions are motivated by a moral framework, which gives him freedom to resist injustice when institutions are not acting in interest of public. His reputation is a reflection

of social issues of equity, honor and responsibility to community. Oral tradition, Punjabi literature say, Jagga Jatt is not like the politicians. His physical strength and generosity, his friendliness and the fact that he risked his life fighting strong enemies are all subjects of folk songs. He is depicted transferring of wealth, guarding the helpless villagers and rejecting the arbitrary rule. Significantly, there is a lack of literature that discusses contemporary political ideology. Rather, they encourage Punjabi values in rural areas. Leadership is service to community, not politics and justice is just behavior. Heroic theme can take different forms in folk theatre, music, cinema and modern Punjabi literature as evident in popularity of *Jagga Jatt*. His legend persists and even thrived in midst of significant political transformations because generations had taken their own meanings from his tale, which concerned social issues.

Jeona Morh is another Punjabi folklore personage who blends history with legend. Jeona Morh was like Jagga Jatt, who struggled and stood up for the oppressed and downtrodden. In the folklore, Jeona Morh is an brave one who struggled against the oppressive elites and preserved the tradition and responsibilities of the community. His legacy reflects the moral economy of rural society, one that places more emphasis on the moral aspects of social justice, reciprocity and the common good than on state power. The concept of moral economy derived by E. P. Thompson (Thompson P. (., 2000) and idea of James C. Scott (Scott, 1985) may be used to examine Punjabi heroic traditions.

Political authority was measured with regard to justice, protection and social responsibility in rural areas. When such expectations are challenged by political power, oral heroes are created. Jeona Morh, then, is a cultural archetype—a protector of local area, a man who fights injustice, a man who builds community. Outside of these popular heroes, there are also numerous regional heroes in Punjabi folklore who have an impact on certain districts or tribes. While such tribal organizations and federations, as well as resistance from villages and localized warfare, are overlooked in national histories, they are sometimes emphasized in regional oral traditions. For instance, tribal chiefs who opposed outside rule, local warriors who defended villages during wars, or community leaders who solved conflicts or safeguarded weak. Lesser known than stories of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral and Dulla Bhatti, they exhibit diversity of Punjabi heroes. This diversity is the result of complex history of region, which resulted in regional diversity in Punjab. The province's environmental zones, tribal associations, language groups and politics are different. Courage, honour, sacrifice and community responsibility were shared in different local heroic stories. Local traditions are often able to embody history in a way that official archives can't; in this sense they are historiographically valuable. Rather than administrative records, local political change can be better captured through village genealogies, oral poetry and traditions of shrines and family histories. Punjabi heroic folklore focuses on male warriors, chiefs of tribe, family and responsibility of people of society. The "Hero's" attitude towards women, children, elders and community welfare is often evaluated. This morality is illustrated in actions of *Dulla Bhatti* who saved *Sundri* and *Mundri*, *Jagga Jatt's* assistance and *Jeona Morh's* generosity. Punjabi folklore considers heroism as military service and social responsibilities. The heroic folktales lack women, as well, as scholars have observed in modern era. Women are seldom leaders of resistance movements but they are often symbols of honour, family or community. In field of Punjabi folk songs, wedding poetry, lamentations, and local memory, feminist historiography has resurrected preservation of women's experiences. These views would contribute towards history of Punjab. Collective memory is regional, national and local. Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1992) says that social groups create memories of past events. Punjabi folklore exemplifies the preservation of heroes in various meanings by villages, tribes and districts. Regional heroes help to define local identity through community histories. Annual commemoration, shrines, storytelling, and folk performances are ways to preserve localized memories. Over time, some figures are made into national symbols of Punjabi people. This is evident in works of *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral*, *Jagga Jatt* and *Dulla Bhatti*. Even considering its geographical and historical setting, oral transmission of each led to their representing values that were revered across Punjab. Jan Assmann's cultural memory (2011) is the background of change. Heroic stories are recognized in culture, while staying local, through festivals, literature, education, and monuments. The heroic traditions of Punjab are manifold, which pose methodological issues in reconstruction of history. There are three interwoven heroic narrative levels that the historian must differentiate. The first is about events from past that can be established from archives, contemporals or materials. Secondly, communal interpretations are more concerned with ethics and symbolism than with chronology, as is emphasized in oral traditions. Three are reinterpretations, namely those of nationalism, regional identity, literature, theater, cinema and public commemoration. These layers can help historian steer clear of two errors. Even with its legends, folklore is evidence of historical awareness. An oral story can be accepted as a whole experience without recognizing complexity that can be found in processes involved in construction of collective memory. Therefore, critical interdisciplinary work involves a comparison of documentary evidence with folklore, oral evidence, vernacular literature and cultural performance.

4.4 Heroic Ballads (Vars), Dhadi Tradition, Qissas and Historicization of Resistance:

It is not just the events of history or independent documentation that could account for the continuity of Punjabi heroes in public memory. Their importance has always been linked to the cultural institutions that held, performed, and handed down their narratives from one generation to next. Heroic ballads (vars), dhadi tradition, qissas, folk songs, village storytelling etc. are powerful means of historical remembrance. These traditions elevated acts of courage to a symbol of resistance that would live on long past times of political situations that had changed. Oral traditions are a

significant memory of culture in sense of memory studies. (Assmann, 2011). They do not just entertain spectators, they maintain communal understandings of justice, sacrifice, identity and resistance. As such, they play a significant role in historicization of Punjabi heroes. Vars are one of the oldest types of oral literature of Punjabi people. Vars are traditionally written in heroic narrative poetry and are about battles, sacrifice, leadership and injustice. Vars rather than official chronicles stress moral character of people and experiences of communities. Traditionally, poets and singers used to appear in public, chanting at village gatherings, including those held during local festivals, religious celebrations and seasonal festivals, to perform vars. These performances helped to keep historical memories alive and not just in written texts.

Heroic vars that focus on concept of valor and sacrifice, while also placing the concept of resistance in a moral context, often highlight figures like Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is a figure highlighted in heroic vars, with a focus on notions of valor and sacrifice, as well as the moral context of opposition. Colonial domination is not only understood as political domination but as an ethical challenge that calls for community unity and a worthy leadership. It is important to note that vars should not be interpreted as a literal history. They often have a poetic structure, with metaphor, exaggeration, symbolism and dramatic dialogue. However, historical value of these literary features is not affected by these. Rather, they unveil way that communities reacted to past events and values they deemed to be worth protecting. In terms of historiography, vars serve as supplements to the archival materials and record emotions, moral judgments, and collective hopes that are lacking in official sources.

One of most powerful institutions of historical remembrance in Punjab is its dhadi tradition, which is closely related to heroic ballads. *Dhadi* performers narrate stories of valor, sacrifice and struggle among people through a combination of storytelling, music, poetry and acting. Historically, dhadi performances have been linked to Sikh and Punjabi culture in general, but have been vital in maintaining historical awareness. The written history conveys its message mainly through analysis of texts, whereas *dhadi* performance evokes emotions of its audience along with its intellectual content. Histories are made collective through use of music, rhythm, gesture and participation of audience. The performances reinforce the feeling of community and help listeners to identify with heroic characters and their values. In colonial times, public performance was often a place where histories of resistance were maintained even in the face of political oversight. Performers typically did not confront colonial authorities directly, but in narratives of courage, sacrifice, and opposition to injustice, narratives implicitly challenged the official interpretations of history. Modern performance studies scholars place greater emphasis on the fact that meaning is continually recreated in each performance. The *dhadi* tradition thus does not just repeat fixed stories but also plays an active role in process of forming historical memory. Each of performances is an indicator of current social issues and at the same time, keeping alive traditions.

Another significant role of *qissa* in Punjabi literary culture can be found. Many of *qissas* recall romantic epics *Heer-Ranjha*, *Mirza-Sahiban*, *Sassi-Punnun* and *Sohni-Mahiwal*, but they also make important observations of social hierarchy, political authority, honor, kinship and resistance. While heroic vars focus on war and leadership, qissas highlight other aspects of human life and incorporate history into stories. These stories repeatedly raise issues of justice, social inequality, of patriarchal authority, of communal identity. In scope of this study, relevance of qissas is as a contribution in development of historical consciousness. Moreover, qissas helped to create a literary setting in which heroic figure could be construed as not just a political figure, but also a moral model. This wider culture could facilitate historical memory in a folklore not only as a factual mechanism, but more. Folk songs have also been used to help keep memory of Punjabi heroes alive besides formal ballads and narrative songs. The songs of village life and agricultural events, weddings, or seasonal celebrations were often punctuated by moments of courage and generosity. Folk songs are not the same as official songs, which are organised by political institutions. They are passed down from generation to generation; they are not only an element of commemorative experience, but a part of life. This can be seen in songs of *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral*, *Jagga Jatt* and *Dulla Bhatti*. Typically, these are articles about sacrifice, loyalty, to defend oppressed, and devotion to good of community. Another important mechanism of transmission of historical memory of Punjabi is village story-telling tradition. Informal custodians of community's history have always been their Elders, their tribal leaders, religious scholars, poets and genealogists. They had narratives of conflict, migration, leadership and resistance, which were not recorded in official history and were repeated over years. These community historians tended to tell other versions of story to other audiences, while retaining elements of story at its heart: honor, justice and community identity. This flexibility enabled continuation of oral tradition in face of these political shifts including Mughals, Sikhs, British, Partition and modern nation states. Oral historians are historical informants, and these narrators are oral historians too; they are not just source of facts and statistics—they are source of stories that reveal community meaning making processes. (Portelli, 1991) (Thompson P. (., 2000)

5. Folklore as Resistance:

Punjabis' heroic traditions are maintained through oral traditions, Ballads, *dhadi* performances and collective memory. According to contemporary folklore studies, folklore is a way for subordinate groups to assert identity, to remember history and to parry political narratives. Resistance comes in other forms as well, such as military uprising and political

movements. Language, ritual, music, storytelling, symbolism and daily culture as tools for opposition of colonial cultures. In absence of colonial institutions, folklore was an important medium for negotiation of historical memory, of moral authority and communal identity. Classical political resistance was frequently in form of war, revolution or organized political action. Subsequent studies reveal that cultural and social processes are opposed, although historical opposition is not. According to Foucault (1978), knowledge, discourse and social norms are powerful and constraining. The meaning of resistance is political challenge. This implies colonial Punjabi resistance went beyond battle. Honour songs for local heroes, condemnatory songs against injustice and bravery performances opposed monopolization of colonial history. Colonial rule was not the only means of preserving alternative discourses on legitimacy, justice and community. James C. Scott (1985; 1990) characterised public compliance with hidden resistance and expanded resistance. He demonstrated how a subordinate group fights against dominant power through symbolic practices or oral traditions, rumors, satire and everyday acts that are not usually described in political history. Hidden transcripts are not necessary to meet community criticism of state. It is a traditional aspect of Punjabi folklore. Political dominance was criticized by regional heroes such as Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, Dulla Bhatti, Jagga Jatt, but he did not start any rebellion. Under political subordination, cultural expression can keep history alive, stories reveal. Administrative skills were developed by colonialism. Census reports, district gazetteers, intelligence files, judicial records, ethnographic surveys and revenue records were all used by colonial officials to classify populations and to monitor local societies. Archive is a valuable historical source. There is no such thing as being neutral about archives, says postcolonial historians. Nicholas Dirks argues that categories and representations were channels of reinforcing colonial authority through imperial governance and colonial knowledge. (Dirks N. , 2001) Edward Said proved imbalances of power in knowledge system. (Said, 1978) People substituted folklore for colonial archives. Oral narratives, genealogies, folk songs and village narratives recalled events that had not been documented. They preferred suffering with people, leadership at local level, moral courage and resistance to injustice over administrative success. The other archive is very distinct from official documents. The key events of communities are documented, rather than order in which they occurred. Thus, folklore expresses values and interpretations that are not captured by official archives. Discussing archives and folklore is a task historians must face; it is not one they can select. Ordinary people's interpretations are caught in folklore and chronology, political context and institutional responses, in documentary. They form complement of colonial Punjab.

Folklore helps to preserve history and brings people together to resist. Stories, rituals, symbols and commemorations unite politically dominant communities. So, heroic tradition continues the culture even in the face of political change. The historical memory is constructed by social context, as claimed by Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1992). Social memory works. Communities 'rebuild history' to solve problems and to maintain its core narratives that help to build group identity. Literature, folklore, ritual, music, festival and public performance are the means by which cultural memory is held on to over centuries as stated by Jan Assmann (2011). This is exemplified by Punjabi heroes. As colonialism altered politics and society, local leadership and resistance was passed down through oral tradition. Process mattered politically. Punjabi folklore recalled Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral as a champion of cause of communal autonomy rather than a colonial rebel. Dulla Bhatti Celebrations in Lohri encouraged generosity, justice and protection of vulnerable. The memories knitted communities together, politically neutral. The scholarship has been changed by SSS. Rajendra Guha (1982) contended that colonial history and nationalist history of elites overlooked political agency of peasants, tribes and the like. It was recommended to include unrecorded voices in historical analysis. This intellectual endeavor keeps alive views seldomly recorded in administrative record. In heroic stories in countryside, ordinary people knew about politics, social justice and legitimate leadership. There were also many other heroes in Punjabi region, who were not kings or imperial commanders. From tribes, rural communities or local leaders. Such folk heroes illustrate how historical significance and political power were granted by moral character and community appreciation. In 1995 book, Shahid Amin argued that popular memory should be historically analyzed, rather than as a source of evidence. The values of community through community memory of past events are more evident than from official records. This perception of Punjabi folklore is that it is more of an oral history than historical fact. Narrative and performing resistance. Ballads of heroes, *dhadi* performances, village stories and folk songs record history. Performance studies indicate that performer-audience interaction is a mechanism for meaning making. All show affects folk. Small indications of communal dignity were achieved through performances of local heroes during colonial rule. Although narratives did not specifically challenge colonial administration, they facilitated viewers to assess political authority in indigenous ways of moral judgments, but not legal frameworks. Interpretative flexibility – this is why heroic traditions of Punjabi are still alive. Performances were significant when colonial rule was in effect, when struggle for independence was underway and when partition and postcolonial state formation was taking place, as they adapted themselves to changes in historical context.

In folklore, symbolism is more important than description. Heroes are not figures from history; they are a moral role model. *Dulla Bhatti* is the symbol of justice and generosity and Jagga Jatt is protector of marginalized. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is firm & resolute. Many have symbolic meaning other than their personal lives. Anthropological symbolism seems to imply such narratives are intended to encourage community morality. Heroes are shown to be

courageous, have leadership and a sense of social responsibility. This symbolic dimension fosters resistance in that it provides for alternative political authority criteria. Leadership is based on justice, on ethics, on welfare of community rather than on rank or on legal position. So folklore is a repository of indigenous political values that can be very different from those of colonists. Historical consciousness is the way that societies look at history, present and future. The power of folklore is to tell generations of history. Through heroic traditions, Colonial Punjabis rose to power by being resilient, sacrificing and dignified. It was not colonialism that was part of folklore, but colonial leadership and resistance. Few political movements did much to break thread of continuity; anti-colonial memory became reinforced. The heroic resistance narratives provided communities with a sense of hope and a reminder that it was possible to resist foreign rule and that moral courage was possible in face of unequal political power.

6. Collective Memory, Identity Formation and Resistance in Colonial Punjab:

Punjabi anti-colonial memory is beyond war and politics. The role of cultural history memory, interpretation and transmission was critical. History-based folklore, symbols and rituals formed identity. Stories, heroic ballads, dhadi performances, village commemorations and seasonal festivals were vehicles for imparting resistance and morality. The modern theory of memory brings an explanation to this. Memory is a social process that is dynamic and can be used to build community identities, respond to political shifts and interpretations of history. These colonial Punjab views reveal how folklore became an act of local resistance and became Punjabi history. Memory is socially constructed; this was the thesis of Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1992), which revolutionized field of historical research. Memories are preserved in communities. Historical memory is a living memory, not merely a set of facts. This is shown in Punjabis heroes. Not every colonial event was preserved in communities. They celebrated courageous, just, generous, honorable and resistance to oppression community survivors. Ethical were the heroes of the regions such as *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral*, *Dulla Bhatti*, *Jagga Jatt* etc. History doesn't change because of selective memory. Rather, it reveals cultural memory organization. The moral and identity are shaped by history. The work of Halbwachs is enriched by Jan Assmann (2011), who focuses on institutional mechanisms that ensure transmission of memory across generations. The societies preserve history through centuries of literature, rituals, festivals, monuments, music, and folklore, as well as through public performance. This is what is seen at times in Colonial Punjab. Heroic stories were told in family and popular culture. People who sang songs of people, dhadi artists, village elders, poets, and religious functions were the ones who guarded against resistance. For example, with *Dulla Bhatti*, *Lohri* is a festival of season and a cultural memory. From Festival Songs, children learn about generosity, justice and vulnerable communities. Historical memory is not only in text, but also in ritual practice. The celebrations of *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral* in Central Punjab reinforce the regional identity and link people of the region to struggle of nineteenth century. These celebrations provide an example of how performance and participation can help to maintain a culture. Pierre Nora's "sites of memory" illuminate Punjabi heroism. Nora (1989) states that symbolic places, commemorative practices, texts, monuments, and rituals hold historically aware and collective memory. (Nora, 1989) The memorials of Punjab go beyond monuments. Heroes' village, shrines, battlefields, festivals, oral narratives and folk songs are all ways of remembering and reinterpreting the past. Historic landscapes are an integral part of our collective memory. In Sandal Bar, two concepts of memory and geography are connected. The landscapes of Raipur Ahmad Khan Kharral are a reflection of colonial resistance of the region. Though barely nationally recognized, villages of *Dulla Bhatti* and *Jagga Jatt* are significant in local folklore. Communities are brought together by symbolizing landscapes that help to preserve heritage. Culture geolocalizes. Punjabi identity is formed through language, kinship, religion, agriculture, regional traditions and history. This process was supplemented by folklore which had developed in communities and the nature of the political power. The Punjab folklore highlights its leadership aspect rather than dynastic and administrative changes. Imperial courts do not make heroes, they come from tribal confederacies, rural villages, or agrarian society. The empowerment of community values is an enhancement of regional identities, which is better developed than those built by centralized political institutions. Remarkably, heroic tradition is trans religious. But *Dulla Bhatti*, *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral* and others were remembered by Muslim, Sikh and Hindu ancestors. They are popular because of regional values which they share across sects – courage, hospitality, generosity and justice. This inclusivity enhances Punjabi folklore. Culture, religion and politics were the factors determining regional identity.

History is a matter of communities' decisions. Colonial Punjab shows. Folklore celebrates freedom fighters and forgets colonial collaborators. This imbalance should not be caused by a historical mistake. Collective memory is an expression of ethics. Heroes are memorable and are a symbol of society. Administrative cooperation does not generally bring out culture cheerleaders. Folklore preserves moral models, rather than political histories. Historians should recognize this selection process, and thus be able to critically assess oral traditions without demeaning their historical significance. Memories hold community stories, not all events. Collective memory is created by historical knowledge and common feelings. Courage, sacrifice, loss and perseverance bring generations together. *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's* warrior poems celebrate his indomitable spirit in face of overwhelming odds. The *Dulla Bhatti* stories are about being generous and caring for one's family. *Jagga Jatt's* stories courageously stand up for oppressed. These

emotions help to maintain folklore. Factual historical stories will not last for as long as emotional historical stories, since they are ones that shape identity of community. These emotional connections are reinforced through public performances that are based in historical fact. Folklore is a teaching tool for survival of people and how history and emotion are involved in teaching it. Colonialism affected politics, administration, education and history. Organizations and communities kept indigenous history alive through cultural memory in spite of change. Folklore preserved culture. Punjabis were kept mentally and culturally separate from colonizers through heroic celebrations, folk customs and oral history. Resilience should not be romanticized as political opposition. Demonstrates cultural customs outlast politics. One way that communities resisted imperial historiography was by using oral stories to understand colonial experience through their ethics. Cultural mechanisms have not been successful in eradicating Punjabi heroic traditions and it is clear that colonialism has not. Nineteenth-century heroes influence the literature, education, music and regional identities.

Heroic post-colonial Punjabi traditions are important. Historical memory interpretations were altered by political circumstances since 1947 when nation was freed from foreign rule and partitioned. *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal* and *Dulla Bhatti* symbolized regional culture, social justice and anti-colonial nationalism. Current research in field of memory suggests that memory is malleable. Every generation rewrites history in its own terms of political, cultural and educational values. Punjabi folklore is more than just stories; it is a living history. Heroic traditions are shared via digital media, academia, museums, documentaries and cultural festivals. This demonstrates versatility of folklore in relation to new communication and its influence on history. Folklore is dynamic and dynamic in nature; therefore, it must be investigated as a historical source and a construction of memory. Collective memory theory is an addition to methodology of Punjabi history. Oral traditions are a means of historical interpretation that go beyond official archives. Second, it gives reasons for elevation of heroes and downfall of others. Demonstrates the influence of history on culture. Alongside archive research, memory studies should be conducted.

Folklore employs symbolism, selective emphasis and adapts story forms. Documentary, oral, literary, material and ethnographic evidence are needed for critical historical scholarship. This all-encompassing perspective enables historians to differentiate between the actual from the symbolic and to appreciate historical dimensions of events. Punjabi heroes are remembered due to their deeds and significance in culture. Collective memory was the basis for anti-colonial consciousness and regional identity in Colonial Punjab. Local resistance was considered to be courage, justice and cultural resistance in Punjabi folklore, rituals, festivals and communal memory. For *Maurice Halbwachs*, *Jan Assmann* and *Pierre Nora*, communities construct memories to serve their needs. Punjabi heroic folklore encapsulates history, morality lessons and defies culture and it helps to discover Punjabi heroes beyond military and colonial histories. There is a need for cultural remembering, celebration and reinterpretation of these figures.

7. Historiographical Debates and Methodological Reflections on Punjabi Heroes:

Heroic traditions of Punjab people are documented, passed down orally, and remembered in collective memory. The question of historians is not whether sources differ, but how historians can reconcile competing past representations. In colonial history, past was reconstructed from written administrative records and oral traditions were written off as unreliable legends. This hierarchy has been challenged recently, by scholarship that has revealed that archives in colonies were imperial products and need to be read critically. The modern historiography has suggested that to reconstruct colonial Punjab, documentary evidence should be complemented by vernacular literature, folklore, oral history, archaeology, material culture and memory studies. One of the biggest documentary archives in South Asia was developed by British administrators. This huge archive of Punjabi history was developed through use of district gazetteers, settlement reports, intelligence files, judicial correspondence, census records, ethnographic surveys, military letters and administrative memoranda. All of these documents are vital for their chronological accuracy, institutional information, demographic information and administrative view. The official correspondence relating to military operations, arrests, troop movements and government reactions is essential to historians of 1857. But postcolonial historians have revealed that archives are not simply facts. It has been demonstrated by postcolonial historians that archives are not just facts. These were found within the colonial governance structures. Nicholas Dirks (Dirks N. , 2001) argues that colonial knowledge was used to categorize communities, to construct identities and to authorize political power for imperial rule. Bernard Cohn (Cohn, 1996) demonstrated that ethnographic surveys were not merely academic enterprises but they also served a purpose in colonial governance. Resistance leaders, such as *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal*, were frequently referred to by administrations as rebel, insurgent or disturber of public peace. These categories were not necessarily endorsed by historical consensus, but rather colonial political priorities. History must study not only what is recorded in archives, but also how and why they were made.

In 20th century, nationalistic history interpretations challenged colonial interpretations of South Asian history. The marginalized indigenous leaders in imperial discourse were more and more beckoned by historians. *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal* earned a reputation as a central figure in fight for independence in Pakistan. His rebellion in 1857 was redefined as being for freedom and patriotism and foreign rule. Rebel leaders in other parts of South Asia turned into anti-colonial activists. Nationalist History re-wrote colonial history and made indigenous agency the primary focus.

However, it also raised new challenges for interpretation. Nationalist narratives were frequently simplified, sanitized versions of region that were devoid of local motives, tribal politics, agrarian concerns, and intratribal social differences, and instead focused on unity and anti-colonialism. This complexity is reflected in history of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. His resistance was a reaction to British control, but also a reflection of local tribal concerns of tribal autonomy, customary leadership and rural governance. His actions should be seen in relation to region, colony and anti-imperialism, rather than just one. One of most significant challenges to traditional ways of writing history was from Subaltern Studies. Ranajit Guha (Guha, *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, 1982) asserted that colonial and nationalist historians frequently prioritized interests of elite political actors over peasants, tribal communities, labourers and others. Subaltern historians emphasized that rural masses manifested their political awareness in rebellion, rumour, folklore, religious movements and everyday resistance. Historical agency was available to recipients at any social level or even to informal political organizations. This viewpoint is good for Punjabi heroic traditions. Rural memory honors Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, Dulla Bhatti and Jaggia Jatt because they were from local society rather than from imperial institutions. They are important because they are recognized by their community, not because they are in political office. Chauri Chaura study by Shahid Amin (Amin, 1995) demonstrated that popular memory and archival record do not necessarily coincide and that this may not be of historical importance. Oral traditions will capture meanings in historical events that will be lost to official record because of the way communities understand these events. This application of findings to colonial Punjab leads the historian to view folklore as a document of historical consciousness, and not merely illustrative.

In late 20th century, oral history has significantly increased historians' resources. Paul Thompson (2000) states that oral evidence reflects history in an alternate way to written documents and thus makes history more democratic. Oral history is not only important for facts, but for historical meanings too as said by Alessandro Portelli (Portelli, 1991). The variations between oral evidence and documentary evidence can reveal the interpretations of past history of communities rather than mistakes. This approach is very helpful in research of Punjabi folklore. The story of Rajas of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral ballads can focus on symbolism rather than chronological history. The assessment of oral traditions must be done based on the role they have played in history. It is usually their ethical interpretation, sense of community and emotional experience that is their primary contribution rather than administrative detail. In history classroom, historians and their students are taught that memory is subjective and history is objective. This binary division is called into question by modern scholarship. Memory includes selection, interpretation and symbolism. But history writing involves selection, interpretation and narration. Communities and historians interpret evidence in terms of an intellectual framework. As life memory is forgotten, Pierre Nora (1989) suggested that modern societies increasingly depend on formal historical institutions. Memory and history go hand-in-hand. Historical research can be enhanced by the examination of public memory of past and memory studies benefit from empirical basis provided by archival studies. This interaction is well reflected in Punjabi heroic tradition. Chronology and political context come from colonial archives and folklore provides explanations for why things were important for generations. Both they illuminate anti-colonial resistance. This interdisciplinary framework can be used to reconstruct colonial Punjab and way it was remembered, interpreted and passed on. Finally, historicization of Punjabi heroes can no longer be seen in terms of either archive/folklore, fact/memory or history/legend, but rather as multiple forms of evidence that make up conversational historical knowledge. Punjabi heroes like Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, Dulla Bhatti, Jaggia Jatt, and others are not only celebrated for their political struggles but also for their spirit of courage, justice and resistance. To write an inclusive, culturally relevant, and methodologically sound colonial history of Punjab, one needs to be aware of this transformation.

8. CONCLUSION

The study analyzed historicization of Punjabi heroes in the context of their relationship with folklore, collective memory and anti-colonial resistance in colonial Punjab. In addition to political and military history, the study provides for a third thread of historiography that the colonial archives and official administrative records cannot provide an answer to Punjabi heroes' significance in history. Their legacy was the result of a continuous process of interaction between what had happened in history and cultural processes that shaped the ways in which communities remembered, interpreted and transmitted historical events over time. The analysis reveals that Punjabi folklore, which involves heroic vars, dhadi performance, qissa, folk songs, oral tradition, genealogies and commemorative traditions, is a vital historical source. These traditions kept alive indigenous justice, leadership, sacrifice, autonomy of community and resistance that colonial records often overlooked. The local oral history of movement made heroes of local resistance leaders as defenders of honor, protectors of community and symbols of moral courage, while British administration's version of history saw them as rebels or threats to public order. These rival versions demonstrate that history of colonies never was fully under control of colonial rule. The study demonstrates that folklore is not just entertainment or mere legends to be doubted. It is, rather, a sign of past, cultural expression, a lesson of ethics, and a remembrance of people. Local resistance actions were repeated, performed and transmitted in folklore, so that they became part of

Punjabi history. Their documented actions and meanings ascribed by later generations determined historicization of regional heroes such as *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral*, *Dulla Bhatti*, *Jagga Jatt* etc. The study has demonstrated that concept of memory of folklore and of archival history are complementary. It is not antagonistic but to understand past concepts, in line with approach of *Maurice Halbwachs*, *Jan Assmann*, *Pierre Nora*, *James C. Scott*, *Ranajit Guha*, *Alessandro Portelli*, *Paul Thompson*, *Bernard Cohn*, *Nicholas Dirks* and others. Collective memory is a phenomenon that helps to explain why some historical figures continue to be central to local identity despite a changing political context. Chronological precision is obtained from archival sources and historical ethics from folklore. They enhance our knowledge of Colonial Punjab.

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