

HISTORICIZING THE BRAVERY OF RAI AHMAD KHAN KHARRAL: FOLKLORE, COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND ANTI-COLONIAL RESISTANCE IN COLONIAL PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

The 1857 uprising has been studied traditionally from the perspective of the northern and central region of India and several important centers like Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Delhi etc. Comparatively, the scholarly focus has been less on the resistance movements that developed within colonial Punjab, the significance of which lies in their ability to provide a good illustration of localized forms of anti-colonial mobilization. One of the more significant figures of resistance in Punjab was the tribal chief of the Kharral tribe, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral (c. 1776–1857), who is remembered in official British documents, regional history and Punjabi folklore. Colonial authorities often depicted Kharral as a renegade tribal chief who was threatening imperial stability and peace, but local histories have retained him as a brave hero who stood firm against the colonial establishment for the cause of local autonomy, justice, and communal honor. The differing representations show that there is a complex relationship between historical documentation, folklore and collective memory. This study historicizes the courage of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral by exploring the entanglements of oral history, folklore and colonial archives as well as contemporary historical writing. The study reviews the theories of collective memory, oral history and Subaltern Studies and assesses the processes of the construction, transmission and institutionalization of a heroic narrative across generations. Study claims folklore should not be viewed solely as legend, but as a useful historical source if carefully examined in conjunction with archival sources.

KEYWORDS: Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral; Colonial Punjab; 1857 Uprising; Folklore; Collective Memory; Oral History; Anti-Colonial Resistance; Subaltern Studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

History of South Asian British colonialism focuses on the 1857 uprising. It has been described by scholars according to their ideology and history as Indian Rebellion, Sepoy Mutiny, Great Revolt, or First War of Independence. Colonial writers interpreted the revolt as a mutiny by discontented sepoys, and nationalist writers viewed it as a general rebellion against British domination. These dichotomous interpretations are complicated by recent research based on regional diversity, local grievances and multiple social actors that influenced the subcontinental rebellion. In this historical context, Punjab is important but understudied. (Guha R. (., 1983) British narratives focus on the Sikh princely states and the Punjabi elite support of the East India Company, and depict Punjab as loyal to the British administration during the revolt. Such reports separated Punjab from Delhi, Awadh, Kanpur and Jhansi as hot spots of resistance. This depiction later in history is an oversimplification of the complex political dynamics of the province. The anti-colonial nature of the local movements, tribal mobilizations and rural resistance movements in Punjab were more complex. (Talbot I. , 1991)

The resistance of the Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral of colonial Punjab is a remarkable case of Sandal Bar resistance. During the events of 1857, the chief of Kharral tribe opposed the expansion of British administrative powers, the revenue policies, and interference in the functioning of local government. He died in battle in a rebellion against the colonial forces. His courage and defiance of the British were celebrated in the oral history of Punjabis, the folk poetry of the land, and even the history of the area. The colonial records depicted him as a tribal insurgent or outlaw. Collective memory, cultural transmission and archival documentation are the means by which these opposing depictions are mediated. Valour is not just in heroic deeds as it used to be. It includes critical analysis of processes of remembering, interpretation, institutionalization, and in some cases, symbolization in history of courage as a symbol of collective identity. Heroism is influenced by politics, culture, history and memory. We must look beyond celebratory narratives and colonial dismissals to documentary evidence, oral traditions, folklore, and memory studies to understand Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's bravery.

Modern historiography recognizes the importance of recovering marginalized voices from colonial archives. Subaltern Studies by Ranajit Guha challenged elite-centric interpretations of South Asian history by emphasizing the political agency of peasants, tribal communities and rural actors whose experiences were often excluded from official documentation 1982. (Guha R. , 1982) Collective memory studies show that oral narratives, commemorative practices, and folklore preserve alternative histories to official state histories. (Halbwachs, 1992) Punjab's folklore preserves history. Folk ballads (vars), oral epics, local poetry, and storytelling have told stories of resistance, sacrifice, honor, and justice. Folk narratives recount local historical events and often differ from administratively controlled colonial documents. Historians value folklore more when supported by archival, contemporary and material evidence. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral illustrates this historiographical challenge (Portelli, 1991). Local traditions emphasized Kharral's commitment to tribal autonomy, resisting unjust colonial policies, and defending communal dignity, while colonial reports suppressed imperial order-threatening disturbances. Historicity, memory, and representation politics are raised by different portrayals. They also stress need for oral-archival reconciliation. Kharral's legacy transcends 1857. He is a regional and national hero, and his fight is representative of the opposition against colonial rule since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. Kharral has not been studied from a nationalist perspective nor in regional folklore, but rather in the absence of historical archives, oral traditions, or collective memory theories. There have been a limited number of studies that focus on the impact of colonial and indigenous narratives on bravery history. The study of folklore has not been approached traditionally in an historical way. This article fills these gaps by historicizing Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's bravery through historical analysis, folklore, oral history and memory studies. The study analyzes colonial documentation and folk tradition, and seeks to see where they converge, contradict, and are illuminating. It addresses methodological debates regarding the history, the subaltern agency and collective memory in the interpretation of anti-colonial resistance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The 1857 uprising has been shaped by methodological and political changes over the course of 100 years. The 1857 sepoy mutiny was blamed by early colonial historians on three factors: mismanagement of administration, military indiscipline, domestic unrest. The nationalist historians' Subaltern studies, memory studies and oral history scholars have decentered the focus on the peasantry and on the tribes and regional actors, challenging both interpretations in the name of rebellion as the first large-scale Indian resistance against British colonialism. (Guha R. (., 1983). Historiography on Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is similar. Pakistani academics and regional historians have focused on his 1857 struggle, but few have studied colonial records, folklore, and communal memory. Because studies favor factual or nationalist narratives, multidisciplinary historical research is possible. The uprising was first documented by British colonial historians John William Kaye and George Bruce Malleon. This multi-volume histories described the revolution as a military mutiny in danger of bringing imperial stability into question. Many Sikh kings, Punjabi aristocracy, and newly recruited military personnel supported the EIC during emergencies which is why the emphasis is on Punjab. (Kaye, 1897) The bond of the Punjabis is Loyalty and the three pillars are recruiting military, efficiency and allegiance to local political elites. The academics paid no attention to the uprisings in Gogera, Sandal Bar and others. The leader of the Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral and other militants were not described as resistance fighters but as livestock bandits, local trouble makers, and rebels. Most modern historians doubt these images were intended to represent any kind of historical truth, and believe instead that they were intended to serve colonial administration agendas. The majority of colonial reports were pro-military and pro-Imperial. Records did not emphasize indigenous political motivations; rather, it emphasized crime and disturbance. (Stokes E. , 1986)

Nationalist historians after British rule redefine uprising as organised struggle for independence. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in "The Indian War of Independence" (1857) stated that revolt was a national reaction against the colonial rule. Later historians challenged Savarkar's view, but nationalist study broadened the historical agenda to consider more than the military narratives of the empire. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar and Surendra Nath Sen studied regional uprising diversity thoroughly. Pakistani history revealed Muslim leaders and regional resistance that colonial histories

ignored. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral became a Punjabi indigenous resistance hero intellectually. Historians are looking beyond colonial and nationalist boundaries at Punjab's 1857 socio-economic issues, tribal politics, and regional opposition. (Talbot I. , 1991)

During the era of 1980s, Subaltern Studies changed South Asian history. Elite history ignored peasant, tribal, worker, and rural politics, said Ranajit Guha. Politics, not violence, drove peasant uprisings, said Guha (1983). (Guha R. (., 1983) He inspired historians to study political history's neglected local resistance. This position was crucial because Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral led rural tribal communities, not colonial administrative agencies or metropolitan political elites. Local concerns about taxes, police, tribal sovereignty, and British interference in traditional authority fueled his opposition. Kharral's efforts are indigenous politics, not revolt, according to Subaltern Studies. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) and Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) historical studies do not need to repeat elite epistemologies, but they can reflect minority ones. Historical methodology is formed by the combined memory research. Maurice Halbwachs said that "Society makes memory. Communities actively rewrite history to reflect their politics and values. Halbwachs quotes Jan Assmann as contrasting communicative memory, passed down through generations, with cultural memory, preserved through literature, rituals, monuments and memorial activities. (Assmann, 2011) Theories about what happened to Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. His history is defined by annual observances, oral history, educational stories, literature, TV plays, and local culture. His courage is remembered in the context of regional and national identities. Memory studies consider how cultures preserve historical meanings, not folklore. Due to its symbolic language, lyrical embellishment and legends, traditional history distrusted folklore. However, historians increasingly use carefully researched folklore. Alessandro Portelli says oral stories show how communities interpret history. Vansina demonstrated that well-researched oral traditions can preserve historical information. (Portelli, 1991) South Asian oral tradition is strong in Punjab (Vansina, 1985). Folk songs (vars), epic poetry, storytelling and Sufi culture celebrate social revolutions, great leaders and regional conflicts. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is remembered for his bravery, hospitality and resistance to injustice in the traditions. According to historians folklore should not be a replacement of archives. Oral traditions analysis is aided by source critique, contextualization, and documentation. The anti-colonial movement of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral has been a 20-year object of study for Pakistani historians. The findings indicate that the narratives of colonialism have underestimated the size and political impact of the Gogera uprising. The scholars claimed that the resentment stemmed from British tax policies, administrative reorganization, restriction on tribal powers and strident policing. Oral traditions of Punjabi kept the memory of the colonial era, as folklore and cultural identity studies indicate. In this modern scholarship, 1857 Punjab events are juxtaposed with the records from the districts, colonial letters, indigenous chronicles, and oral history. Although attempts have been made, there are still some research gaps. The collective memory of Kharral has rarely been represented in the form of oral history and comparative archives. The study of the Pakistani heroic myths of colonial and post-colonial periods is inadequate.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Historical investigation has gradually evolved from the reconstruction of past events through written sources to a study of the way in which societies remember, interpret and make sense of those events. Today's history discourse has taken into account the mediation of past through archives, oral history, commemorative activities, literature, monuments and public memory. Therefore, the discussion of anti-colonial resistance has to go beyond the examination of documents and involve an understanding that collective identities create and maintain memories of anti-colonial resistance. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is a case in point of this interdisciplinary challenge. His memory is alive in the British colonial records, in Punjabi folk tales and traditions, in the local histories and in contemporary national memory. The research approach applied in this research is the interdisciplinary theory, as a theory that combines historicization, collective memory theory, cultural memory, Subaltern studies, oral history and folklore studies.

3.1. Historicizing Bravery:

Historicization involves presenting historical persons, incidents, and concepts in socio-political, cultural, and temporal context. Instead of seeing bravery as a quality that does not change over the years, Historicization focuses on how bravery changes over time. Bravery in colonial south Asia is not merely about bravery in war. It was influenced by local honor (izzat), tribal leadership, land rights, kinship obligations and resistance to outsiders' domination. Colonial rebellion can be perceived as moral duties within indigenous communities. Bravery is a matter of perception. Bravery in British colonial records was evidenced by loyalty to the Empire and military discipline. Indigenous communities associated bravery with upholding communal autonomy, ancestral lands, justice and dignity. These competing historical interpretations are illustrated in different depictions of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. Collective memory was revolutionized by Maurice Halbwachs' theory. M. Halbwachs considered that memory is a social process formed from the community. Groups recreate the past, based on existing identities, values, and concerns. There are several distinctions between collective memory and professional history. (Halbwachs, 1992) The oral tradition, celebration, folk songs, festivals, education and regional literature are the ways by which Punjabi communities have maintained

their heritage. The central theme of the narrative is resistance to colonial rule and sacrifice, though it is not always explicitly about valorization. While the details are context-dependent, the theme is often of valorization, sacrifice and resistance to colonial rule. Collective memory thus shows how a community perceives its history and historical events. Jan Assmann described cultural memory with the reference to Halbwachs' theory as defined as a different memory from communicative memory which lasts for approximately 80-100 years. There are several ways to preserve cultural memory in literature, monuments, rituals, educational systems, archives and public commemorations. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's history is becoming cultural memory. (Assmann, 2011) His memory is kept alive by Punjabi folk poetry, historical biographies, school textbooks, television dramas/documents, academic scholarship, public monuments, memorials, and annual commemorative ceremonies. These cultural expressions reflect the public views on Kharral bravery and connect the region and nation.

Ranajit Guha and Subaltern Studies collective provide another theoretical framework for this study. Ranajit Guha challenged the historiography of colonial and nationalist traditions by highlighting that it marginalized peasants, tribal people and rural populations. Guha (1982) is of significance to Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. Kharral was not included in the colonial bureaucracy, nor was it part of the urban elite. His power was derived from tribal leadership, local social arrangements and customary politics. He resisted in a way that was an example of indigenous political agency outside of colonial administration. Subaltern Studies urges historians to go beyond the focus on local resistance, indigenous political organization, community participation, rural leadership and alternative political cultures. The colonial narrative of "lawlessness" of tribal resistance is a less balanced approach. Other historians such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, however, cautioned that historians should avoid imposing their present-day interpretations on the historical figures, even while they are trying to represent the voices of the margins. (Spivak G. C., 1988)

3.2. Oral History and Folklore as Historical Sources:

Oral history's theoretical contribution is growing in historical research. From Alessandro Portelli, oral testimony has a historical value because it reveals the way people and communities understood history. (Portelli, 1991). Jan Vansina showed that oral traditions are admissible historical evidence after rigorous source criticism. (Vansina, 1985) This research follows oral history scholarship's methodological principles, which advise against blindly accepting or dismissing oral narratives. Folklore conveys cultural and historical meanings. Compare oral traditions rather than relying on one. Triangulate oral evidence with archival documentation whenever possible. Even when details are embellished, symbolic narratives preserve historically significant social realities. These principles enable analysis of Punjabi ballads, folk poetry and oral traditions about Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. Folklore serves many historical purposes. Because they were performed rather than written, such narratives survived colonial censorship. Punjabi folklore preserves Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, showing how communities create historical continuity without official documentation. This study views folklore as an important part of historical consciousness that must be compared to documentary evidence. The theoretical framework provides a conceptual framework for Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's legacy. Historicization, collective memory theory, cultural memory, Subaltern Studies, and oral history are used to go beyond fact versus folklore or archive versus memory." Instead, it views historical knowledge as result of multiple forms of evidence, each with its own context, purpose and limitations. This interdisciplinary approach recognizes colonial records' evidentiary value and Punjabi folklore's role in preserving marginalized histories of anti-colonial resistance to reconstruct Kharral's bravery.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative historical study examines Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's bravery through historical documentation, folklore, collective memory and anti-colonial resistance. A single-source approach is insufficient to reconstruct Gogera uprising's chronology and understand Kharral's heroism's memory, representation and institutionalization. A multidisciplinary approach combines historical analysis with memory theories, oral history and folklore studies. Although detailed, colonial administrative records maintained imperial governance and often reflected British officials' priorities and biases. In contrast, Punjabi oral traditions and folk narratives preserve indigenous perspectives but use symbolic language, poetic embellishment, and retrospective interpretations. The study is qualitative historical case study. Historical case studies are useful for examining complex political issues in a social and cultural context from several perspectives. (Yin, 2018) Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral leads analysis due to the fact that his 1857 revolt was a classic instance of anti-colonial resistance of Punjabis. Interpretive historians appreciate the fact that history sources are not simple factual repositories, but rather social products. All historical texts are shaped by the political agenda and institutional setting of their authors as well as their cultural values.

5. Historical Background-Colonial Punjab, Sandal Bar Region and Political Context of 1857 Uprising

To understand the courageous and defiant leadership of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, it is important to contextualize him in the political, economic, and social changes that unfolded after the British annexation of Punjab in 1849. The resistance that was led by Kharral during the uprising of 1857 was not spontaneous but grew out of the slowly rising

tensions between the expanding colonial state and the local indigenous tribal community of Sandal Bar region. Administrative changes from Britain, new revenue policies, policing, and limitations on customary rights, all changed longstanding relationships between tribal leaders and their communities. These developments did lead to complaints which were part of the general crisis of 1857.

5.1. Annexation of Punjab and Consolidation of British Rule:

After British East India Company won Second Anglo-Sikh War, Punjab was annexed by British in 1849, which changed northwestern India's political history. The Punjab was a laboratory for colonial administrative reforms by Henry Lawrence, John Lawrence and Robert Montgomery. British authorities established a centralized civil administration, a system of land-revenue settlements, expanded police and judicial systems, undertook systematic population and land surveys, enhanced road and telegraph networks and engaged Punjabis in the colonial military. These reforms were intended politically for stability and administrative efficiency from the colonial point of view. But in many rural areas, they were considered as a new, unparalleled encroachment on customary governance. As time went on, colonial authorities reduced the power of chiefs to allocate land, settle disputes and provide local security. (Metcalf, 2012) So, the annexation had a profound effect upon the reorganization of both political sovereignty and rural society.

5.2. Sandal Bar: Geography and Strategic Importance:

The resistance was started by Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral in Sandal Bar, a huge area of semi-arid forest and grazing land between two rivers, Ravi and Chenab. In the mid-19th century, there were few permanent settlements, large grazing lands, seasonal migrations, pastoral and semi-pastoral economies, dense woodlands for defense and good tribal organization. However, before the British annexation, Sandal Bar was much more independent than the irrigated agricultural districts of central Punjab. Tribal communities' custom rights included access to pastureland, forests, water and seasonal cultivation. Geography was a very strong factor in resistance. The military operations were hampered by the dense forests, scattered settlements and minimal colonial infrastructure, while local leaders could easily mobilize supporters and out maneuver British. Therefore, Sandal Bar was one of toughest to control for British administrators. There were some very strong pastoral tribes at Sandal Bar, such as Kharrals. Political authority in these communities was derived from kinship and customary law, as well as negotiated leadership. Tribal chiefs had authority through lineage, ancestry, customary recognition, mediation of disputes, protection of communal interests, redistribution of resources during crises, military leadership and personal courage and generosity. So, leadership needed to be hereditary and able to ensure the safety and honor (izzat) of the community and its welfare. In such a political culture, faithfulness was two ways. Tribal members were expecting chiefs to protect customary rights from outside interference during conflict, but chiefs were depending on community support during conflict. These native political systems were very different to the British forms of government stressed on central authority, codified law and bureaucratic governance.

5.3. Colonial Administrative Reforms and Rural Discontent:

After the annexation, the British administrators wanted to integrate the tribal areas into the larger colonial state. The implementation of several policies sparked growing tensions, since traditional systems of taxation and land use were being superseded by a uniform system of revenue assessments. These were intended to regularize tax collection, but often clashed with customary systems of farming and communal resource access management on a seasonal basis. Fixed revenue demands were perceived as an impediment to the economy in pastoral communities. British authorities opened up police stations and judiciary offices across Punjab. Tribal mediation was no longer used to settle disputes, but they were taken over by the colonial authorities instead. This diminished the role tribal chiefs played and increased the colonial administrative presence. The economy of those in the past was a pastoral economy, which was based on the seasonal migration of animals. As forests, grazing lands and transportation routes began to be regulated by the colony, patterns of mobility were begun to be restricted. These measures included, amongst others, those pertaining to economic livelihoods and customary rights. British government officials became more suspicious of powerful tribal chiefs. There is increasing worry about their ability to muster armed supporters, according to administrative paperwork. In the process, the practice of surveillance, collection of intelligence, and preventive detention grew more frequent.

5.4 Punjab During Uprising of 1857:

British security in the North was altered when the Meerut uprising took place in May 1857. Punjab was of strategic value because of its close proximity to Delhi, size of military cantonments, recruitment facilities and communication lines with northwestern part of India. British administrators were quick to respond and they started dismantling poorly organized regiments. Communication networks improved military reinforcements for Delhi. Unrest potential locations were observed. These measures made Punjab look more stable than the northern part of India. Recent scholarship shows that regional stability varied greatly. Many districts saw localized resistance, especially in tribal communities with strong political autonomy. The Gogera district became one of most important centers of rural resistance on July 8, 1857, when Joyia tribe members at *Lakho Ka* of Tehsil Pakpattan refused to pay taxes and land revenue to the British government. Mutiny Records describes this event as minor; "On July 8, 1857, a slight disturbance occurred in

Pak Putton tehseel at village of Lukhoke on Sutluj. Some chuprassees sent there to collect a revenue balance were expelled by Lumbardars. (1991, Walden) People also looted British Post Office Chowkis. British officers in that area were barred from certain areas. Mr. Elphinston, Deputy Commissioner of Gugaira, noticed people surveillance the area and ordered Mr. Berkeley, Assistant Commissioner, to arrest them. Some locals fled to Bahawalpur, while others were arrested and imprisoned.” (Ahmad Ghazali, 1988) British later called arrested traitors. Ahmad Khan Kharral represented arrested people at this crucial time. After learning about conditions of “*Lakho Ka*” residents in Tehsil Pakpattan, Ahmad Khan Kharral met the Deputy Commissioner of Gugaira to convince him that the arrested were innocent and should be released. Deputy Commissioner of Gugaira told him they were arrested for refusing to pay government revenue. (Anwar, 1993) However, Rai Sahab informed him that they were being illegally arrested and owed no revenue. Unless those people are freed, government will struggle to control the district.” Deputy Commissioner accepted Rai Sahab's suggestion and released the prisoners. Although wider rebellion improved politics, local grievances were equally important. There were a number of immediate factors that added to sense of tension. British officials rounded up tribal chiefs who were suspected of fighting their revolutionaries. Such arrests compromised the politics and fostered resentment. Colonial officials began to involve themselves more in the affairs of customary law. Local government was challenged by interventions. In 1857 there was noticeable expansion of administrative intelligence network. These were interpreted by many tribal leaders as a colonial encroachment. The consolidation of the British raised a challenge to hereditary tribal elites' political power. This resistance was manifesting itself not only against specific policies but also in regard to the future of indigenous political institutions.

5.5. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral as a Regional Leader:

In this volatile situation, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral emerged as a great figure of Sandal Bar. Historical sources repeatedly reference his military prowess, personal bravery, dedication to customary justice, dispute mediation skills, military networks and extensive tribal influence. His influence was recognized by United Kingdom, but was interpreted as a threat to colonial system. Punjabi folklore portrays him as a protector of local communities who resisted unjust interference in traditional ways of life. The convergence of these otherwise disparate sources suggests that Kharral ruled the region, even if their interpretations differ. All Gogaira tribes under Ahmed Khan Kharral fought the British in War of Independence (1857). Ahmad Khan, Kharral tribe chief, ruled Sahiwal-Neelbar and was 1857 War's hero. Even though he was 80, he fought like a young man. (Aitzaz Ahsan, 1996) He conducted many adept guerrilla operations against British with courage, speed and valour. A British Montgomery Gazetteer compiler says, “Ahmad was a man above the average—bold and crafty.” (Punjab, Montgomery District Gazetteer, p.44, 1935) He studied horseback riding and war techniques in his youth. His father tried to teach him guerrilla warfare and horseback riding because these were local leader symbols. He was kind, honored, and respected by people as a chief. Everyone praised and honored him because tribes respected him. Contemporary chiefs of other tribes across the province also respected him. Zaheer Hassan Wattu says, “Rai Ahmed Kharral changed Pug with Sardar Malik Bahalik Wattu, Wattu Ravi chief beside River Ravi.” (Wattu, 2005) His relations with Sikh Rajas, especially Ranjeet Singh and Gulab Singh, were excellent. Raja Ranjeet Singh invited local leaders like Nadir Shah Quraishi, Chaudhary Jivay Khan Arain, Ahmed Khan Kharral, and Mehr Singh (father of Dhar-e-Singh) to Sayyidwala tehsil after Sikh conquest of Punjab. Because Ahmed's height and youth impressed Raja, Raja Ranjeet Singh asked about Rai Ahmed Khan after every leader introduced himself. Raja Ranjeet Singh called him “his brother.” This relationship grew into family over time. Rai Ahmad Khan visited Raja Ranjeet Singh, who wanted to give him a gift and said he could take whatever he wanted. Raja imprisoned some Muslims for not paying taxes. Rai Ahmad Khan offered to free all captured Muslims, so Raja Ranjeet Singh honored him and freed them. Ranjeet Singh released all Muslim prisoners only after taking Rai Ahmed Khan's booty, according to local narrators. Rai Ahmed Khan sent his servant to Ranjeet Singh's wife to demand four thousand rupees. Rai Ahmed took the four thousand from Ranjeet Singh's wife. Rai Ahmed's family ties and honor with Raja Ranjeet Singh are shown. Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral was a generous landlord who was a Punjabi Muslim. This peace-loving chief of the Kharals was a famous freedom fighter.

5.9 Bravery, Honour and Resistance in Punjabi Political Culture:

To understand Kharral, one has to grasp what bravery meant in the political culture of the natives. Bravery was not just on the battlefield in nineteenth century rural Punjab. It was protecting communal honour (izzat), protecting guests and dependants, maintaining the autonomy of the tribe, resisting injustice, and being generous and moral. These are typical values of Punjabi folk literature and oral traditions. Therefore, Kharral's memory is a combination of military achievements and leadership morality. This cultural perception is quite distinct from the administrative colonial definition which was geared towards imperial allegiance. The above history indicates that story of rebellion in 1857 on a general level cannot account for the Gogera uprising. The process of colonial state formation, indigenous political institutions, different economic relations, traditional honour, regional geography and anti-colonial opposition all influenced the movement of Kharral. Recent historiography focuses on the regional diversity of 1857 resistance, yet has also cast doubt on earlier accounts that depicted Punjab as a region that was entirely steadfast in its allegiance to British rule. History has made Kharral's courage so ingrained in punjabi culture. ((Talbot & Heath, 1991; 2015) He was a defender of local autonomy in the context of changing politics of rural Punjab due to colonial expansion. The

coming of Punjab to the British rule and its consolidation altered the social-political landscape of Sandal Bar. Conflict between tribal leaders and communities regarding revenue, policing, courts, surveillance and restrictions on customary authority created tensions. The resistance of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was a localized response to colonial advancement and an integral component of the anti-colonial uprising of 1857. This background is crucial to historicizing Kharral's bravery. His actions were characteristic of political culture in Punjabi community in the nineteenth century, in which honour, communal responsibility, and customary rights were important values.

6. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral and Gogera Uprising of 1857: Leadership, Bravery and Anti-Colonial Resistance:

The uprising in Gogera district during 1857 represents one of the most significant yet comparatively understudied episodes of anti-colonial resistance in Punjab. Unlike the better-documented military revolts at *Meerut*, *Delhi*, *Kanpur* and *Lucknow*, Gogera movement was rooted in tribal alliances, rural mobilization, and indigenous political structures. At its center stood Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, whose leadership has been remembered differently in colonial archives and Punjabi collective memory.

6.1. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral: Leadership Before the Uprising:

Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was a powerful Sandal Bar tribal chief before rebellion. His authority came from customary leadership, not colonial appointment. He wielded power through kinship, mediation, and community protection as Kharral tribe leader. British administrative correspondence shows that he was one of Gogera district's most influential leaders. He could mobilize armed resistance due to his extensive network among Fatiana, Wattoo, and other pastoral tribes. "All Gogaira tribes under Ahmed Khan Kharral fought British in War of Independence (1857). Ahmad Khan, chief of Kharral tribe, commanded entire Sahiwal-Neelbar region and was the 1857 War's undisputed hero. Even though he was 80, he fought like a young man. (Aitzaz Ahsan, 1996) He conducted many adept guerrilla operations against the British with courage, speed and valour. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was Nathu Khan's son. All nearby tribes respected his tribe. Various tribes saw Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral as their true leader and survivor against British armies. Ahmed Khan Kharral established a parallel district government to the British. Ahmed Ghazali (1988) Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral led freedom fighters for three months and freed their country from British Raj. In Sandal Bar, Ahmed Ghazali wrote, "This reality can not be refuted that companions of Rai Khan Kharral like *Murad Fatiana*, *Dalil Fatiana*, *Malik Sardar Khan*, *Dalidar Khan*, *Pir Nadir Shah*, *Murdana Baloch*, *Lal Khan Kathia*, *Mokha Vehni Wal* etc. show sincerity to him, who remained on Rai Ahmad's side in crucial moments. The companions of Rai Ahmad Khan resemble him." Ahmed Khan Kharral also wanted district tribes to unite for independence (Ahmad Ghazali, 1988). Gogaia and Jhang district leaders attended a Mujahedin meeting at Kamalia on September 16, 1857. Ahmad Khan Kharral wanted Sarfaraz Khan Kharral to support Mujahidin against British, so Kamalia was chosen for this important gathering. (Anwar, 1993) On the same night, Sarfaraz Khan Kharral informed Captain Elphinstone that "all chiefs of Ravi tribes who had been called into Kamalia had fled, evidently with intention of rising in their villages." (Punjab, Montgomery District Gazetteer, p.44, 1935) Colonialists saw this influence as a threat to public order. However, local communities saw it as legitimate indigenous leadership based on customary law and reciprocity. Different views of Kharral's legacy foreshadow historiographical debate.

6.2. British Military Strategy to Gogera Uprising:

The 1857 uprising spread across northern India and led to British losing their fear of losing Punjab. The colonial government spied on tribal leaders and imprisoned anti-colonial activists. The arrest of some tribal leaders for disloyalty caused immediate action in the Gogera district. British officials had summoned and detained/supervised Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, according to historical records. These actions led to more distrust between colonial authorities and tribal populations, though there are conflicting records on the order of events. These were not only legal, but were also in breach of customary autonomy and honour (izzat) in many communities. The respected leaders were arrested, which caused political relations to be harmed and organized opposition to grow. After Harral's release (or escape, depending on the story) he was the leader of the resistance in Gogera. He united with the neighboring tribes. In historical reports, Kharrals, Fatianas, Wattoos, Joyias and other pastoral clans collaborated with each other on the Sandal Bar. This alliance is proof that an uprising wasn't just a matter of leadership. It was a grass roots protest against the intrusion of colonialism. It was not military organization, but social institutions that mobilized. Communication was fostered by tribal networks and recruitment and support by kinship. Oral history highlights the importance of trusted intermediaries and communities' meetings in spreading resistance, even when Britain was on the watch. The use of indigenous landscape knowledge was remarkable in Gogera uprising. The route of British was on roads, supply lines and traditional military formations, whereas Kharral were supported by forests, seasonal river channels, grazing routes, spread settlements and an intimate knowledge of the terrain. It was due to geographical advantages that resistance fighters resorted to irregular warfare or guerrilla warfare. Tribal warriors resorted to guerrilla warfare, to disrupt communications, to attack isolated outposts of the colonies, to retreat rapidly into forests, and to depend upon local populations for intelligence and materials.

British authorities knew that the Gogera uprising was a regional threat particularly because Punjab was a strategic region for operations in 1857. Military and administrative force were used against the colonists. They involved regular

troops, locally loyal troops, increased intelligence efforts, punitive raids, destruction of rebel bases, confiscation of property, the arrest of tribal leaders and more policing. Administrative letters were focused on re-establishing the rule of law as soon as possible so that rebellions would not spread to other districts. Colonial reports often justified these operations as suppressing disturbances. However, modern historiography increasingly recognizes that such language reflected imperial governance priorities rather than neutral historical description. (Stokes E. , 1986) On September 16, the Punjab government received an express report that "Khurruls, a wild and predatory race, whose chief support consists in their large herds of cattle, which roam through wastes of southern Rechnah Doab, had collected to the number of some thousands and intended to attack the place." Their chief said he was ordered to do this by King Delhi. Plunder and weakness of the Police Force at Futtipur Gogairah (a large portion of the original establishment was drafted to serve in Huriana with General Van Cortlandt) likely led to this attempt. The 1911 Punjab Mutiny British suppression of this uprising is also documented. 200 Sikh sowars of a regiment recently raised at Lahore for service in Hindostan were immediately sent to Futtipoor Gogairah, 75 miles away. A native-carried company of Her Majesty's 81st, three Horse Artillery guns, one Military Police company, and 50 Police Horse followed them before morning. (Government, 1911)

In his political report to Indian government, Punjab Chief Commissioner Sir J. Lawrence writes, "A serious attack has come from Gogaira, south of Lahore between Ravi and Satluj." A post office employee came to me on September 16 with tears in his eyes and told me that all villagers between Multan and Lahore opposed British. One lac and twenty-five thousand people out of three lac in the district are theirs. Investigating rebellion causes is necessary. No control over rebellion existed until Delhi's conquest. (Government, 1911) The record also describes rebellious tribes' conditions against the British: "Khurruls can have but few arms, and these of the worst description, being such as they must have buried or concealed in their mud walls. Dissatisfaction can spread quickly if they gather enough people. Kuttias, another predatory pastoral race in Baree Doab, only separated from Khurruls by Ravee, began plundering. They attacked the mail cart, stole horses from post houses, and disarmed several small police units on Multan high road. On the right bank of Sutledge, Wuttos, a third similar race, began to gather. (1911, Government) Wattus revolted on Ravi in 1857 and still steal cattle. During rebellion, Sutlej Wattus behaved well. (Punjab, Montgomery District Gazetteer, p.44, 1935) In September 1857, military operations killed *Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral*. The forests near Noorpur (also called Nooray ki Dall or nearby localities in other traditions) are where most scholars believe he died in battle against British forces. Colonial reports acknowledged his death as a military victory that weakened district resistance. The event is interpreted differently in Punjabi folklore. Instead of defeat, oral traditions portray Kharral's death as culmination of brave resistance for justice, tribal honor, and independence. Folk poetry portrays him as a martyr rather than a surrenderer. Although documentary evidence and oral tradition are expressed through symbols, the convergence of these sources in his death during the armed resistance further reinforces its historical significance.

6.4. Colonial Archives versus Punjabi Folklore:

The differences between colonial records and oral history in the Punjab could be indicative of Kharral's history. British administrative documents called Kharral a rebel chief, disorder-maker, public security threat, tribal insurgent, and lawbreaker. Colonial administration prioritized political stability, as shown in this portrayal. British historians and administrators always call War of Independence (1857) negligible, but official records show otherwise. In "Punjab and Delhi in 1857," British historian J. Cave-Brown wrote, "Drums were heard beating in all parts of adjoining jungle, and spies reporting large gatherings there, varying from 3000 to 5000, but the grass was so high and thick that not a man could be seen." (Cave-Brown, 1861) Branderth, Secretary to Chief Commissioner of Punjab, wrote to Secretary (Foreign Affairs) Government of India, "These clans can muster 20 to 30,000 men and occupy a 40 to 50-mile-wide, 70-to-80-mile-long section of Googaira District. They have few villages and live in temporary grass huts in areas with the best pasturage and water for their many cattle. *Khurruls*, *Khattias*, *Wattoos*, *Fatwanas* and others rule them, and they are Jat." (Government, 1911) The Official Mutiny Records state, "On the evening of 14th of September (assault of Delhi), a Mahomedan postal official from Googaira arrived at Lahore from Googaira, came before the Chief Commissioner, and reported, with a wicked twinkle, that all the wild and predatory tribes in jungle between Lahore and Mooltan had risen." He informed the Chief Commissioner that insurgents numbered 125000 men in response to a question.⁴⁴

Punjabi folklore illustrates a different picture. Kharral was a brave tribal leader, defender of communal honor, symbol of resistance, and martyr who refused colonial rule. Folk tales celebrate moral courage, loyalty, sacrifice, and justice, not military victories. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral is honored in Punjabi folklore (Dholla) because his mother was pregnant and going to visit Syed Khaki Shah of Jhamra. She received bestowment from a stranger. His mother asked that stranger how he knew me. Though he didn't know you, I know that child in your web." (Bhutta, 2010) Researchers and historians find no evidence of this incident, but folk storytellers and Marasis portray him as an inborn Pir, a spiritual leader of locals. He played a great role in the War of Independence, but spiritualism has no historical relevance. At eight years old, he was sent to a Madrissa in Kobamay Lasharian (Present Okara) for religious education. His religious leader, spiritual mentor, and teacher, Hazrat Awais, taught him religion. The natives praised his teacher, saying he prepared Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral to fight the British. He practiced his training in the War of Independence

(1857) and was martyred. The contrast highlights the fact that the meaning of history is shaped by events and by the interpretation of events in the eyes of those who record and remember. Documentaries and oral histories of Kharral focus on bravery. But in history, there are other definitions of courage. Courage was defined by colonial officials as having loyalty to the colonies and military discipline. This transformed resistance to the state into rebellion. The concept of bravery was different in the context of Punjabi political culture. It included the struggle for rights of custom, communal autonomy, community responsibility for leadership, izzat (honor) and injustice prevailing even when challenged. To historicize Kharral's courageousness is to assign his actions to native moral and political contexts and not colonial administrative ones. He was a symbol of Punjabi leadership values and a warrior in armed resistance. There are several points of the Gogera uprising on which modern historians differ. The main debates include how the movement was interpreted as a tribal revolt or as part of the anti-colonial uprising in 1857; its coordination with resistance in other parts of northern India; its popularity; the reliability of later oral traditions; and how local grievances intersected with the development of anti-colonial consciousness. New scholarship rejects, simplistic either/or interpretations. Historically, it is argued, there was a dynamic of mutual reinforcement between local grievances and anti-colonial movements. The Gogera uprising demonstrates the impact of local political influences and imperial crises on local resistance. (Talbot & Stokes, 1991; 1986) The Gogera uprising shows that colonial archives and nationalist commemorations cannot explain Punjabi anti-colonial resistance. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral played an important role because he organized tribal groups, expressed local concerns and represented tribal morality and duty.

7. Folklore, Collective Memory and Historicization of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral's Bravery:

Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral was more than just a man of September 1857. His role in the Gogera uprising was recorded in the colonial archives but his image as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance is preserved in the Punjabi folklore, oral history and collective memory of the land. Kharral's legacy demonstrates that cultural practices, telling of stories and public commemoration create history. The oral literature of Punjab is one of the best in South Asia. Prior to literacy, communities had their own means of transmitting history, such as vars (heroic ballads), epic poetry, oral history, devotional gatherings of the Sufi, folk songs, seasonal festivals and communal commemorations. These traditions maintained common experiences, ethics and regional identities as well as amusement. Folklore has been the repository of rural communities' voices that were largely missing from the imperial archives. Many leaders who were not mentioned in British reports continued to be prominent in oral history. It is reflected by the constant remembrance of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. In the central part of the country, particularly in the former Sandal Bar area, folk tales depict him as a brave tribal leader in the fight against colonialism. There is a variety of detail, but it is similar in the main themes. Several themes come out from the comparison of the oral traditions of the Punjab. For Kharral, willing to fight a militarily superior colonial state is a recurring theme. Folk stories are all about overcoming fear, being steadfast, not giving up, putting aside personal security and forfeiting for the good of the community, not about the tactical win. This allows Kharral to be a moral rather than a historical figure. Honour is considered as a virtue to be worshipped in political culture in Punjab. Folklore portrays Kharral as a protector of tribal pride, tribal rights, tribal independence, and tribal moral justice. It is a concept that is quite foreign to contemporary nationalist patriotism. The sources of resistance are customary law, kinship, and reciprocal leadership. Kharral is not a single hero but a symbol for the resistance of the people in the rural areas.

7.1. Folklore and Historical Reliability:

The problem of folklore as historical evidence is a controversial one in historical methodology. Oral traditions can be embellished with symbols, poetry, supernatural elements, and may be contradictory in terms of chronology and compression of information, and therefore cannot be trusted by positivist historians. Recent scholarship, however, calls this into question. Jan Vansina argues that oral traditions can give historical information when critically evaluated. Vansina: 1985 (Alessandro Portelli) Oral testimony reveals what happened, what communities think happened and why. The conclusions of the above can be extended to the case of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral where folklore should not be assessed on the basis of literal accuracy. Historians need to ask what historical events do people remember over and over again? What are the values promoted? Who are the surviving political relations? What events are not recorded but remembered orally? These questions illustrate the historical significance of folklore in the social memory and cultural interpretation. Community is not a mechanism that preserves the memory from generation to generation, but rather, it is a process of reconstruction, according to Maurice Halbwachs, using current social structures. This perspective is a helpful explanation of the history of Kharral. (Halbwachs, 1992) Remembrance was local immediately following 1857. In the latter part of 20th century, the regional historians brought his anti-colonialism into focus. Once Pakistan was established, institutions of learning, literature, television dramas, and public events made him a part of narratives of colonial resistance. Kharral's image went through multiple processes of local tribal memory, regional Punjabi memory, provincial historical identity and national historical commemoration. Each stage has left recollections and has transformed them into political settings. Jan Assmann divides cultural and communicative memory. Kharral's memory is being embedded into cultural memory via public monuments, museums, school curriculum, university research, literary publications, TV documentaries and annual commemorative

ceremonies. Historical awareness and opinion is formed through institutionalization. But historians have to differentiate between historical reconstruction, public memory and political symbolism. If these are not made the historical analysis can become uncritical commemoration.

7.2. Colonial Archives and Folk Memory: Points of Convergence & Divergence:

The Colonial records are like the Punjabi folklore. Kharal provided regional influence, leadership of the Gogera upheaval, mobilization of tribes, British conflict, and death in the military. History overview confidence increases with a convergence. The vast majority of conflicts are not chronological, they are interpretational. Rebellion is mentioned in the colonial archives. Folklore fights. Colonial demands stress. Oral enforcement of the law. These interpretations are informed by political rather than historical frameworks. Significant gaps remain. Civil order, military suppression, crime and revolt against the law are recorded in British documents. The Punjabis have a moral, sacrifice, communal dignity, indigenous sovereignty and heroism theme in their folk tales. These differences show that history is influenced by institutional interests. Colonial writers staunchly supported empire. Cultures preserved identity memories. These historical works need critical context. The popularity of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal reflects regional identity and history. Heroism, resistance, honor, leadership, justice, and indigenous autonomy are his Punjabi legacy. Historicists, educators, and cultural groups preserve his legacy. Political goals influence history, so historians must consider them. Historicization must balance cultural memory and history. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal crossed military and colonial records in bravery. Memories, interpretations and transmissions by Punjabi communities preserve his legacy.

The British did not recognize Rai Ahmed Khan during his performing of Asar prayer, according to local literature. British soldier *Gulab Rai Bedi* shot Rai Ahmed after Dhara Singh and Khem Singh Bedi told them about Rai Sahb. British was warned by Dhara Singh and Khem Singh Bedi that no one was safe before he mounted a horse. Gulab Rai Bedi started the second fire, killing Rai Sahb and 20 British soldiers. (Mushtaq, 2009) British employed Sampuran Singh Bedi, according to A.D.Ijaz in *Kal Bulandi*. Nahal Singh fought Muslims in Gogaira, says A.D.Ijaz in *Kal Bulandi*. He wanted British-Muslim conflict. British army recruits from his tribe were pampered. British got all Punjabi Sikh soldiers.” (A.D.Ijaz, 1983) Local literature and folk singers explain in *Dholas* that British forces cut Rai Ahmed's head and placed it on Gogaira jail's wall, like Hazrat Imam Hussain. He hung out there for six days. Traitor. Liberationists buried him. The British recorded him as a rebel. Khurrul clan chief, Ahmed Khan, was a renegade who claimed to rule Delhi and met with Hansi rebels. Ahmed helped free the country from British rule, according to last Mughal king, Bahadur Shah Zafar. (Cave-Brown, 1861) On September 21, 1857, Ahmed Khan died fighting near Gogera, according to famous lawyer and novelist Aitzaz Ahsan. Presented on an earthen pitcher with his head removed. In loss, Kharals led.” An guard with strong spiritual ties to Rai Ahmed dreamed Rai Sahb asked, “What are you doing with your soil?” British will transport him to London. Guard placed head in earthen pot. Buried in Jhamra. Head and remains were in 1976 mausoleum. Apparently, his head bled and looked fresh after a century of digging. According to folklore, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal killed Berkeley, district assistant commissioner. Murad Fattiana shot British Assistant Commissioner Berkeley, wrote Ahmad Ghazali in Sandal Bar. *Adil Mushtaq's Tarikh-i-Sahiwal* states that Berkeley was sent on September 21 to maintain Gogaira-Multan service. All houses he passed were burned. He went to *Koray Shah* and *Mehr Shah Pattan* after burning *Mian Mastana's* shrine at *Nur Shah*. (Mushtaq, 2009) Liberators wanted revenge for Rai Ahmed's martyrdom when Berkeley arrived. Battle killed Berkeley. Local dholla: “Murad Fattiana put his sword on the heart of Berkeley.” Berkeley fell off his horse, and Shujay Bhadro killed him with his stick and enlightened his predecessors. British women wept when mare reached Gogaira bungalow without Berkeley. Dholla, “Berkeley” in 1967 Freedom fighters chopped Berkeley's head and pounded drums in Jalhi. Retaliating for Rai Ahmed Khan, Walidad Murdana chopped and threw many British troops' heads into the river (Dholla, “Berkeley”, 1967) According to Allah Bakhsh Tariq, “Freedom fighters killed Berkeley and fifty others.” Murad, a Fattiana, killed Berkeley. After Berkeley's death, British bombed freedom fighters' villages and suppressed *Fattiana, Mardana, Bheghelas, Kharal* and *Joyia* revolts until October 14, 1857. Famous scholar and researcher *Shafqat Tanvir Mirza* says Berkeley, Assistant Commissioner, was killed “two days after death of Ahmad Khan.” (Mirza, 2006) says Sujay Bhadro fought in War of Independence (1857). He influenced Sath Garha, Saiyad Wala, Jhamra, and Kathia tribes to oppose British rule due to his close ties to district leaders. All four brothers fought Koray Shah. In *Tarikh-i-Sahiwal*, Adil Mushtaq writes, “with Murad Fattiana, he was also involved in killing British Assistant Commissioner, Berkeley” (2009). (Mushtaq, 2009) Rai Ahmed Khan Kharal did not kill Berkeley, as Dholas and local storytellers claim.

British officials say in Mutiny Records that Rai Ahmed Khan Kharal's initial struggle lacked kharal tribe support. “Kharals of that part of district could never be induced again by Ahmad Khan to combine against us, and that chief after several fruitless attempts was obliged to join with his immediate dependents, Wattoo tribe, on left bank of river Malik Bahalik Wattu lived in Khudiya Wattua, Guger In the War of Independence, Momand and Nathu Kathia combined the strength of Kathia tribe sub castes to capture Harrapa for Walidad. Berkley attacked Walidad, who led Murdanas, Fattiana, and Tarana. They seized Multan-Lahore GT road for 7 days. Mr. Berkeley and 60 horsemen moved to Kaure Shah to break Multan-Harrapa communication blockade. The officer stressed importance of Lahore-

Multan communication during the Punjab Government Mutiny. Correspondence: "The only important thing is that the road to Multan, our only link to Bombay, passes through this district. Security is expected to be restored soon." (Government, 1911) In his essay in New York Daily Tribune, Karl Marx mentioned this blockade. Karl Marx said, "Another danger had emerged for British in Punjab, because communicative route between Lahore to Multan had been stopped for the last eight days." British claimed that they had now controlled native tribe rebellion and praised their administrative efforts against tribes. (Ahmad, 2007) "The predatory tastes of these tribes were now checked by vigorously enforced laws, involving punishment and restitution; and under these stringent measures, the road from Lahore to Mooltan had become as safe as any in Bengal." Wattus of Ravi fought British at *Nooray ki Dal* near *Gashkoria*. Younger generations adore Ravi. *Malik Rahem Khan Wattu, Matta Ali Wattu, Mailk Hassan Ali Wattu, Siyad, Jalha, Bhawal* and others were important Ahmad relied on Wattoo tribe west of Jhamra after Kharrals were defeated in War of Independence (1857) in Gogera threatened British soldiers. Fattiana, Murdana and other north-Ravi tribes were attacked in October. Bhainiwals and *Baghelas* were their jungle friends. Kharrals and Wattus lost and returned home, while *Joiyas* killed Lieutenant Neville, an English officer passing through *Kabula*. "After martyrdom of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, his son, Muhammad Khan Kharral, put himself before British administration and they granted him forgiveness," says local researcher Saeed Bhutta. Wattu (2005) Freedom fighters' dhollas are remembered. Folklore, collective memory, and cultural commemoration have preserved Kharral's leadership better than archives. Critical historical methodology suggests not ignoring folklore as legend. Oral traditions illuminate rural Punjabi political culture, honor, and history versus documentary data. We must honor Kharral by studying archives, folklore, and memory. It advances Gogera uprising history and methodological debates about historical evidence, subaltern agency and colonial South Asian memory and history.

8. DISCUSSION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

The Gogera uprising, collective memory and preservation, and the leadership and folklore of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral have been discussed in the previous sections. This section critically examines the historiographical implications of this study over a descriptive history. It examines current issues regarding the production of knowledge about the colonies, Subaltern Studies, memory studies, and oral history, proposing that Kharral's case demonstrates the necessity to combine archival documentation with indigenous knowledge systems. The institutional contexts in which historical narratives are produced strongly influence them, according to this study. The colonial archives were not a source of facts and truths but a means of upholding imperial control. British authorities documented events to provide governance, intelligence and military control. Thus, natural opposition to colonial rule tended to be labelled as rebellion, disturbance, or lawlessness, and colonial interference was justified to restore order. Postcolonial historians argued that in a "colonial knowledge system," administration classifications and historical writing justified imperial rule. This view of leaders such as Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral denied local political legitimacy and minimised security resistance. (Cohn, 1996) This paper demonstrates that British colonial accounts of Kharral provide both an insight into colonial priorities and also events in 1857. It indicates colonial archives must not be abandoned. They offer a wealth of administrative documentation and illuminate the ideology of imperial administration.

8.3 Reassessing Narrative of a 'Loyal Punjab'

In British historiography, Punjab was depicted as a rather loyal province in the uprising of 1857, during the majority of twentieth century. This story highlighted the assistance rendered by certain elements of Punjabi regiments recruited by EIC and Sikh aristocracy of princely states. These are historical developments, but they are just part of story in Punjab. Recent scholarship has thrown light on several localized resistances in Punjab, especially in the rural and tribal areas. (Heath, 2015; Wagner, 2010). Gogera uprising is also noteworthy for its diversity of resistance strategies in response to varying political and economic conditions, and social organization, in the region. In the larger picture, the movement of Kharral does not contradict with the history of Punjab, but rather it supplements it with an account of the various responses to the rule of the British. This re-evaluation adds to a more complex historiography that breaks the loyalty/rebellion dichotomy. However, it acknowledges the existence of a spectrum of political stances within colonial Punjab that were contingent upon localities and native institutions.

8.4 Subaltern Agency and Localized Resistance:

This study focuses on the history of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral as an important contribution to Subaltern Studies. The early historical writing tended to favour the imperial administrators, military men and the urban elite, and de-emphasize rural communities. Ranajit Guha (1983) contended that peasant and tribal movements were not only rational in their politics but also had political rationality. This is reflected in Kharral's leadership. His opposition was not to a sense of nationalism, but in terms of tribal institutions, customary authority, and local justice. Therefore, the Gogera revolt demonstrates that anti-colonial resistance among South Asians was not confined to the urban and military cantonment areas. It also arose from pastoral societies, tribal confederacies and village communities that had political traditions other than those of colonial administration. However, this study does recognize Subaltern Studies critiques of romanticizing local resistance. Opposition is not always progressive and oral traditions are not always

historically accurate. The challenge for historians is to restore the voice of the subaltern and to maintain scrupulous evidence and interpretation. (Spivak G. C., 1988)

8.5 Folklore as Historical Evidence: Strengths and Limitations:

The one thing that is more innovative in the modern methodology of history is the reevaluation of folklore as genuine and valid historical sources. Traditional positivist methods tended to favor written texts and saw oral traditions as unreliable, potentially containing exaggeration, symbolism or even mythic elements. This work is consistent with the more recent one of Jan Vansina (1985) and Alessandro Portelli (1991): folklore is not so much a record of events as a record of the collective interpretation of those events. This ethnological study of Punjabi folk traditions about Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral shows methodological merits, which include the fact that the culture and perspectives of the Indians are retained in the folk traditions, which are not noted in colonial records. They shed light on cultural values like izzat (honor), sacrifice and leadership. They explain the ways in which communities knew about and remembered anti-colonial resistance. They pass on memory of the past from generation to generation. But traditional tales have methodological flaws as well, for example, facts about the sequence of events may differ. Later political events may be factored into narratives. The heroic can be the opposite of historic complexity. While, local traditions may preserve different versions of the same event(s). Thus, folklore cannot totally be ignored, nor should it be used in place of archival research. It should be judged, rather, using source criticism and cross-referenced with documentary evidence.

8.6 Collective Memory and Evolution of Heroism:

The change of role of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral from a tribal leader to a national anti-colonial figure reflects a change in collective memory. According to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), memory is an active reconstruction that is influenced by the social frameworks in which it is formed. Local tribes initially remembered Kharral. His story was added to the Punjabi resistance history by regional historians. He was elevated to the status of an anti-colonial hero in education, literature, commemorations, and media since the inception of Pakistan. Heroes are historically constructed, as shown by this evolution. The events of 1857 are a starting point but later generations reinterpret for cultural and political reasons. This makes it easier for historians to differentiate between the real and the fictional characters of collective memory. Discuss similarities and differences between the uprising of 1857 and the events of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. He organized local communities and was an opponent of colonial expansion, as were other leaders of the region. His mobility was marked by the fact that it was not related to military cantonments but to tribal/nomadic social systems. Leadership was not institutionalized but was entrusted too custom. Resistance was driven by geographical and kinship networks. His memory is mostly preserved in oral traditions. These traits show South Asian anti-colonial resistance's diversity. Historians need to recognise more than one trajectory that emerged from the political cultures of the different regions in which the 1857 uprising took place.

9. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

This study analysed folk narrative, collective memory, colonial historiography and the anti-colonial resistance of Punjab in the nineteenth century to historicize the courage of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral. The study critically uses archival evidence, oral traditions, memory studies and Subaltern Studies to present Kharral not as a hero in regional folklore or a rebel tribal chief in colonial archives, but as a man who lived his life and died his death without any heroic deeds in between. The approach demonstrates how the study of official records and indigenous knowledge systems can complement each other to enhance historical understanding. It also asserts that Kharral was more than just significant in the Gogera revolt of 1857. The significance of his work is embodied in the ways in which folklore, culture, and public commemoration come together to form and to maintain resistance memories. His courage is a useful addition to the historiography of colonial Punjab and to discussions on the history of collective memory and marginal voices in South Asian history. First, Gogera uprising was not a local law and order issue or a tribal affair as colonial administrative reports maintained. It was a noteworthy instance of localized anti-colonial resistance that was influenced by political, economic and cultural transformation following the British annexation of Punjab in 1849. Revenue reform, administrative centralization, increased policing and interference in customary governance led to the disintegration of tribal institutions and created resistance. Second, the study reveals that the leadership of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral emerged from indigenous political structures that were kinship-based, customary-based and community-based. His impact has to be considered in light of Sandal Bar's social structure, which was based on reciprocal obligations between chiefs and communities. Third, the views of colonial archives and Punjabi folklore about Kharral's resistance are complementary. Thirdly, there are different perspectives taken by colonial archives and Punjabi folklore about Kharral's resistance. He was remembered by Punjabis for his courageous role in the struggle for justice, communal dignity and local autonomy, and was viewed by the colonial government as a threat to colonial stability. The various depictions, which highlight the need to situate historical sources, not to privilege one type of evidence. Fourthly, both source criticism and documentary evidence confirm that folklore is an important historical source. Although oral traditions have symbolic or poetic components, they also record collective experiences, cultural values, and indigenous interpretations which are missing from official archives. This study concludes that Kharral has turned

from the memory of the tribes into a symbol of the resistance of the region and national level. The fluidity of collective memory has made his image an integral part of Pakistan's historical consciousness through education, literature, public commemoration and cultural institutions. There are more acts of bravery than the Gogera uprising that are historicised by the bravery of Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal. It is important to know how colonial administrators, tribal communities, folklorists, historians and generations have reworked his legacy. Documentary evidence, oral traditions and collective memory build bravery, as this article illustrates. The study is based on the colonial documents, Punjabi folklore and the modern historical theory, which reveal that Kharal's contribution was not limited to military resistance. His legacy demonstrates the possible intersections of interdisciplinary scholarship to retrieve indigenous views and to question archival narratives. Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal proves to the historians how the past is multi-layered. The official documents report the events of administration, the folk lore communicates the values of the community, collective memory maintains morality. These sources add to the knowledge of anti-colonial resistance in colonial Punjab and contribute to a more pluralist South Asian history.

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