



The Kalhora Dynasty: Rise, Rule, and Decline

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Abstract

Various local dynasties have governed Sindh since the Arab conquest, including the Soomra, Sama, Arghuns, Turkhans, Kalhoras, and Talpurs. Among these, the Kalhora dynasty stands out for its significant contributions to the prosperity of the local inhabitants, the development of educational institutions, commerce, and the flourishing of Sindhi literature and poetry. The Kalhora dynasty, established as the first sovereign State by the indigenous people amidst the Mughal Empire's decline, marks a pivotal era in Sindh's history. This article examines the effects of the Mughal Empire's political disintegration in Sindh and investigates how local people advanced to power following this civil collapse. Furthermore, it analyses the transformation of the Kalhora family from spiritual leaders to sovereign rulers of an independent Sindh. The study also explores the reasons behind the collapse of Kalhora rule and the subsequent rise of the Talpurs as the last local rulers of Sindh.

Keywords: Kalhora family, Kalhora dynasty, Mughal decline, regional history of Sindh.

Introduction

The rise of the Kalhora Dynasty in Sindh marks a significant chapter in the history of the Indian subcontinent, particularly amidst the decline of the Mughal Empire. The early 18th century saw the weakening of Mughal control after the demise of the last great Mughal King, Aurangzeb Alamgir, in 1707. Aurangzeb's reign, marked by intense political and religious conflicts, including his support for Shaikh Ahmed Serhindi's philosophy against his brother Dara Shikoh's embrace of Ibn-ul-Arabi's mysticism, set the stage for the disintegration of Mughal authority (Lodh, 2019). As Mughal power declined, local leaders, such as the Kalhora family in Sindh, began to proclaim their independence. The Kalhoras, whose origins are debated, are believed to have descended from either the Jat tribe, the Channa clan, or even the Abbasid lineage, as various scholars suggest. Their rise to power in Sindh began under the leadership of Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro, who was initially appointed by the Mughal governor of Multan to govern Bakhar, upper Sindh (Kalhoro, 2024). Over time, the Kalhoras consolidated their power, extending their control over lower Sindh and reducing Mughal influence in the region.

Significant internal and external challenges marked this period of Sindh's history. The Kalhoras faced invasions from Nadir Shah of Iran and later Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan, which disrupted the region's stability. Despite these challenges, Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro emerged as a pivotal figure, successfully uniting Sindh under his rule and establishing a sovereign State recognized by the Mughal court. The Kalhora dynasty also made significant contributions to the cultural and economic development of Sindh, promoting education, literature, architecture, and trade. Cities like Thatta became centres of learning and commerce, and the dynasty's patronage helped to flourish Sindhi literature and poetry (Mallah, 2021). However, internal troubles and the rise of rival factions,



particularly the Talpurs, led to the decline of the Kalhora dynasty by the late 18th century. Thus, the history of the Kalhora Dynasty reflects the dynamic and frequently turbulent past of the Indian subcontinent, while also serving as an example of flexibility and determination in the aftermath of the broader collapse of Mughal authority.

Research Questions

1. What were the key factors contributing to the decline of the Mughal Empire, and how did this decline influence the political landscape of Sindh?
2. How did the Kalhora family transition from a spiritual leadership role to becoming sovereign political rulers of Sindh, and what factors enabled this shift?
3. What were the significant political, economic, and social developments in Sindh under the rule of the Kalhora Dynasty?
4. What were the political, economic, and social repercussions of the foreign invasions by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali on Sindh during the Kalhora dynasty's rule?

Research Methodology

This study employs a **qualitative research methodology**, relying exclusively on secondary sources to analyze and interpret the research topic. Secondary sources include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant newspaper publications. These sources are carefully selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the political, historical, and social dimensions of the Mughal decline and its impact on Sindh, the transition of the Kalhora dynasty, and foreign invasions. The analysis will synthesize insights from these materials to conclude the political and historical implications discussed in the paper.

Mughals Decline and Its Repercussions in Sindh

The Indian subcontinent has a colorful history of exploitation of the people based on religion. Thus, this tool of exploitation has sometimes succeeded and sometimes failed. Either religious or political chieftains have used this tool since its inception. However, this instrument has been used either to unite or divide the masses in order to serve the interests of political elites. Akbar the Great was the first king to attempt to unify India based on religion by introducing the "Deen-e-Illahi," a new kind of syncretic religion, in 1581 (Dr. Shabana Akhtar, 2023). However, Shaikh Ahmed Serhindi, Mujadid Al-Thani (d. 1624), did not accept the new religion and opposed him. Resultantly, Akbar was unable to achieve the enormous success of uniting the Indian subcontinent.

It was Shaikh Ahmed Serhindi who introduced the new mystical thought called "Wahadat-ul-Shahood" in contrast to al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) "Wahadat-ul-Wujood" philosophy in the subcontinent. Therefore, two major philosophies revolved around



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mystical thought at the time when the Kalhora family was flourishing in Sindh. The Mughal Empire's decline began after the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir in the early eighteenth century. Aurangzeb established his empire following the imprisonment of his father, Shah Jahan (r. 1627-1658), and the assassination of his brother, Dara Shikoh. However, the opposition between the two brothers (Aurangzeb and Dara) was rather political than ideological, because Aurangzeb was a supporter of Shaikh Ahmed Serhindi's philosophy.

In contrast, Dara Shikoh was a follower of Ibn-ul-Arabi's ideology. Dara Shikoh was a great scholar of his time. He wrote a pamphlet named '*Majma-ul-Bahreen*' in which he discoursed regarding the *Tauheed* (oneness of God). Moreover, he translated the renowned Hindu books, '*Gitta* and *Apanshidan*', into Persian to analyze the similarities between the Muslim and Hindu philosophies (Abbasi, 2000). Thus, Dara was overwhelmed by his brother and killed in 1659.

The formation of an empire requires cooperation with indigenous elites to resist rebellion, and through these elites, the rulers can legitimize their governments. Similarly, the Mughals were not originally Indian; therefore, they had to fabricate relations with native groups. There are two major groups from which the ruling class can benefit: the first is the urban group, including nobles and landlords of the region, and the second is the peasantry, who can indirectly profit from the creation of empires. Therefore, the Mughals established the department of Mansabdari to administer the local areas, and they ruled over the urban merchants who provided revenue and goods to them (Leonard, 1979). Similarly, the Mughals delegated authority only to the Centre and relied on local elites to assist in the administration of the empire. Moreover, these relationships would be carefully balanced to save the empire from downfall. However, the governors of Sindh during Aurangzeb's reign were dependent on the local elites (Kalhora) to maintain control over the region's uncontrollable groups (Verma, 2016).

Thereafter, the enthronement of Aurangzeb, in the six decades of the seventeenth century. Firstly, he secured the throne from his family's insurgencies, which was a tradition of the empire to appoint new emperors when the last king breathed his last. Afterward, he extended the throne by annexing neighboring independent states in India. Resultantly, he became the king of almost the whole of the subcontinent, as was done by his great-grandfather, Akbar. It is an undeniable fact that Aurangzeb was a great emperor not only of the Mughal Empire but also in the history of the Indian subcontinent, who ruled the entire subcontinent for half a century.

In the last years of his reign, he was unable to stabilize the center, and his absence, along with that of his faithful team, contributed to the creation of distrust at the court of Delhi. Thus, the reliable friends, administrators, and even his sons were not willing to concern themselves with State affairs. In contrast, Aurangzeb relied on his trustworthy courtiers and sons, whose intentions were often opposed to his own. Consequently, the law-and-order situation in the empire deteriorated, which favored those seeking to establish



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their independent states, such as the Marathas, Sikhs, and Pathans. Bhatti asserts that Aurangzeb's lack of concern for his trustworthiness and courtiers in State affairs, as well as the empire's limited attention to Delhi administration and his residence in the Deccan, away from the capital, contributed to the decline of the great empire (Bhatti, 2002). Resultantly, Marathas rose as the strongest group of rebellion against the central power to establish their independent State. Moreover, Shivaji was the next to initiate insurgencies against Delhi's power and establish a strong force to resist it. However, Aurangzeb commenced the campaign to crush these rebel groups, and this movement lasted for twenty-five years; yet, the Delhi authorities could not control the rebel groups (Naqvi, 1977).

There were so many causes behind the downfall of the great Mughal Empire, such as the religious policies of Aurangzeb that were fronted to humiliate the other religions, promoting the philosophy of Shaikh Ahmed Serhindi in India, and the rising of Shia-Suni conflict that was not seen before this in the subcontinent (Abbasi, 2000). Nevertheless, the other reasons for the decline are the Deccan policies of the Aurangzeb that resulted in the downfall of the economy, the large extension of the empire that was unable to be controlled by the weak descendants of the Aurangzeb, fighting among the native nobles for the enhancement of their Jagirs, rising of the local powers like Sikhs, Marathas, and Pathans, the invasions of the foreigners like Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali, etc.

It was inevitable that the disturbances at the center would have repercussions in the neighboring region, particularly in Sindh. During this turmoil, the administrative and political systems of Sindh were severely affected, and the province was administratively governed from two parts. For example, Bakhar (now Sukkur) was the capital of upper Sindh, which was controlled by the governor of Multan, appointed by the Mughal Empire. Thatta was the capital of lower Sindh, ruled by a Nawab appointed from the Delhi court. After the failure of Aurangzeb's Deccan policy in 1679, no representative of the Mughal Empire came to Bakhar to reoccupy the charge of upper Sindh. Therefore, the government of Bakhar was delegated to Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhora. He was the spiritual master and feudal lord of upper Sindh. Whereas the representative of the Delhi court controlled Thatta for some time, but he did not have authority over the region; thus, he was just the nominee of the Delhi court to collect revenue from lower Sindh. However, their (Mughals') control of Thatta was ended after the huge loss taken by Sadique Ali Khan, a ruler of lower Sindh. Subsequently, the government of Thatta was entrusted to the ruler of Bakhar, Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhora, in 1736 (Bhatti, 2002). Thus, the Kalhora family got the governance of Sindh without any struggle.

Rising of Kalhora Power in Sindh

Several scholars have differing opinions regarding the origins of the Kalhora family and their ancestors, who are believed to have been the first to settle in Sindh. However, Verma argues that Kalhoras was the offshoot of the Jat tribe of Sindh (Verma,



2016), in contrast with Verma, Richard Burton, a renowned English officer of East India Company, wrote that Kalhoras were originally by Hindus and later converted to Islam, thus, they were from the Channa clan of Sindh (Burton, 1851). However, Burton does not provide any accurate evidence to suggest that Kalhora was a branch of the Channa family. However, most of the authors, such as G.M. Sayyid, Rashid Bhatti, and Hakim Shah Bukhari, agreed that the Kalhora family was descended from Hazrat Abbas (R.A.), the uncle of the Prophet (PBUH). Due to their connection with Hazrat Abbas (R.A.), they also referred to themselves as Abbasi. G.M. Sayyid asserts that the descendants of Kalhora were of Arab descent. Ibrahim was one of the ancestors of the Kalhora who migrated to Sindh during the reign of Mautism-Billah Abbasi, the eighth caliph of the Abbasi Dynasty. Thus, he settled in the small village of Kalore, near the hills of Neerun (now Hyderabad). The Kalhora name originated from their ancestral home, "Kalore" (Sayyed, 1996). The Kalhora clan began to grow during the reign of Adam Shah Kalhoro, a religiously pious and respected figure among the locals, who had a large number of devotees. His hometown was Dokri, located near the Larkana district in Sindh.

During this period, Abdul Rehman Khan-e-Khanna, a trusted general and guardian of the great Mughal King Akbar, led an invasion of upper Sindh and captured Bakhar (now Sukkur). After that, he moved to Thatta. On the way, he heard about the reputation of Adam Shah Kalhoro, so he intended to meet and pay homage to this God-loving man. While meeting Adam Shah, a fakeer (disciple) of Adam Shah supplicated to Khan-e-Khanna for issuing the land to sustain this monastery. The Mughal officialdom accepted the request and granted the land of Chandka in the name of Adam Shah Kalhoro. From here, Adam Shah's name and fame spread widely, and he became a strong religious and political figure in the region. His popularity and strength enhanced the anxieties among the local rulers and landlords. Hence, these rulers and landlords expressed this distress to Multan's governor. Consequently, Adam Shah was arrested by the governor of Multan in 1592, and he died during his imprisonment, where he was buried at Rohri Hills. Now, this hill is called Adam ShaHillhill (Sindhi, 1998). Thereafter, Kalhora's four generations grew and prospered at Chandka, enhancing their popularity and influence in the region.

Mian Din Muhammad was a prominent personality of the Kalhora family. He was from the fifth generation of Adam Shah. He became a highly influential religious figure in the region, attracting a large following. Thus, the two local powers of upper Sindh were defeated by Din Muhammad. As a result, his position had strengthened, which became a consideration for the Multan rulers. Hence, Prince Moizuddin, a ruler of Multan and Lahore, moved to Sindh to overthrow the rebellions. However, Mian Din Muhammad sent his brother to the prince in advance to welcome him, but this came to his resentment. During this period, a devotee of Din Muhammad attacked Mirpur Mathelo, a northern city in Sindh, and looted it. When the prince heard about it, he again marched towards the force of Din Muhammad. Ultimately, Din Muhammad had no way to further escape from the prince and was forced to surrender himself to the prince at Sehwan. Then, the prince



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brought him along with himself to Multan, where he was executed in 1700. Mian Yar Muhammad, brother of Din Muhammad, could not bear this indignity, and he assembled the local forces and assaulted the prince (Bhatti, 2002). Subsequently, a battle was fought between the prince and Kalhora in 1700 near the Dadu district in Sindh, in which Kalhora defeated the prince.

Thereafter, Mian Yar Muhammad was flown to Kalat for self-imposed banishment, and in the absence of Yar Muhammad, Bhaktia Barozai, a local landlord from Sindh, seized the land of Kalhora. When Mian Yar Muhammad returned home after two years, he reclaimed his property. Thus, Barozai went to Multan for lamentations before the prince for recapturing the land from Kalhora. The prince again intended to assault and crush down the rebellions of Kalhora and dispatched troops to Sindh. However, Barozai resented the prince while marching to Sindh, and as a result, he was killed by the prince.

On the other hand, Mian Yar Muhammad entrusted his authority to the prince, and the prince conceded to it. Hence, Mian Yar Muhammad was pardoned by the prince, and Aurangzeb Alamgir granted the title "Khuda Yar Khan" to Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro. The Mughal court entrusted the control of upper Sindh to Mian Yar Muhammad, who ruled over Sindh until he died in 1718 (Sindhi, 1998). Afterward, the Mughal influence in Sindh gradually began to decline; however, the Nawab of Thatta remained appointed by the Mughal court until 1737.

Mian Noor Muhammad, the eldest son of Yar Muhammad, was enthroned as both the religious and political head of the Kalhora family after the demise of his father. Although Mian Noor Muhammad abandoned religiosity and righteousness, he entirely shifted his focus to politics. According to tradition, whenever one member of a family is appointed as head of State, the other members rebel against him. Similarly, Mian Noor Muhammad faced the insurrection of his two brothers, Muhammad Daud and Ghulam Hussain. However, after the intervention of the Sayyid brothers, influential men of upper Sindh, their disorder was resolved. Mian Noor Muhammad was also overwhelmed by the other insurgencies revived by Daudpotas, who had controlled Shikarpur, and chiefs of Kalat, who were jealous because of handing over the region of Sibi to Mian Noor Muhammad by the Mughal court. Thus, the territory of Shikarpur was handed over to Noor Muhammad by Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah in 1722. Over time, the political influence of Kalhora expanded in Sindh, resulting in the gradual reduction of Thatta's power, which was previously under the control of Mughal Nawabs, and ultimately led to ineffective rule in the region. Consequently, the territory of Thatta was also entrusted to Mian Noor Muhammad in the year 1737 (Bhatti, 2002). From here, the Kalhora family commenced to rule over the entire Sindh independently, and the influence of the Mughal court was swept away from Sindh.

When Mian Noor Muhammad was engaged in resolving the internal insurgencies of Sindh, an unforgettable and merciless incident occurred when Nadir Shah of Iran



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invaded Sindh in 1739. He captured the upper and western part of Sindh from the Kalhora dynasty and annexed Sindh to the Persian Kingdom. Therefore, Sindh was directly ruled by the Persian monarch after this invasion (Sorley, 1940). Nadir Shah arrested Mian Noor Muhammad, and his territories of Shikarpur, Sibi, and Kutchi were seized from him and committed to Daudpota and Khan of Kalat, respectively. Thus, a treaty was signed between Noor Muhammad and Nadir Shah in 1740, in which Mian was released and handed over the power of Thatta on the condition that Mian had to pay 20 lacs of rupees to the Persian court annually. After the looting by Nadir Shah, economic exigencies and chaos erupted in the soil of Sindh. Consequently, the local chiefs and nobles started to rebel and repudiated paying taxes to the government (Bhatti, 2002). Hence, Mian disintegrated all the insurgencies and recaptured the areas that were entrusted to Balochi and Daudpota chiefs by Nadir Shah.

In 1747, Nadir Shah was assassinated through the conspiracies that erupted in the Persian court. Ahmed Shah Abdali, a renowned trusty general of Nadir Shah, captured Iran, Afghanistan, and Sindh. He developed his kingdom and made Kandahar his capital. He ceded the control of Sindh to Mian Noor Muhammad with the new title of "Shah Nawaz Khan. Sindh, then, was under the control of the Kandahar administration. When Mian Noor Muhammad's strength was enhanced and Abdali was preoccupied with internal chaos, he refused to pay the tax assigned by Nadir Shah. Subsequently, Abdali began to march towards Sindh to collect his diwan (revenue) from the local rebellions led by Mian Noor Muhammad in 1754. In response to Abdali's invasion, Mian escaped to Kutch, where he died in the same year (Sindhi, 1998). Mian Noor Muhammad (r. 1718-1754) was a sagacious ruler of the Kalhora dynasty who reigned over the entire Sindh and united the whole people. He defeated all the internal chaos and overthrew all the insurgencies to consolidate his sovereignty. He was the first Sindhi ruler to establish a sovereign State, as recognized by the Mughal court. However, he faced the cruel invasions of foreign rulers, Nadir Shah of Iran, and Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan in 1739 and 1754, respectively.

Murad Yar Khan, the eldest son of Mian Yar Muhammad, succeeded to the throne after his father's death. However, Abdali lost control of the northern areas of Sindh due to his father's escape to the eastern border. However, Murad sent diwan (revenue) to Abdali for his recognition as the ruler of Sindh. Abdali identified him by giving him the title of "Sur Buland Khan," based on his tribute to Kandahar, and entrusted the northern areas of Sindh to Murad. Murad was not a praiseworthy ruler of Sindh, and his brothers and courtiers were annoyed by his rude behavior. Consequently, Murad was dethroned by the conspiracies of his brothers, particularly Mian Ghulam Shah, and courtiers in 1756.

Mian Ghulam Shah was a great and commendable ruler of Sindh. He was enthroned after the downfall of his elder brother Murad Khan in 1757. He was born in the home of Mian Noor Muhammad by the blessing of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, a renowned sufi poet of Sindh. At the beginning of his rule over Sindh, he was challenged by his two



brothers, Attar Khan and Ahmed Yar Khan. Attar Khan received assistance from the Khan of Kalat to dethrone Ghulam Shah; thus, the army of Ghulam Shah was weaker compared to his brother. Subsequently, Ghulam Shah escaped towards Jaisalmer, and then he obtained asylum from Mubarak Khan of Bahawalpur (Bhatti, 2002). During the brief tenure of Attar Khan, the political situation in Sindh was in utter confusion, and the people were distressed under his rule, prompting them to request Ghulam Shah to reassume the charge of Sindh. However, Ghulam Shah collected the force with the help of Mubarak Khan and his supporters to overcome his brother. Consequently, the two battles took place between Ghulam Shah and Attar Khan at Ubaro and Rohri, respectively. Finally, Ghulam Shah overpowered Attar Khan and other insurgents (Sindhi, 1998), becoming the absolute power and undisputed ruler of Sindh in 1759.

Ghulam Shah was a great admirer and founder of new cities in Sindh. After overcoming the internal crisis, he began to expand his territory by annexing additional areas in the eastern and northern parts of Sindh. In 1763, he marched towards Kutch and subjugated the Kot Lakhpat and Rahim ki Bazar in his territory. He also annexed the southern areas of Sindh from the Kalhora dynasty. Thus, the Kalhora dynasty expanded to a large area, from the southern sea to the northern areas of Derajat, throughout the reign of Ghulam Shah Kalhoru. During his period, he constructed the new port on the River Indus, named "Shah Bunder", and founded his new capital city, Shahpur, near Nawab Shah (now Shaheed Benazirabad) district. He was also the founder of Hyderabad and the tomb of Shah Latif Bhittai (Gurbakshani, 1993). He was not only tasked with constructing new cities and expanding his territory, but also encouraged industrial development, as he permitted the East India Company to establish its firms and trade at Thatta, which was the trade and industrial hub of Sindh under his regime. During the Kalhora dynasty, Thatta was the center of education, and according to Hamilton, there were approximately 400 educational institutions in Thatta alone (Sindhi, 1998).

The Kalhora dynasty was also known as the golden period of Sindhi literature, during which two of the most renowned poets of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and Sachal Sarmast, flourished. There were three major languages used in the soil of Sindh: Persian, Arabic, and the native Sindhi. Persian gained importance during the period of Argun and became the official language, a status it maintained until the Kalhora dynasty. Arabic was the educational language of Sindh, introduced by the Arab rulers. Next was Sindhi, which had been spoken by the native people of Sindh, as well as the first time Sindhi began to be written and taught in educational institutions in this period. The Sindhi alphabet was first compiled by Abul Hasan Ali Sindhi (d. 1724) during the Kalhora dynasty. By the demise of Ghulam Shah Kalhoru in 1772, the Kalhora dynasty began to decline in dignity.



The Downfall of the Kalhora Dynasty

Mian Sarfraz Khan, the eldest son of Ghulam Shah, succeeded to the throne in 1772. In the early months of his reign, Ahmed Shah Abdali died in 1772; therefore, he was responsible for paying yearly tribute to Shah Timur, son of Abdali. Sarfraz was an inept ruler of the Kalhora family, and due to his erratic dealings with the East India Company, the Company withdrew from his region in 1775 (Sorley, 1940). During this period, the Talpurs, who were members of the Kalhora army and the royal court, extended their influence in State affairs due to Sarfraz Khan's indifference. However, the conspiracies originated among the Sindhis and Balochis (Talpurs), and their outcome led to the assassination of Mir Bahram Khan, chief of the Talpurs. In revenge for their leader, the Talpurs united and marched to Kalhora's capital, Khudabad. Subsequently, Sarfraz Khan escaped to Hyderabad, where the Talpurs controlled the fort. Mian Muhammad was nominated as the new ruler of the Kalhora Dynasty in 1775.

Thereafter, Sarfraz Khan was imprisoned, and the unanimous decision of Sindhi and Balochi chiefs enthroned Mian Ghulam Nabi. Ghulam Nabi, like Sarfraz, was incompetent and feeble to run the dynasty. However, his close trustworthiness and loyalty led him to remove the Talpur chiefs from the army and court by creating various conspiracies at the Kalhora capital. The outcomes of these conspiracies led to a brutal war between the Talpurs, led by Mir Bijar Khan, son of Bahram Khan, and the Kalhoras. Consequently, Kalhoras were overthrown, and Ghulam Nabi was imprisoned. Afterward, Mian Abdul Nabi, son of Mian Noor Muhammad and the last ruler of the Kalhora dynasty, was crowned after the assassination of Ghulam Nabi in 1776. He was a very atrocious ruler and was killed by his four relatives, who considered themselves the successors of Ghulam Nabi. Abdul Nabi was a hypocritical ruler who never compromised with the Talpurs and fought several battles against them in his pursuit of the throne, but unfortunately, he faced disappointment every time. The tenure of Abdul Nabi was marked by trouble and civil wars, although Madad Khan, a general of Ahmed Shah Abdali, plundered Sindh in 1780. Ultimately, a decisive battle was fought at Halani near Naushahro Feroz District in 1783, in which the joint forces of Talpurs, led by Mir Fateh Ali Khan, and Kalhora forces, led by Abdul Nabi, clashed. Thus, Talpurs emerged victorious from the war, and Kalhoras were swept entirely out of Sindh and never rose again.

The Kalhora dynasty is divided into five transition periods through which they ruled over Sindh. The first period was the appointment of the governor of Bakhar, Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro, by the Mughal court, which commenced in 1701. It was the beginning of local rulers (Kalhora) in Sindh after the Sommora and Samma dynasties. The second period was characterized by the enlargement and consolidation of local chiefs and captured areas into the central government of Sindh. This extension of territory occurred during the reigns of Mian Yar Muhammad and Noor Muhammad, lasting up to 1736. This period was also recognized as a semi-independent State by the Mughal Empire. The third



period began after Nadir Shah of Iran's incursion into Sindh in 1739, and from this point, political dominance was transferred from the Mughal Court to the Persian Kingdom. This persisted up to the demise of Nadir Shah in 1747. The fourth period dawned after the rise to power of Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan; consequently, the annexation of Sindh was transferred from the Persian Empire to the Afghan monarch, and this era lasted until 1778. The fifth and final period was the struggle to save the dynasty from local insurgencies led by the Talpurs, which lasted until the end of the Kalhora Dynasty in 1782 (Sorley, 1940). The central objective of the Kalhora rulers, from their inception to their demise, was to establish Sindh as an independent State, free from the grasp of the Mughals, Persians, and Afghans.

Conclusion

The rise of the Kalhora Dynasty in Sindh is a notable chapter in the extensive historical context of the Indian subcontinent, occurring as Mughal influence declined in the early 18th century. This period marked a significant transition from the centralized power of the Mughal Empire to the emergence of regional sovereignties. The Kalhora family benefited from this decline to establish a dynasty that played a pivotal role in the socio-political and cultural landscape of Sindh. The Kalhora Dynasty began with Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro, whose consolidation of power established the way for the dynasty's rise to prominence and control over Upper and Lower Sindh. Despite facing invasions by formidable opponents, such as Nadir Shah of Iran and Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan, the Kalhoras managed to retain their control, particularly under the astute leadership of Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro. He succeeded in uniting Sindh, fostering a sense of regional identity, and establishing a sovereign State recognized by the Mughal court.

Culturally, the Kalhora period was marked by significant contributions to education, literature, and trade. Cities like Thatta flourished as centres of learning and commerce, with the dynasty's patronage leading to a renaissance in Sindhi literature and poetry. This era also saw infrastructural advancements, including the founding of new cities such as Hyderabad, which further fortified the Kalhoras' legacy. However, the decline of the Kalhora dynasty was inevitable due to a combination of internal conflict and external pressures. Family conflicts and the emergence of other groups, particularly the Talpurs, who had deposed the Kalhoras' rule by the late 1700s, were the leading causes of internal unrest. The decline of Mughal hegemony exacerbated the dynasty's problems, the ongoing threat of foreign invasions, and the rise in power of regional chieftains.

The Kalhora Dynasty's history underscores the dynamic and often turbulent nature of political power in the Indian subcontinent. It exemplifies the resilience and strategic approach required to maintain sovereignty in the face of declining central authority and external threats. The dynasty's ability to navigate these challenges and leave a lasting cultural and political inscription in Sindh is a testament to their significant role in the region's history. In conclusion, the Kalhora Dynasty represents a critical period of



transition from Mughal hegemony to regional autonomy in Sindh. Their rise into power, cultural contributions, and eventual decline illustrate the complexities of governance and the interplay of religious, political, and military forces in shaping the history of the Indian subcontinent. Despite their fall, the legacy of the Kalhoras continues to influence Sindhi identity and history, marking their era as a crucial chapter in the regional history of Sindh.

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