

(Landlord) Theory from the South: Empire and estates on a Punjabi Frontier

Shozab Raza 

Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Correspondence

Shozab Raza, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, 19 Ursula Franklin Street, Toronto, Ontario, CAN M5S 2S2, Canada.

Email: shozab.raza@mail.utoronto.ca

Funding information

Jackman Humanities Institute, University of Toronto; Ontario Graduate Scholarship; International Development Research Centre; Wenner-Gren Foundation

Abstract

Theory has occasionally shaped agrarian transformations. Utilitarian theory, for instance, influenced British colonial land revenue policies, while modernization theory spurred, via the Green Revolution, the development of capitalist farming across the global South. Yet scholarship, when it has probed the mediation of theory in agrarian change, has largely centred on the intellectual activities of Western figures. In this paper, I examine an under-appreciated theorizing actor: landlords in the global South. I explore landlords' concept-work in the former "Punjab Frontier," a region where Baloch chiefs collaborated with the British Raj to acquire localized magisterial powers, a paramilitary apparatus, and immense "landed estates" (*jagirs*). To overcome various crises, certain chiefs engaged with various imperial concepts—namely, property, race, progress, contract, and freedom—and re-arranged their estates. By showing how these elites creatively embraced these concepts to maintain a colonial-fortified hegemony, I also challenge those who overstate the emancipatory and decolonial possibilities of theory from the South.

KEYWORDS

British Raj, decolonial, hegemony, imperialism, landlords, Pakistan, theory

1 | INTRODUCTION

How has theory shaped agrarian change? Here, we might think of how utilitarian theory influenced British colonial land revenue policies, or how modernization theory spurred, via the Green Revolution, the development of capitalist

farming across the global South. In shaping certain agrarian trajectories, these theories also maintained the hegemony of particular classes or regimes. Yet scholarship, when it has probed the mediation of ideas in agrarian change, has largely centred on the intellectual activities of Western figures. Scholars have shown, for instance, how thinkers like David Ricardo and Jeremy Bentham influenced British colonial officials, who mobilized their utilitarian theories to maintain the hegemony of empire. Or, similarly, how academics like Norman Borlaug and William Gaud developed technologies that contributed to the Green Revolution across the global South, a revolution that essentially maintained the hegemony of capital and its ruling regimes. In this paper, I shift vantage points to examine an underappreciated theorizing actor: landlords in the global South. Tracing the life of imperial concepts in the peripheries, I show how local landlords embraced and occasionally reworked these concepts, and did so to sustain their own hegemonic projects. As I discuss in the conclusion, this engagement with imperial concepts also challenges recent work that overstates the emancipatory and decolonial possibilities of theory from the South.

I explore landlord theory-making and agrarian change in the context of rural Pakistan, specifically in a region the British Raj once called the “Punjab Frontier” or “the Derajit Frontier.”¹ Unlike the rest of Punjab, this understudied region consists of Baloch tribes headed by hereditary head chiefs (*tumandars*) and smaller chiefs (*sardars*).² Because many of these tribes were armed, hierarchically organized, and initially hostile to the British, the latter had to offer significant concessions to the former, leading to an agrarian trajectory in the region quite distinct from the rest of Punjab. Outside the Frontier, the British initially undercut the authority of landed aristocracies by cultivating a class of prosperous, compliant and taxable commercial farmers (I. Ali, 1988; Rizvi, 2017).³ Though the Raj eventually patronized landed aristocracies across Punjab, especially after a series of rural rebellions (Javid, 2011; Talbot, 2007), it still granted Frontier chiefs significantly more powers than other rural elites, precisely because of the threat posed by their armed and highly organized tribal structure. In exchange for their loyalty, the Raj gave chiefs legal jurisdiction over their tribesmen, authorized their paramilitary apparatus (whereas elsewhere, the British centralized the military), and granted them immense “landed estates” (*jagirs*) over which chiefs had the right to collect rents and, unlike Punjab's other rural elites, the entire land revenue. Despite various crises to their authority over the centuries, many of the same chiefly families remain powerful in postcolonial Pakistan. They sit in government cabinets and legislative assemblies, maintain close links with various imperialists, exercise patronage and informal juridical functions in the former Frontier region, and still possess relatively vast landed estates.

As I show, these chiefly families' enduring hegemony is explicable through their collaboration with various imperialists and the postcolonial Pakistani state, collaborations that entailed a series of practices undergirded by concepts. Over the centuries, certain Baloch chiefs engaged with various imperial concepts—namely, private property, race, progress, contract and freedom—to re-invent themselves and re-organize their relations with people and land. Thus, I build on recent scholarship on the life of colonial concepts (e.g., Bhandar, 2018; Bhattacharya, 2019) by centring how local elites embraced and occasionally refashioned these concepts. By creatively engaging with these concepts and re-arranging their material relations, chiefs sought to weather various crises and secure their hegemony—with some even expressing this objective in explicitly Gramscian terms. Yet their conceptual and practical “fixes” (Harvey, 2007) also set the conditions, as we will see, for subsequent crises and challenges to their authority.

The paper draws on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the former Punjab Frontier district of Dera Ghazi Khan, as well as various archival materials, including colonial settlement reports, government memorandums, police surveillance files and even the personal diaries, memoirs and PhD dissertations of several chiefly landlords. I focus on chiefs from the district's two most powerful tribes: the Legharis and the Mazaris. While some chiefs expounded their theoretical ideas in written prose, others did not. To unearth theorizing in the absence of theoretical texts, I follow

¹The Derajit Frontier consisted of the present-day districts of Dera Ismail Khan, Tant/Bannu, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. When the British carved out the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in 1907, Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu became part of that province, while Dera Ghazi Khan remained in Punjab. In 1982, Dera Ghazi Khan district was partitioned into two separate districts: to the north, Dera Ghazi Khan and, to the south, Rajanpur. I conducted fieldwork in both these districts.

²Each tribe usually has only one recognized head chief, the *tumandar*, but has many petty-chiefs called *sardars*. Typically, any male members of the chiefly clans, and even heads of non-chiefly clans, give themselves the title of *sardar*.

³For other recent studies of central Punjab, see Martin (2016) and Jan (2019).

anthropologist Faye V. Harrison's (2016, p. 172) approach, which “shift[s] from a valorization of theory as textualized product to ‘theorizing’ as a form of creative work performed in diverse dialogical contexts.” Central to her approach is the “concept of praxis” (Harrison, 2016, p. 172), which emphasizes how theory is both immanent to and co-constitutive of practice. Thus, in addition to engaging with any texts chiefs did pen, I focus on chiefs' practices, as gleaned from the archive and oral history, to uncover its conceptual underpinnings.

In the paper's first section, I elaborate on the relationship between theory, hegemony, and agrarian change. The subsequent sections focus on three different crisis-riven periods when chiefs engaged with concepts to radically transform their material relations: (1) the 1849 British annexation of Punjab and its aftermath, when chiefs drew on the colonial concepts of property and race to establish their landed estates and refashion the Baloch identity; (2) the popular upheavals of the 1970s, when chiefs engaged with concepts of progress, derived in part from American imperialism, to transform their estates into capitalist farms; and (3) the 1990s, when chiefs drew on the concepts of contract and freedom, which were globally circulating at the time under “flexible” neoliberal imperialism, to lease out their estates to contract farmers. In each period, various threats “from above” and “below” coagulated to produce a crisis to chiefly authority. Each propelled certain chiefs to engage imperial concepts and transform agrarian relations in ways that mitigated these pressures and sustained their rule. Ultimately, their practices illustrate the mediating role of theory-making in the achievement of landlord hegemony in the (post-)colony.

2 | THEORY, HEGEMONY, AND AGRARIAN CHANGE

Italian communist Antonio Gramsci famously elucidated the relationship between theory, hegemony, and agrarian change. He showed how the ideas of intellectuals could shape agrarian transformations, and in ways that either maintained elite hegemonies or fed into the hegemonic aspirations of subaltern classes. Recent scholarship has further demonstrated the role of certain colonial concepts in agrarian change and imperial hegemony, a perspective I develop by focusing on a comprador elites' engagement with these concepts.

To understand the relationship between theory and hegemony, I turn to Gramsci's writings on intellectuals. Gramsci seriously studied intellectuals because they provided a lens to probe wider historical, political, and cultural shifts in a given society. “The theme of the intellectuals,” Peter Thomas (2009, p. 408) wrote, “is not merely one of Gramsci's numerous interdisciplinary fields of research, but a kaleidoscopic perspective onto the history-politics-philosophy-nexus.” His writings on intellectuals were intimately tied to his concept of hegemony, which he understood as a condition of rule constituted by a dialectic of coercion and consent (Thomas, 2009, pp. 159–195). As Gianni Francioni (cited in Thomas, 2009, p. 406) noted, for Gramsci, “the question of hegemony and that of the intellectuals are, in a strict sense, indissoluble.” Intellectuals produced theoretical concepts that shaped how people saw the world—what Gramsci (1971, p. 9) calls “conception[s] of the world.” While “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 5) promoted concepts to support subaltern class interests, “traditional intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 7) produced conceptions that generated consent for elite rule, “thus represent[ing] the function of the general reproduction of the system” (Filippini, 2017, p. 69). As Gramsci himself put it, intellectuals essentially “have the function of organizing the social hegemony of a group and its domination at the level of the State” (Gramsci, cited in Thomas, 2009, p. 412).

Gramsci's (1978) essay on Italy's “Southern Question” concretely illustrates the connection between theory, hegemony, and agrarian transformations. Here, he accounts for the underdevelopment of Italy's agrarian south, in part, through the theoretical works of its intellectuals. Allied to the region's major landlords were “great intellectuals” like Benedetto Croce and Giustino Fortunato, who mediated between the landlords and the peasantry to consolidate a “monstrous agrarian bloc” (Gramsci, 1978, p. 457). Though the region was rife with landlord-peasant exploitation, with even the occasional peasant insurrections, intellectuals like Croce and Fortunato theorized so as to “[see] to it that the problems of the South would be posed in a way which did not go beyond certain limits; did not become revolutionary” (Gramsci, 1978, p. 459). In particular, they produced ideas that pacified those “cultured youth” who

might serve as the organic, revolutionary intellectuals of their peasant compadres, “steer[ing] them along a middle way of classical serenity in thought and action” (Gramsci, 1978, p. 460). By depoliticizing the Southern peasantry and uniting them with the rural elites, these intellectuals consequently oversaw the interests of Northern capitalists, who depended on an alliance with pre-capitalist landlords and the latter’s agrarian bloc to uphold their rule over the entire country. That is, the intellectuals of Italy’s South effectively theorized to continue the country’s “passive revolution of contemporary bourgeois hegemony” (Thomas, 2009, p. 419): that hybrid of revolution and restoration, capitalism and feudalism, that explained Italy’s spatially uneven development (Harootunian, 2015, pp. 129–130).

Gramsci’s insights into how theory can shape agrarian change and uphold the hegemony of specific classes resonates beyond Italy. Scholars have shown, for instance, how certain theories shaped the Green Revolution’s agrarian transformations. Backed by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, intellectuals like Norman Borlaug and William Gaud promoted a set of ideas and agricultural technologies that contributed to the development of capital-intensive farming across the global South (Patel, 2013), including in Pakistan (Alavi, 1973; Niazi, 2004). In doing so, they also effectively prevented many of those countries turning “red.” As John Harris (1987, p. 229) noted, the term Green Revolution “was deliberately coined to contrast with the phrase ‘red revolution’, and the notion that ‘developing’ countries were to undergo far-reaching changes as a result of an agricultural revolution, rather than because of radical political transformation, gives a clue to the political interests involved in the generation of the new agricultural technology.” In the case of the Green Revolution, theory mediated agrarian transformations so as to prevent socialist revolutions and uphold the hegemony of capital and American empire.

Scholars have also traced the life of colonial concepts in the peripheries and their impact on agrarian change and elite hegemony. Eric Stokes (1959) examined how the British Raj drew on utilitarian theory to transform agrarian relations in ways that maintained its hegemony. For instance, influenced by David Ricardo’s theory of taxation, which argued that surplus income beyond the average rate of profit sustained unproductive accumulation, colonial officials began periodically revising and enhancing the land revenue demand to spur landlord investment in agriculture (Stokes, 1959, pp. 81–139). Likewise, Neeladri Bhattacharya (2019, pp. 172–173) shows how colonial officials took inspiration from utilitarian theorists like Jeremy Bentham to replace customary rights in the countryside with codified laws that affirmed the proprietary rights of landholders, thereby solidifying the interests of a local elite central to the Raj’s own hegemony. Bhattacharya (2019, p. 170) also expands on Stokes, revealing how colonial officials drew on the “conceptual resources of conflicting traditions”, from utilitarianism to romanticism, to construct the very category of the “agrarian.” Through this category and its attendant concepts (the village, landlords, tenants, etc.), the British furthered their colonial aspirations for order and profit. Brenna Bhandar (2018) adds to discussions on the life of colonial concepts by attending to both property and race, especially in the settler-colonial contexts of Canada, Australia, and Israel/Palestine. With reference to thinkers like John Locke and William Petty, she shows how colonial concepts of race and property worked in tandem to further settler-colonial forms of land appropriation. These “racial regimes of ownership,” she maintains, “persist as hegemonic juridical formations” (Bhandar, 2018, p. 18).

Yet scholarship on the interactions between colonial/imperial concepts, agrarian transformations, and elite hegemony tends to centre the intellectual activities of Western figures. Bhandar (2018, p. 18), for instance, explicitly states that she does “not engage with indigenous concepts of ownership and relationships to land.” I build on this scholarship precisely by focusing on a certain indigenous elite, Baloch chiefly landlords, and how they creatively embraced various imperial concepts to fortify their own hegemony.

3 | CHIEFS AS LANDLORDS, CIRCA 1849–1933

The first period I examine centres on a crisis to chiefly authority that emerged shortly after Punjab’s annexation, one that provoked certain chiefs to engage with the colonial concepts of property and race and establish their landed estates. During this period, chiefs faced specific pressures “from above,” as the British Raj sought their loyalty and submission, and “from below,” as the British, in confronting nomadic pastoralism and pillaging, threatened to



FIGURE 1 A map of British Punjab, circa 1916 (Source: Douie, 1916, p. 223). Dera Ghazi Khan district can be seen on the far left, bordering Balochistan.

undermine the reciprocal exchanges upon which chiefs secured their tribesmen's support. To resolve this crisis, certain Leghari and Mazari chiefs embraced and reworked the Raj's concept of private property. By developing the region's irrigation infrastructure, chiefs acquired proprietary rights to immense agricultural estates (*jagirs*) over which they collected rents and revenue from newly settled Baloch tribesmen, as well as long-standing Punjabi Jat farmers. But Balochness—associated as it was in tribesmen's imaginary with glorified notions of nomadism, pillaging and tribal warfare—threatened to undermine this new property regime. To protect it, chiefs collaborated with the Raj to reconstitute the Baloch race itself, thus becoming active co-conspirators in the latter's “racial regime of ownership” (Bhandar, 2018). Chiefs tied this racialized construction to the new property regime through various practices, including by giving land rights and revenue grants to ordinary tribesmen to accommodate their aspiration for pastoral-like autonomy, and by affirming the juridical authority of British courts in property disputes. In the absence of any writings by the chiefs of this period, these practices provide a glimpse into their engagement with colonial concepts.

After the British annexed Punjab in 1849, one of their key priorities was to incorporate the Baloch hill tribes on the Punjab Frontier into their sphere of influence (Figures 1 and 2) (Douie, 1916). The British imagined these tribes as nomadic pastoralists and raiders, averse to settled agriculture. As one colonial official for Dera Ghazi Khan wrote, “the Bilochis [sic] are robust and manly, but they look upon war as their trade, and despise agriculture and the arts of peace” (Fryer, 1876, p. 66). Officials did eventually recognize that hill tribes seasonally farmed on the plains (e.g., Minchin, 1869, p. 29),⁴ and had a customary system of land rights and corresponding class categories⁵ based on

⁴Baloch tribes' seasonal movement from pastoralism on the hills to agriculture on the plains explained the relative scarcity of settled villages in the region. As one official noted about this area, “villages, in the proper sense of the term, hardly exist; we have merely aggregates of a few separate holdings, which have been clubbed together for revenue purposes into ‘mauzas’” (Baden-Powell, 1892, p. 537).

⁵Local tenant categories included *butemar/mundemar*, who acquired land rights by clearing jungle or shrub, and *adhlapai* and *latmar*, who acquired land rights through sinking wells or erecting embankments respectively (Fryer, 1876, pp. vi–ix).

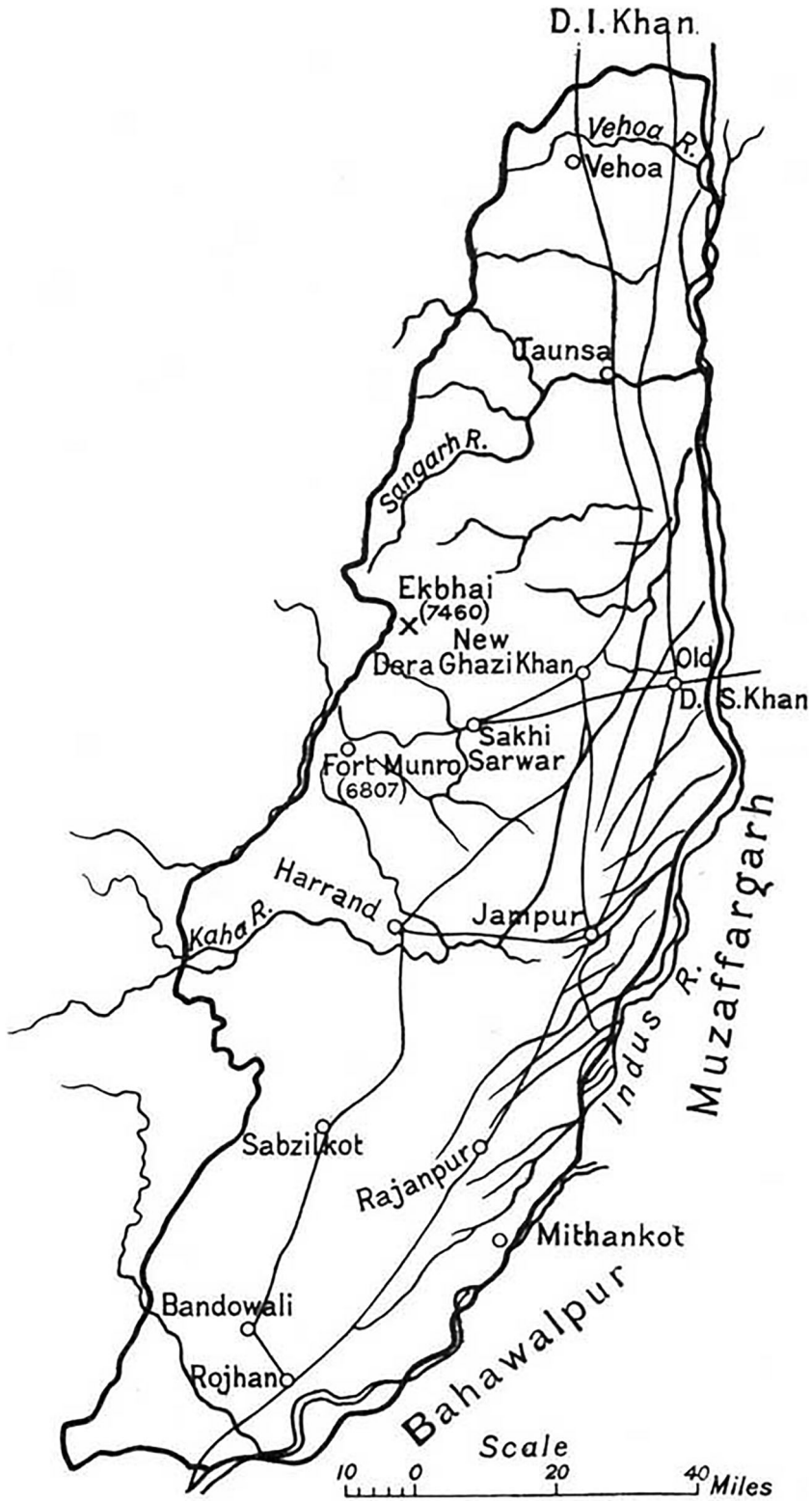


FIGURE 2 A map of Dera Ghazi Khan district, circa 1916. The Leghari chiefly family's headquarters (town of Choti, not on the map) is next to Sakhi Sarwar. The Mazari's headquarters is in Rojhan, in the district's southern tip (Source: Douie, 1916, p. 269).

sourcing water (Bhattacharya, 2019, pp. 156–157) and clearing jungles (Fryer, 1876, p. 78). Still, seasonally migrating tribes were, as elsewhere in the colonial world (Scott, 1998), an obstacle to state legibility and security,⁶ and thus needed to be permanently settled, with their property rights legally codified. Incorporating the Frontier tribes into the Raj's sphere of influence therefore hinged, in large part, on transforming tribesmen from pastoralists to settled cultivators on the plains, who would then be categorized as either proprietors or tenants (Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 152). One key way the British sought to do this was by encouraging tribal chiefs to invest and participate in the development of canals, promising them revenue-grants (*jagirs*) and even proprietary rights to some of the newly irrigated land (Gilmartin, 2015). Through this process, the Raj aimed to subvert Baloch tribal identity entirely: to transform the Baloch “hill man”—“filthy,” “hungry,” and “wild”—into the “plain Baloch,” who has a “suit of English cotton cloth, a good mare to ride, and is prosperous and free from anxiety” (Fryer, 1876, p. 74).

While the British had their racialized constructions of the Frontier Baloch, chiefs had their own. Though chiefs also tied the Baloch identity to nomadic pastoralism and warmongering, unlike the Raj, they valued these notions. Agriculture, though practiced, was commonly derided by Baloch tribesmen as a Punjabi Jat practice.⁷ In his memoirs, the Mazari *sardar* Sherbaz Khan Mazari (1999, pp. xiv–xv), brother to the current Mazari *tumandar* (head chief), proudly describes his own tribe as historically “nomadic” with a “war-like nature.” He even recalls his grandmother boasting to him about the battle injuries her uncle, a former *tumandar*, sustained. She would tell the young Sherbaz Mazari how, as a little girl, she was fond of playing with a musket ball lodged into her uncle's collar bone (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. xix). Sherbaz Mazari (1999, p. 243), in fact, suggested that this construction of the Baloch constitutes a concept, “the concept of Balochiyat,” which others have defined as “Balochness” (Breseeg, 2001, p. 312). Whereas the British viewed Baloch tribes' nomadic pastoralism and pillaging as antithetical to civilizational development, chiefs saw it, at least initially, as foundational to a respectable Baloch identity.

But, as we will see, certain chiefs also participated in the reconstruction of Balochiyat during their engagement with the British Raj, especially as they faced a crisis to chiefly authority. This crisis stemmed, not only from British efforts to subdue the chiefs but also from the fact that the Raj, in confronting inter-tribal pillaging, undermined the political economy of booty redistribution that secured tribesmen's loyalty to their chiefs. Pressures “from above” (the British Raj) thus combined with pressures “from below” (an increasingly disgruntled tribal base) to produce a crisis to chiefly authority.

One chief to face such a crisis was Jamal Khan Leghari (the 1st). With his rivals jockeying for the *tumandar* title, Jamal Khan realized an alternative route to securing the loyalty of his tribesmen: collaborating with the Raj in their Indus irrigation projects. In the 1850s, he proposed to the British a plan for widening and extending the Manka tail, as long as the government agreed to pay half the costs, grant him ownership over newly irrigated and previously unclaimed “waste” land, and recognize his right to collect revenue from his tribesmen in *jagir* (Gilmartin, 2015, pp. 47–48). With British approval, Jamal Khan then enrolled his tribesmen in the canal-building process, offering them water access and land rights (either tenancies or property) in exchange for their labour. The project led to him acquiring proprietary rights over immense land on the plains, on which he collected rents from tenant farmers, as well as expanded “*batai jagir* estates” (Wilson, 1926, p. 6), on which he collected land revenue from smallholders and tenants, fixed at a 1/5th share of the crop (Fryer, 1876, p. 153).⁸ With boosted wealth and better-off tribesmen, Jamal Khan emerged from the canal-building project with his claim to the *tumandar* title confirmed. He would also go on to participate in various other canal projects. By 1867, Jamal Khan held contracts for most projects in the district,

⁶As a colonial administrator for Dera Ghazi Khan noted: “It is the immense tracts of waste and jungle that render it so easy for hill marauders to leave the passes and penetrate unobserved for many miles towards the river, returning with stolen cattle to the thick jungle, and during the following night to the hills...every new settlement renders this kind of theft more precarious, and reduces the labor of our police” (Pollock, 1860).

⁷A popular Baloch proverb captures this derision for settled agriculture: “those who followed Chakur have become Jatts, while those who stayed behind have remained Baloches [sic]” (Dames, 1904, p. 48).

Chukur refers to Mir Chakar Rind Baloch, an early Baloch chief who settled on the Punjabi plains in the 15th century. Waves of Baloch migration to Punjab occurred throughout the 15th and 16th centuries.

⁸The report on the revised first settlement (1893–1897) states that, out of a total land revenue of 519,314 rupees for the district, 81,280 Rupees—or close to 16%—was relinquished by the British to various *tumandars* as *jagirs* or other revenue grants (Diack, 1898, p. 63).

thus expanding his influence to even non-Leghari farmers (other Baloch or Punjab Jats),⁹ who needed access to water controlled by the chief (Massy, 1890, pp. 599, 617).

The British Raj came to see his growing influence as a threat, as did rival Frontier tribes like the Mazaris. To balance out the Legharis influence, the Raj and the de-facto Mazari chief, Imam Baksh Mazari, began to collaborate on various canal development projects, including the Gamul project in 1867, which aimed to permanently settle Mazari tribesmen on the Indus plains (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 57). By propping up Imam Baksh in this way—he was eventually knighted in 1888 (Massy, 1890, p. 612)—the Raj also aimed to exert control over various rebellious tribes in the region, including the Mazaris themselves, who the British saw as a “very wild and nomadic tribe” (Fryer, 1876, p. 26), and the Bugtis in neighbouring Balochistan, with whom Mazaris had good relations. The Mazari chief, for his part, not only hoped to counter-balance the Legharis by acquiring and expanding his own landed estates, he also aimed to secure his tribesmen's loyalty by providing them better access to water and land. Like Jamal Khan, the Mazari chief's authority was also tenuous, as his brother was actually the hereditary *tumandar* but, because of injuries from battle, temporarily ceded the tribe's management (Mazari, 1999, p. xx) (Figure 3).

In trying to resolve their crisis of authority by settling their tribesmen as property-respecting cultivators and establishing landed estates, both the Mazari and Leghari chiefs embraced and reworked the colonial concept of private property. This embrace is evident in colonial reports. Colonial officials described Jamal Khan Leghari as “an enterprising and liberal chief” (Fryer, 1876, p. 23), praised Imam Baksh Mazari for “speedily recogniz[ing] the advantages of the new regime of law and order” (Massy, 1890, p. 611), and noted how the latter's successor even took it upon himself to “scrutinize the accuracy of proprietary rights” (Wilson, 1926, p. 19). However, chiefs also reworked the colonial concept of private property when they insisted that their participation in irrigation schemes entitled them to land. Here, chiefs drew on local concepts of property, specifically the *adhlap* system, whereby well-sinkers acquired rights to land through irrigation, rights which were collectively recognized but not legally enshrined (Bhattacharya, 2019, pp. 156–157). In essence, chiefs mobilized the Raj's property regime to codify and authorize local entitlements to land which, hitherto, were recognized only implicitly. In doing so, they also effectively consolidated a new racialization of the Baloch. With Baloch chiefly authority increasingly “embodied in new forms of landed property” (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 66), Balochiyat itself came to be rooted in the respect for, rather than the pillaging of, property.

Though both chiefs enrolled their tribesmen in this property regime by granting them various codified land rights, Imam Baksh Mazari went even further than his Leghari counterpart. As one colonial official noted, Imam Baksh “threw himself heart and soul into the work of making good subjects of the Mazaris” (Massy, 1890, p. 611). One way he made “good subjects”—that is, subjects compliant to the new property regime—was by redistributing land revenue grants. Specifically, the Mazari chief began redistributing a land revenue grant called *kasurs*. Before the British arrived and consolidated *jagir* awards, the Mazari chief already held a *kasur* land grant with the Amirs of Khairpur, to which the Mazaris were subject before Punjab's annexation (Fryer, 1876, p. 26), and which entitled the chief to half the revenue. The British continued to respect these *kasur* grants, even allowing the Mazari chief to keep all the revenue (Fryer, 1876, p. 26). Imam Baksh, and then his successor, divided and redistributed *kasurs* to “leading men of the tribe subject to good conduct and service” (Diack, 1898, p. 67). Whereas in 1876, only one *kasur* grant existed in Mazari country (Fryer, 1876, p. 11), by 1898, the British noted 17 large *kasurs* and 248 smaller ones (Diack, 1898, p. 67) and by the 1920s, a “bewildering congeries of *kasurs*” (Wilson, 1926, p. 50). Mazari chiefs thus partially relinquished what was otherwise a privilege of the *tumandar*: the right to collect land revenue. In doing so, chiefs appeased their tribesmen's aspirations for a pastoral-like autonomy, securing the latter's compliance with the new property regime and ultimately refashioning Balochiyat.

⁹As chiefs settled their Baloch tribesmen on the plains over the years, the racial distribution of the population would radically change. Per the 1868 census, 53% of the district's population was Punjabi Jat and 30% was Baloch (Fryer, 1876, p. 17). By 1901, Baloch would become more numerous than Jats, accounting for 32% of the district's population compared to 25% (Meyer, 1908, p. 252). Though the Pakistani state did not collect district-level population data by race/ethnicity, it did note in its 1972 census that the overwhelming majority of the district's population was Baloch (Census Organisation, 1972, p. 6). This is certainly the case today too.



FIGURE 3 The tombs of Imam Baksh Mazari and other Mazari chiefs near the town of Rojhan (Source: author).

Chiefs also tried to tie their tribesman, and Balochiyat more generally, to this new regime by affirming the juridical authority of British courts, especially in property disputes. Before, disputes between tribes were often resolved through violent conflict, which was constitutive of tribal identities and solidarities (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. xxiii). Yet over the 19th century, chiefs increasingly resolved their conflicts through British liberal courts, thus setting an example for their tribesmen as well. For instance, Jamal Khan Leghari and his descendants waged a long legal battle with the Marri tribe over land rights in the Barkhan valley (Conran & Craik, 1910, pp. 343–344), while Imam Baksh Mazari, for his part, faced a lawsuit from the *tumandar* of the Dreshak tribe over land on the Phitokh torrents (Massy, 1890, p. 636). In fact, Imam Baksh would go further than other chiefs in his use of British liberal institutions to mediate inter-tribal property disputes. He believed inter-tribal warfare only weakened each tribe, and thus sought to negotiate between tribes peacefully and legally (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. xxii). Not only did he swiftly resolve the land conflict with the Dreshaks through the intercession of the Deputy Commissioner (Massy, 1890, p. 636), Imam Baksh also joined Jamal Khan and other chiefs to establish a “joint-stock company,” structured by British property laws, to re-excavate the Dhundi canal (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 49). Because of his mediating acumen, Imam Baksh was even made an “Honorary Magistrate” by the Raj, for which he built himself a “fine courthouse” in his hometown (Fryer, 1876, p. 41). Such chiefly practices must have influenced ordinary tribesmen, for one notable colonial official would, decades later, write of the Punjab peasantry’s own “passionate love for litigation” (Darling, 1978, p. 67).

Apart from the legal courts, chiefs also used the Raj’s Court of Wards to mediate any property disputes, especially internal disputes within the chiefly clans. Originally established in medieval Britain to manage the aristocracy’s estates, the institution was abolished in the 17th century before being revived to protect the estates of British India’s gentry. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Court assumed control of both the Mazari and Leghari estates. In the late 19th century, for instance, after the Leghari *tumandar* was allegedly poisoned in a succession dispute, the Court protected his newborn son and heir, Jamal Khan (the 2nd). “From then on,” the son’s English great daughter-in-law wrote in her memoirs, “none could harm [Jamal Khan the 2nd] without retaliation from the

British” (Iris Leghari, 1995, p. 18). Similarly, the Court assumed control of the Mazari estate in 1933, in part to prevent a succession dispute, as the Mazari *tumandar* at the time had died, leaving behind his young children (which included the current Mazari *tumandar*, Balakh Sher Mazari, and his brother Sherbaz Mazari) (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. xxx). The British state even became the children’s official guardian, with the district’s Deputy Commissioner acting as the embodiment of that guardianship—a figure Sherbaz Mazari described as “fatherly” (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. 12). As their guardians, the British state was also responsible for their education, sending them to elite schools like Lahore’s Aitchison College that contributed to their “liberal outlook” (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. 2). Thus, in addition to the colonial legal courts, chiefs also used the Court of Wards to set an example of how disputes were to be adjudicated, tying tribesmen and Balochiyat to the new property regime.

Moreover, the Court of Wards also financially secured the landed estates, thereby protecting chiefs’ authority and enabling them to continue to enrol tribesmen in the new property regime. In 1927, for instance, the Court appropriated Jamal Khan Leghari’s (the 2nd) estate, estimated to be 114,000 acres, to protect it from mismanagement, insolvency and collapse: the chief spent more time and money on politics than on agriculture, all the while extracting exorbitant sums from his increasingly angry tenants (Gilmartin, 2015, pp. 66–67). When taking over these estates, the Court curtailed the excessive spending of chiefs, improved estate management, and even paid sums to creditors to annul any outstanding debts (I. Ali, 1988, p. 79). Had the Court not assumed its management, the Leghari estate would have been sued by Hindu creditors and possibly dissolved, and the chief would have lost his authority. As Imran Ali (1988, pp. 78) notes, “it is doubtful whether many of the large estates would have survived the pressures and vicissitudes of modern times had the state not interceded on their behalf.” By providing an institution (i.e., the Court of Wards) to protect the landed estates, the British Raj secured a chiefly authority that was, by now, increasingly dependent on landed property and the enrolment of ordinary tribesmen in this property regime. In terms of race, the Court enabled Balochiyat to continue to be rooted in the respect for private property.

The Frontier tribes’ encounter with the British Raj led to a crisis to chiefly authority, one that provoked certain chiefs to engage with colonial concepts and re-arrange their relations with people and land. The Leghari and Mazari chiefs, in particular, resolved this crisis by collaborating with the Raj and creatively embracing its concept of private property to develop the region’s irrigation infrastructure, transform their nomadic tribesmen into settled cultivators, and consolidate their own landed estates. But given that this re-arrangement radically opposed tribesmen’s conceptions of what it meant to be Baloch, chiefs also had to engage with the colonial concept of race. In collaboration with the Raj, chiefs untethered Balochness or Balochiyat from notions of nomadic pastoralism, tribal warfare and pillaging, tying the race instead to the new property regime through various practices. Some of those practices even drew on aspects of Balochiyat that chiefs ultimately sought to overturn, as when chiefs granted land rights and revenue grants to tribesmen to accommodate their aspirations for pastoral-like autonomy. Thus, chiefs not only passively embraced the Raj’s racial project but actively reworked it to align, in some respects at least, with pre-existing Baloch values.

4 | CHIEFS AS “PROGRESSIVE” FARMERS, CIRCA 1970–1990

As chiefly authority became embodied in landed property, inequality between chiefs and the peasantry (Baloch and otherwise) radically increased. Colonial officials directly contributed to this: when determining land revenue, for instance, they insisted that revenue assessments not be “unduly light,” because “more political danger is to be apprehended from a native aristocracy impoverished by inadequate assessments, than from a thriving peasantry called upon to pay a moderate and equitable demand” (Baden-Powell, 1892, pp. 606–607). By the early 20th century, rents in the district also rose, reflecting the growing competition for tenancies amongst previously pastoral Baloch tribesmen (King, 1926, p. 3). The combination of rising rents and revenue payments led chiefs to accumulate immense wealth and land, the latter often purchased from increasingly squeezed smallholders (see also Bernstein, 2006) within their *jagirs* (Baden-Powell, 1892, pp. 700–701). Settlement officers expressed alarm at the

scale of land transfers towards the chiefs (Diack, 1898, p. 27).¹⁰ By the 1920s, the Leghari *tumandar* would own approximately 114,000 acres of land (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 271), while the Mazari *tumandar* would acquire around 165,000 acres (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. 18). As in Punjab more generally (Javid, 2011, p. 338), partition and decolonization did not fundamentally alter the position of chiefs. By the 1960s, growing inequalities on the estates would even trouble chiefs like Sherbaz Mazari (1999, p. xxvi), who claimed that “the practices of feudalism [had] taken over,” with chiefs “brutaliz[ing] their people.” In addition to landlord violence, Mazari (1999, p. 18) also noted the heightened exploitation of tenant labour, as tenants’ share had dropped from two thirds¹¹ to one third. In the 1970s, this inequality would, as we will see, combine with other pressures “from above” (a populist regime) and “from below” (tenant movements for land) to generate another major crisis to chiefly authority. To calm these pressures and secure their hegemony, chiefs engaged with a concept of “progress” derived, in part, through their interactions with American imperialism. They re-invented themselves as “progressive” farmers and transformed their estates into capital-intensive “farms,” insisting that this, not land reforms or occupations, could deliver prosperity to the peasantry.

The crisis began in the late 60s, when a popular movement coalesced against the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan (T. Ali, 1970). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) was able to capture the leadership of the movement and come to power, in part through various populist assurances (Iqbal Leghari, 1979, p. 222). One of the PPP’s assurances was a package of land reforms, which promised tenant security, a reduction in the land ceiling and the redistribution of resumed land. The PPP government passed the reforms in 1972, though only enforced them against their political opponents (Herring, 1979). This initially included both the Legharis and Mazaris, who local PPP leaders called “feudal lords” (Special Branch, West Pakistan, 1970a). Both chiefly families tried to undermine the land reforms, a pressure “from above,” in various ways, including conducting fake paper transfers of above-ceiling land, selling any excess land, and evicting tenants.¹² Per some peasants, chiefs were effectively “making a joke of the land reforms” (Shahid, 1976, pp. 5–6).

Chiefs’ evasions and expulsions, however, furthered pressures “from below,” as peasants empowered themselves to implement the reforms by occupying land. On the Leghari estates, for instance, tenants in the village of Basti Bada Khosa occupied over 300 acres in what was “one of the most advanced peasant movements in all of Punjab” (Buhar, 1976, p. 10).¹³ Likewise, on the Mazari estates, tenants also occupied land, especially on the estate of *sardar* Ashiq Mazari (a descendent of Imam Baksh), “where the peasants stopped sharecropping and also everything else” (Alam, 1975, p. 5). On both estates, tenants were supported by activists from the communist Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP) and the PPP, who often collaborated in local struggles.¹⁴ Both criticized chiefly landlords for being lackeys of colonialism and imperialism, evading the land reforms, and contributing to the broader economic and cultural underdevelopment of the country. For instance, one PPP activist and intellectual derided chiefs for upholding an “dilapidated system” (Hassan, 1976, p. 118), one that exacerbated inequality and undermined economic growth, while MKP president Major (retired) Ishaq Muhammad condemned “the [cultural] decadence of this ancient ruling

¹⁰Alarm at land transfers across Punjab, especially to non-agricultural money-lending castes, would soon pave the way for the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900, which prohibited land transfers to non-agricultural castes (I. Ali, 1988, p. 5).

¹¹To illustrate the complicated division of produce in *tumandar*-controlled areas, one colonial official gave a detailed account of the practice on a Mazari estate:

“The total produce is divided into 18 parts – 1 part is set aside for *kharch* or *tallah* [laborers’ due], 1 for *lichh* [rent], and 4 for *mahsul* [land revenue] and the remaining 12 form the *rahkam* [tenant income]. The chief’s *kardars* [managers] take 6 out of the 18 shares, or 1/3 of the whole. If there are proprietors other than the Mazari family these proprietors apply for their *lichh*. Similarly, if the *kasur* is not a Mazari family *kasur*, the *kasur-khwar* applies to the Chief for his *kasur* (half the *mahsul*), but he gets only 6/16th of the *mahsul*, as 2 annas from this half share are deducted for expenses, after the high Mazari fashion. The menials’ dues here are paid by the tenant.” (Wilson, 1926, p. 26).

¹²Major (retired) Ishaq Muhammad (1972b), president of the communist Mazdoor Kisan Party, visited Dera Ghazi Khan district on several occasions and documented extensive evasions on the chiefly estates. The landlord Ashiq Mazari apparently evaded the reforms by establishing fake companies to which he transferred his land (Hassan, 1976, p. 107).

¹³Details of this movement were also provided by a tenant whose father, the late Mehva Bada Khosa, led it.

¹⁴Occasionally, peasants were also supported by the PPP’s top brass. Per my interview with Ghulam Mustafa Khar, Bhutto’s Chief Minister of Punjab (1973–74) during this period, the provincial government assisted these tenant movements through, for instance, instructing police not to arrest tenants occupying land and even offering financial support to movement leaders, including those in the MKP (an offer the latter refused).

feudal class” (Muhammad, 1972a). Ultimately, as local MKP leader Sufi Sibghatullah Mazari put it, chiefly authority meant “it was impossible to make any progress in the country” (Special Branch, Punjab, 1976).¹⁵

How did Baloch chiefs respond to this crisis, one propelled by these combined pressures “from above” and “from below”? Part of their strategy involved coercion and violence: chiefs often used the Border Military Police—a coercive apparatus the British Raj originally supplied to chiefs as their private “militia” (Muhammad, 1972b, p. 6)—to harass, imprison and even murder tenant leaders.¹⁶ But in addition to coercion, chiefs also tried to stabilize their authority by embracing a concept of progress, reinventing themselves as “progressive.” As Mina Leghari (2016, p. 16), a leading member of the Leghari family, would later write, chiefs were “required to be more active and progressive” if they wanted to maintain power. One form of this chiefly embrace of progress was their reinvention as politically progressive. Both Leghari and Mazari chiefs joined the PPP, that ostensibly progressive, pro-poor and socialist party, with many even entering parliament on PPP tickets.¹⁷ Their entry and reinvention was, in part, certainly an attempt to block pressures “from above,” as they could more easily evade Bhutto’s land reforms as his ally.¹⁸ But, moreover, chiefs’ entry into the PPP and their progressive self-styling was also driven by an attempt to appease critiques “from below”—to “seduce the peasants” (Alam, 1974, p. 8).¹⁹ At least verbally, many chiefs began to propound progressive ideas and commitments at public rallies. Like other chiefs, *sardar* Shaukat Mazari, for instance, invited Bhutto to his estate and together they “championed the cause of the poor and the downtrodden” (Special Branch, West Pakistan, 1970b).

Moreover, chiefs also re-constituted themselves and their estates in economically “progressive” terms to secure their legitimacy amidst the peasant insurgencies. As the MKP’s Punjab general secretary Imtiaz Alam noted at the time, “in central Punjab, [capitalist production] has been intensifying for quite a while whereas in feudal areas [i.e. the Punjab Frontier] this process has intensified [only recently] as a consequence of the peasant movement” (Alam, 1975, p. 7). Refuting the label “feudal landlords,” Baloch chiefs now called themselves “farmers” or “agriculturalists.” Following a trajectory seen elsewhere in Punjab (Rouse, 1983), many chiefs also actively invested in, intensified and re-organized productive relations on their estates, which they now called “farms.”²⁰ However, given the scale of their estates, chiefs could not fully expel all tenants and shift completely to labour-based farming.²¹ Instead, productive relations on their farms typically involved a combination of “self-cultivation” (*khud-kasht*), a euphemism for labour-based (*rahak*) cultivation, and capital-intensive tenant production (*muzaygiri*), where landlords invested in fixed capital and seeds.²² Chiefs believed that this shift to capitalist farming would appease critiques “from below”

¹⁵For further details on the left-led peasant movement in Dera Ghazi Khan, see Raza (2022).

¹⁶For instance, local peasant leaders accused both Sherbaz Mazari and his brother, the Mazari *tumandar* Balakh Sher Mazari, of “perpetuating atrocities against tenants” (Special Branch, Punjab, 1971a). Ashiq Mazari, another landlord from the chiefly Mazari clan whose close relative also headed the Border Military Police, responded in a similar fashion (Unknown, 1975). Meanwhile, the Legharis violently confronted tenants in villages like Basti Bada Khosa, where they even “got around 100 Hadiani Baloch from the nearby mountain to attack the peasants” (Buhar, 1976).

¹⁷A section of the Mazari chiefly family were the first to join—including Ashiq Mazari and his son-in-law Shaukat Mazari, the latter running on a PPP ticket in the 1970 national elections (Hassan, 1976, p. 103). After the PPP formed their government, the Mazari *tumandar* Balakh Sher Mazari swiftly joined the party, as did members of the Leghari chiefly family (one of whom, Ata Muhammad Leghari, won a 1971 by-election on the PPP ticket) (S. K. Mazari, 1999, pp. 274–275).

¹⁸Even Bhutto, a major landowner in Sindh, evaded his own government’s reforms by transferring land above the ceiling to managers and servants. Sherbaz Mazari (1999, pp. 537–538), once a friend of Bhutto, narrates a casual dinner-time conversation he had with Bhutto’s wife, in which she details how Bhutto evaded the reforms and advises Mazari to do the same.

¹⁹Chiefs’ progressive self-styling did have some effect on the attitudes of ordinary peasants, but only insofar as it was backed by material concessions. Both the Leghari and Mazari chiefs did transfer some of their land (albeit very little) to some insurrectionary tenants. Senior Leghari chief Jaffar Leghari, per Mehva Bada Khosa’s son, eventually relinquished some land (albeit a meagre 50 acres or so) to the Bada Khosa tenants. Ashiq Mazari also offered the tenant leader Sufi Sibghatullah Mazari 12 acres of land, which he refused to accept (per my interviews with Sibghatullah’s comrades).

²⁰The *sardar* Ashiq Mazari, for instance, established farms by the names of “United Farms,” “Punjab Indus Farms,” and “Punjab Progressive Farms” (Hassan, 1976, p. 107).

²¹As one report from Dera Ghazi Khan noted during this period of capitalist farming, compared to tenants, “the proportion of other classes — agricultural workers and various artisanal classes — is very low” (Unknown, 1979, p. 24).

²²This per my conversations with Jaffar Leghari and Ashiq Mazari’s son Wali Mazari, and the managers of their respective estates. Indeed, Bhutto’s land reforms did not intend to abolish landlord-tenant relations entirely, but rather aimed to transform this relation into a more productive one (Herring, 1979, p. 531). Landlords were incentivized to invest in fixed capital (tube-wells, tractors) by the promise of state subsidies and the permission to raise rents if they did so. Reforms also stipulated that working capital would be shared between landlords and tenants, while expenditure of seeds would now be entirely the landlord’s responsibility. In this way, Bhutto hoped to eliminate, at least in theory, the disincentive problem of low marginal returns for tenant investment.

by delivering prosperity to ordinary farmers. As Jaffar Leghari, currently the most senior member of the Leghari family, told me, “I believed the tenants and workers would become much better off because of our modern farming ... By becoming progressive, we believed our tribesmen would progress too.” Chiefs thought their capitalist farming would deliver prosperity in a way the land reforms or occupations could not, as they had the capital and expertise to boost agricultural productivity,²³ which would then trickle down to ordinary farmers in the form of cheaper food and higher agricultural wages or tenant shares.²⁴

Just like their predecessors, the Leghari and Mazari chiefs of this period also re-organized their estates in collaboration with empire. Taking the place of the British Raj, however, was Pax Americana and its concept of progress, especially as articulated in the Green Revolution. In an interview, Jaffar Leghari, for instance, credited Pakistan's premier agricultural university, which at the time was influenced by the Green Revolution, for making him “learn modern agriculture.” He was also directly influenced by agricultural developments in America, specifically the farming techniques in California's Imperial Valley, a region he frequently visited to see his relatives.²⁵ He praised the Valley's productivity and the farming sector's intimate links to research centres like the University of California-Davis. In the 1960s, he even tried to convince (unsuccessfully) the Pakistani government to transfer state land on long-term leases to Californian agribusinesses—“just like the British had set up beautiful 400–500 acre farms here”—so that “we could learn the best agricultural practices.” Mazari chiefs were equally influenced by American imperialism. In 1962, Sherbaz Mazari was invited to America by the US State Department to participate in a “Leadership Exchange Program”—a programme essentially aimed at cultivating political allies for American imperialism in the context of the Cold War (S. K. Mazari, 1999, pp. 107–111). On his 3-month stay, the chief also attended a 6-week international management seminar at Harvard University, where he met the country's leading economists and businessmen in an effort to develop his economic acumen (one presumes to better manage his estates-turned-farms).

American imperialism also facilitated various chiefs turn to “progressive” capitalism in industry, not just agriculture. Take, for instance, the case of *sardar* Ashiq Mazari. Apart from his farming activities, he was also tasked with developing the industrial base of the country as chairman (1965–1969) of the state-led West Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (WPIDC). The WPIDC employed highly-paid American advisors on a “fat salary,” who purchased American-built factory plants at “exorbitant prices ... to please the American masters” (Special Branch, Punjab, 1971b). Ashiq Mazari also used his chairmanship to bolster his private industrial base, channeling WPIDC funds to his textile mill in Sadiqabad (Special Branch, Punjab, 1972).²⁶ From a Baloch tribal chief, Ashiq Mazari had “transformed himself into an extremely wealthy businessman” (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. 606). Because of his corrupt and nepotistic practices, the government eventually sacked him from his chairmanship and even withdrew a sugar mill concession (Mazari, 1999, p. 21). Instead, the Punjab government eventually awarded the concession to the Mazari *tumandar*, Balakh Sher Mazari, and the Leghari *tumandar*'s sister, who, together with another Baloch *tumandar*, established the Indus Sugar Mills, the biggest factory in the district today (Mazari, 1999, 21). Just like chiefs of the colonial period, who together engaged with the concept of property to establish joint-stock companies, chiefs of this period also collaborated with one another—this time to promote industrial capitalism.

The 1970s crisis to chiefly authority—a crisis generated by pressures “from above” (a populist PPP regime) and “from below” (left-led tenant movements for land)—led chiefs to engage with the concept of progress, derived in part through their interactions with American imperialism, and re-arrange their political-economic practices. Over the next decade, both Leghari and Mazari chiefs transformed their estates into capital-intensive “farms,” even extending their investment into industry. In doing so, they aimed to ground their authority, not only in landed property (as was done during the colonial period) but also in claims about the progressive and prosperity-generating possibilities of this property.

²³This per my interview with Mohsin Leghari, another Leghari chief.

²⁴To his credit, the Mazari chief Sherbaz Mazari did raise his tenants' share from one third to two thirds (S. K. Mazari, 1999, p. 18).

²⁵Per my interview with him.

²⁶See this reflection by an employee of the WPIDC under Ashiq Mazari, who speaks of the latter's tenure as “marred by malpractices and favoritism”: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/money-matters/643404-reviving-industry>

5 | CHIEFS AS CONTRACTORS, CIRCA 1990–2019

Though chiefs transitioned to capital-intensive agriculture to resolve a crisis of authority, this produced its own crises, already evident in the 1970s. Those tenants evicted and not re-absorbed as agri-labourers continued to protest, as did workers in landlord-controlled industries.²⁷ Combining with these pressures “from below” were pressures “from above,” as the transition to more capital-intensive farming led to a profitability crisis. As Mina Leghari, wife of Jaffar Leghari and currently in-charge of the family’s estate, told me: “by doing [capital-intensive] tenant-farming and self-cultivation, we were losing almost everything. A lot of money. We had no income from the land.” Different explanations were given for this poor profitability: while Jaffar Leghari blamed government export duties and inadequate agricultural expertise and technology in the country, the family’s estate manager criticized the agri-labourers, who were either too difficult to secure—many migrating to the Gulf in the 70s and 80s—or who he believed stole and worked lazily because “being Baloch, they [did not] like to work for someone else.” Whatever its causes, the crisis eventually led chiefs to revert to absentee landlordism, while re-investing their surplus in more lucrative non-agricultural projects. Yet this time, chiefs engaged with the concepts of contract and freedom, which were globally circulating at the time under “flexible” neoliberal imperialism (Harvey, 2003; Little & Watts, 1994). Chiefs contracted out most of their estates to small tenants, who they now re-categorized as “free” contract farmers in an effort to placate them and prevent another insurgency. Thus, through what I call the “contractor estate,” chiefs aimed to allay peasant pressures “from below” and profitability pressures “from above” and secure their hegemony.

Indeed, the question of hegemony was often explicitly on chiefs’ minds. Mina Leghari (2016), for instance, penned a PhD dissertation on the region’s “power politics,” which explores how chiefly families, the “traditional power centers,” can survive amidst various insurgent threats to their rule. Landlord Shireen Mazari (1987), Ashiq Mazari’s daughter, even explicitly deployed Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in her PhD on international regimes, especially since it enabled her to understand elite power. She writes:

while Lenin had developed this notion of hegemony in relation to the desirability of the working class achieving a broad alliance with the peasantry, Gramsci expands upon this notion in order to explain the manner in which a capitalist class gains and maintains power (S. Mazari, 1987, pp. 42–43)

Though her dissertation’s focus is neither on Pakistan nor landlords, she does at one point suggest that land reforms in countries like Pakistan eventually undermined the governments who implemented them, as it ostracized land-owners, creating “conflicts” and “crises” that meant governments were “unable to achieve hegemonic consensus domestically” (S. Mazari, 1987, p. 204). Thus, while Mina Leghari’s scholarly work was principally concerned with threats to chiefly hegemony “from below,” Shireen Mazari was mainly anxious about pressures “from above.” Their writings provide a glimpse into how chiefly families were intimately thinking about how to maintain the hegemony of their own class.

To appreciate how chiefs tried to secure their hegemony through this “contractor estate,” one must first understand its organization. Though chiefs continued to describe their estates as “farms,”²⁸ and often still called themselves “agriculturalists” or “farmers,” they had, at least since the 1990s, begun leasing out their land to tenants on 1-year contracts, with fixed cash-rents.²⁹ In doing so, chiefs embraced a concept of contract that was increasingly popular in agriculture across the global South during this period (Little & Watts, 1994), including in Punjab (Akhtar, 2006; Singh, 2002). On the Leghari estates, where the main crops are wheat and cotton, the contract

²⁷For instance, workers in Ashiq Mazari’s textile mills went on strike, criticizing him for “paying no heed to the problems of laborers” (Special Branch, Punjab, 1972).

²⁸For instance, “Razi Farm,” which is approximately 1500 acres and one amongst eight farms on Jaffar and Mina Leghari’s estate. Or “Hamza Farm,” named after Wali Mazari’s son.

²⁹Cash rents ranged anywhere from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 40,000/acre/year, depending on the land’s productivity. An exception was Jaffar and Mina Leghari, who collected cotton as rent—a fact they told me was pro-farmer, even though the rent was not a fluctuating share but fixed at 11 mound/acre/year.



FIGURE 4 A Leghari farm. The walled compound or “quarter” for the farm can be seen in the distance (Source: author).

was known as *muta*, and the contract farmer as *mutaydar*. In the Mazari area, where wheat and sugarcane are generally grown, the contract was called *mustajiri* and the contract farmer *mustajir*. Estates were effectively run by hired management, who made most decisions, including who to give contracts to, whether to renew contracts, and how to distribute canal irrigation water. Each chiefly estate typically had a finance manager and a general manager, while each particular “farm” on the estate had its own secretary and two or three other staff, who worked from a walled compound (“quarter”) located on the farm (Figure 4). Unlike the earlier tenants on the capitalist farms, contract farmers bore all the costs of production. Depending on the size of their landholdings and the availability of family labour, contract farmers also hired a range of agri-labour—from the *hatain*, hired for the season and paid one seventh of the crop, to female cotton pickers, paid daily on a piece-rate. Many contract farmers were either fellow tribesmen of the chiefs (albeit from non-chiefly clans) or from other Baloch tribes.³⁰

By contracting-out, chiefs could mitigate profitability pressures “from above,” as they now received a steady stream of surplus, which could then be re-invested elsewhere. Chiefs hardly ever visited their lands or their tenants, mostly interacting with only their managers who delivered them the rents. “I only deal with my general manager and finance manager,” Mina Leghari told me. “They have to give me money. The rest is their headache.” And the managers, per Mina Leghari, “delivered.” The Legharis then reinvested surplus extracted from contract farmers into projects more lucrative than agriculture, often real-estate. Jaffar and Mina Leghari were building apartments on the outskirts of the town of Choti (the Leghari stronghold), alongside reportedly investing in real-estate in Turkey.³¹ Likewise, for the landlord Wali Mazari, the fact that his manager took care of everything—sending Mazari bi-annual

³⁰Though there was generally no neat correspondence between tribe/clan and class—both contract farmers and agri-labourers came from various Baloch tribes/clans (or Punjabi castes)—there was a clear link between membership in the chiefly clan and ownership of landed estates. Most Baloch estate owners came from the chiefly Leghari clan (Aliani) and the chiefly Mazari clan (Balachani).

³¹Per my conversation with a local journalist close to the Leghari family.

cheques—allowed him, not only to speculate in Vancouver's lucrative real-estate market but even spend most of the year in the city, where he also collected rare wines. Contracting-out agriculture also enabled chiefly families to spend their time on politics, as many were sitting parliamentarians and cabinet members.³² Because it permitted chiefs to re-invest in more lucrative projects and participate in parliamentary politics in the capital, contracting-out their estates was, as Mina Leghari summed up, “just common sense.”

Yet the “contractor estate” was also common sense for another reason: it aimed to allay pressures “from below,” specifically the prospect of another tenant insurgency, which chiefs were concerned about given the region's history. Various stringent, even coercive, aspects of the contract itself enabled this undercutting. The contract's short-term nature, for instance, made it easier, per Jaffar Leghari, “to remove the bad, dangerous tenants” while on the Mazari estate, the “permit/passbook system”³³ prevented tenants from engaging in rent-strikes, as they only received their earnings after depositing their crops with the chiefs. But most basically, contracting-out the estates aimed to secure chiefly hegemony by soliciting tenant consent, or at least compliance. Mina Leghari (2016, p. 272) alludes to this in her dissertation, arguing that, if chiefly families like hers wish to remain in power, they must engineer a “balanced power diffusion and logical social control.” Though she does not give concrete examples, the “contractor estate” enacted precisely this combination of downward diffusion and upward social control, as it gave farmers a feeling (or at least tried to) of various freedoms, while also upholding landed wealth and power.

One of those freedoms was the freedom to control the production process. Chiefs framed the contract as offering this freedom to farmers. Jaffar Leghari, for instance, told me the contract was advantageous to farmers because “they can grow whatever crops they want. Leave whenever they want.” Another Leghari landlord added that under contract, farmers now had “the freedom to decide not only what crop to grow, but when and how.” Like workers involved in other forms of “flexible” work (De Neve, 2014; Millar, 2014; Sopranzetti, 2017), many contract farmers also believed they had more autonomy. Some told me that, even if they did not possess the land, at least they had more control over their work than a labourer or tenant under the previous “progressive” farming regime, where chiefs more intimately directed and surveilled production.

Another freedom was the freedom to own and dispose of the crop. To furnish this feeling of ownership amongst farmers, chiefs, specifically those on the Leghari estates, re-introduced certain class categories in the contractual arrangement. Specifically, many chiefs replaced the language of *muzaygiri* (tenancy) and *muzayray* (tenants) with that of *mutaydari* (contracting) and *mutaydar*, terms that evoked certain property rights. We can appreciate this by looking at the genealogy of these terms. In the 19th century, before the first regular settlement, the *mutaydar* was someone who acquired a fixed lease (*muta*) from the government over the district's date trees (Fryer, 1876, p. 154). The district's dates and date trees were the property of the government, irrespective of whose land these trees stood, but in exchange for a fixed annual sum paid to the government, a *mutaydar* could become a lessee to the trees and acquire property rights over the dates themselves. Yet because of how it complicated land revenue assessment, this system was revised after the first regular settlement in 1874, such that the government now considered detached date trees as the property of landowners, while landowners were also given preference in acquiring the government leases (*mutas*) for the attached date trees on their land (Fryer, 1876, p. 155). By the second settlement in the 1920s, however, the *muta* had simply come to mean a fixed cash-lease on land, though it represented only a very small percentage of the land contracts at the time.³⁴ Yet when I conducted fieldwork in 2017–2019, the *muta* was the main form of contract that Leghari chiefs used to lease out their land. Chiefs had reintroduced an older class category and

³²Jaffar Leghari, for instance, is a long-time Member of the National Assembly (MNA), while Wali Mazari's sister, Shireen Mazari, sat on Imran Khan's cabinet (2018–2022).

³³Under this system, farmers had to first deposit their sugarcane crop into Mazari's “account” with the nearby sugar-mill. Only once chiefs received the payment for this deposit from the mill owners and deducted the rent from it did farmers then get paid. What prevented farmers from selling their crop directly to the mill owners were permits or passbooks. Only Mazari chiefly landlords like Wali and Shireen Mazari had the permits to sell to the sugar-mills. This landlord-capitalist arrangement was mutually beneficial to both: for capitalist mill-owners, it secured a supply of sugarcane and inhibited competition amongst buyers that could drive prices upwards; for landlords, it stifled the possibility of farmers' rent-strikes of the sort witnessed in the 1970s.

³⁴For instance, in land falling under the Dera Ghazi Khan *tehsil*, only 2% of land was leased on *muta* contracts and that mostly by Hindus who, as the main money-lenders in the district, presumably preferred cash leases over crop-leases (Wilson, 1926, p. 9).

contractual arrangement, one which carried the connotation that contract farmers had property rights over the crop. Per my conversations with them, tenants often felt this ownership.

Finally, another freedom was the freedom to prosper. Chiefs presented the contract as giving farmers the opportunity for upward mobility, precisely because it gave the latter the autonomy to control production and ownership of the crop. Though most contract farmers were small farmers renting between 5 and 25 acres,³⁵ a rare few did lease over 100 acres. For instance, I met one farmer who leased 150 acres from two Leghari chiefs, one of whom was Jaffar Leghari. He explained his accumulation of rental land, which he also acknowledged was rare, because of his higher education, business acumen and the flexibility and autonomy afforded by the contract. The rare farmer who accumulated land to become a capitalist tenant thus affirmed the chiefs' claims about the contract, giving other farmers the hope that they too could prosper.

Chiefs thus framed the contract as delivering various freedoms to farmers—to control the production process, to own and dispose of the crop, and to accumulate and prosper. By embracing these related concepts of contract and freedom, and by establishing the “contractor estate,” chiefs tried to placate peasants and prevent another insurgency. In essence, the contract attempted to allay peasants by accommodating widely held Baloch aspirations for autonomy, property, and progress. Whereas the desire for autonomy was arguably linked to tribesmen's pastoral past, the aspiration for property and “capitalist” progress was emboldened over the 19th and 20th centuries. Chiefly practices, both conceptual and political-economic, had shaped aspirations of ordinary tribesmen, aspirations chiefs now sought to accommodate through the “contractor estate.” Like elites elsewhere (cf. Sopranzetti, 2017), chiefs tried to channel whatever experiences of freedom the contract did give to farmers to sustain their authority. Moreover, chiefs also resolved their profitability crisis through the “contractor estate,” as rents could now be re-invested in more lucrative (and often speculative) projects. Through alleviating these combined pressures “from above” and “from below,” chiefs ultimately sought to secure their hegemony.

6 | CONCLUSION

Recently, we have seen a concerted defense of epistemologies emanating from outside the West, what anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (2016) label “theory from the South.” Some, like the Comaroff (2016) themselves, defend southern epistemologies for their explanatory potential, on the assumption that the global South, in prefiguring dynamics in the global North, is now the vanguard for theory on the latter. But others also embrace these epistemologies for their politically emancipatory possibilities. Sociologist Raewyn Connell (2007, p. vii) suggests that southern theory can “serve democratic purposes on a world scale,” in part because it is not as affected by the hegemony of neoliberal market logic as metropolitan theory. Meanwhile, decoloniality scholars assert the decolonial possibilities of “foreground[ing] different kinds of theoretical actors” in frontier regions of the global South (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 206; see also Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Against these positions, the chiefly landlords centred in this paper show how theory from the South might also sustain, rather than interrupt, colonial-fortified elite hegemonies. Their practices lend further credence to Frantz Fanon's (2004, p. 102) claim that, even after decolonization, the landed elites simply “[sink] deeper and deeper into the ruts established by colonialism.”

In this paper, I specifically explored how, from the 19th century to more recently, the Baloch chiefs of the Punjab Frontier engaged with various imperial concepts to re-arrange their relations to land and people and sustain their hegemony. I focused on the concepts of property, race, progress, contract, and freedom. Chiefs' engagement with these concepts, and the political-economic transformations generated thereof, were spurred by various pressures they faced. This included pressures “from above”—namely, the British Raj, the populist PPP regime, and market profitability—and “from below,” including tribesmen's livelihood grievances, left-led tenant demands for land, and

³⁵This per my conversation with various estate farm managers, secretaries, and contract farmers.

later Baloch aspirations for autonomy, property and progress. Through their practices on the terrain of both political-economy and theory, chiefs ultimately aimed to mitigate these combined pressures and secure their hegemony.

As always, this hegemony was hardly a *fait accompli*. During my fieldwork (which happened to coincide with Pakistan's 2018 national elections), an incident occurred that exposed cracks to chiefly hegemony. As part of his election campaign, Jamal Khan Leghari, the current Leghari *tumandar*, visited one of his constituencies in the Sulaiman hills. Upon his arrival, he was confronted by a group of his tribesmen, who lambasted the *tumandar* for neglecting to develop his constituency, recording the encounter on their cell phones. The young man who led the charge became an overnight celebrity, in part because he encapsulated a brewing disaffection with the chiefs. Over the preceding few years, contract farmers on both the Leghari and Mazari estates have increasingly experienced the contract, less as a form of freedom and more as a subordination to the vagaries of capital—what we might also call a formal subsumption to capital.³⁶ In 2010, for instance, Jaffar and Mina Leghari dispossessed hundreds of contract farming families when they leased out 500 acres of their estate to a Pakistani-owned agricultural conglomerate, which agreed to pay higher rents. After only 2–3 years, the company, facing the same profitability crisis the Legharis themselves faced decades earlier when they “self-cultivated,” packed up and left. Likewise, on the Mazari estates, contract farmers are angered at their incremental dispossession, as the Mazaris lease more and more of their estate to nearby sugar mills, who pay higher rents and engage in capital-intensive, labour-displacing farming. Those farmers lucky enough to hold onto their land are increasingly suffocated by the restrictions of the permits/passbooks system, with many demanding its abolition.

How these brewing critiques “from below” will unfold, and whether pressures “from above” will emerge to produce another crisis to chiefly authority, remains an open question. Yet if the past is anything to go by, unravelling their authority will be no easy task, as chiefs are likely to engage other concepts and re-arrange political-economic relations to sustain a hegemony consolidated over the years in interaction with empire.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For feedback on earlier drafts, I thank Noaman Ali, Geoffrey Aung, Amiel Bize, Jan Breman, Stephen Campbell, Frank Cody, Erdem Evren, Shae Frydenlund, Cameron Hu, Hadia Akhtar Khan, Paul Kohlbry, Chris Krupa, Tania Li, China Sajadian, Kasim Tirmizey, and the journal's editors and anonymous reviewers. For financial support, I thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the International Development Research Centre, and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship and Jackman Humanities Institute at the University of Toronto.

ORCID

Shozab Raza  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5747-0837>

REFERENCES

- Akhtar, A. S. (2006). The state as landlord in Pakistani Punjab: Peasant struggles on the Okara military farms. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 33(3), 479–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150601063058>
- Alam, I. (1974). Bura hal hoya Punjab da. *Circular*, (56), 8.
- Alam, I. (1975). Report: Dusri Punjab council. *Circular*, (62), 5–7.
- Alavi, H. (1973). Elite farmer strategy and regional disparities in the agricultural development of Pakistan. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 8(13), A31–A39.
- Ali, I. (1988). *The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885–1947*. Princeton University Press. [10.1515/9781400859580](https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400859580)
- Ali, T. (1970). *Pakistan: Military rule or people's power?* Cape.
- Baden-Powell, B. (1892). *The land-systems of British India* (Vol. 2). Clarendon Press.
- Bernstein, H. (2006). Is there an agrarian question in the 21st century? *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 26(4), 449–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2006.9669166>
- Bhandar, B. (2018). *Colonial lives of property: Law, land, and racial regimes of ownership*. Duke University Press. [10.1215/9780822371571](https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822371571)

³⁶For a thorough exposition of Karl Marx's concept of “formal subsumption,” see Harootunian (2015).

- Bhattacharya, N. (2019). *The great agrarian conquest: The colonial reshaping of a rural world*. SUNY Press.
- Breseeg, T. M. (2001). Baloch nationalism: Its origin and development up to 1980 (PhD Thesis). School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, London, UK.
- Buhar, M. (1976). Choti ke kisano ki jidd-o-jahd. *Circular*, (73), 10.
- Census Organisation. (1972). *District census report: Dera Ghazi Khan*. Government of Pakistan.
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (2016). *Theory from the south: Or, how euro-America is evolving toward Africa*. Routledge.
- Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Allen & Unwin. [10.22459/AHR.44.2008.04](https://doi.org/10.22459/AHR.44.2008.04)
- Conran, W. L., & Craik, H. D. (1910). *Chiefs and families of note in the Punjab: A revised edition of "The Punjab chiefs" by Sir Lepel H. Griffin and of "chiefs and families of note in the Punjab" by Charles Francis Massy (Vol. 2)*. Civil and Military Gazette Press.
- Dames, M. L. (1904). *The Baloch race: A historical and ethnographic sketch*. Royal Asiatic Society.
- Darling, M. (1978). *The Punjab peasant in prosperity and debt*. South Asia Books.
- De Neve, G. (2014). Fordism, flexible specialization and CSR: How Indian garment workers critique neoliberal labour regimes. *Ethnography*, 15(2), 184–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138112463801>
- Diack, A. H. (1898). *Final report on the revision of settlement (1893–97), Dera Ghazi Khan District*. The "Civil and military gazette" press.
- Douie, J. (1916). *The Panjab, North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.). Grove Press.
- Filippini, M. (2017). *Using Gramsci: A new approach*. Pluto press. [10.26530/OAPEN_625289](https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_625289)
- Fryer, F. W. R. (1876). *Final report of the first regular settlement of the Dera Ghazi Khan District, 1869 to 1874*. Central Jail Press.
- Gilmartin, D. (2015). *Blood and water: The Indus River Basin in modern history*. University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520285293.001.0001>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). In Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith (Eds.), *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Gramsci, A. (1978). Some aspects of the southern question. In Q. Hoare (Ed.), *Selections from political writings (1921–1926)* (pp. 441–462). Lawrence and Wishart.
- Harootunian, H. (2015). *Marx after Marx: History and time in the expansion of capitalism*. Columbia University Press. [10.7312/haro17480](https://doi.org/10.7312/haro17480)
- Harrison, F. V. (2016). Theorizing in ex-centric sites. *Anthropological Theory*, 16(2–3), 160–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499616652516>
- Harriss, J. (1987). Capitalism and peasant production: The green revolution in India. In T. Shanin (Ed.), *Peasants and peasant societies: Selected readings* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Pub.
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. Oxford University Press. [10.1093/oso/9780199264315.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199264315.001.0001)
- Harvey, D. (2007). *The limits to capital* (1st ed.). Verso.
- Hassan, M. (1976). Dera Ghazi Khan ke karkun aur awami jidd-o-jahd. In *Pakistan ke jali hukumran tabqay*. Classic Books.
- Herring, R. J. (1979). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the "eradication of feudalism" in Pakistan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 21(4), 519–557. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500013165>
- Jan, M. A. (2019). The complexity of exchange: Wheat markets, petty-commodity producers and the emergence of commercial capital in colonial Punjab. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 19(2), 225–248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12302>
- Javid, H. (2011). Class, power, and patronage: Landowners and politics in Punjab. *History and Anthropology*, 22(3), 337–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2011.595006>
- King, C. M. (1926). Memorandum No. 537-R. In W. R. Wilson (Ed.), *Final report of the second revised settlement (1916–1920) of the Dera Ghazi Khan district*. Government Printing Punjab.
- Leghari, I. (1979). The socialist movement in Pakistan: An historical survey, 1940–1974 (PhD Thesis). Université Laval.
- Leghari, I. (1995). My experiences in British India and Pakistan. Unpublished Memoir.
- Leghari, M. (2016). *Power politics in southern Punjab*. Har-Anand Publications.
- Little, P. D., & Watts, M. J. (Eds.) (1994). *Living under contract: Contract farming and agrarian transformation in sub-Saharan Africa*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Martin, N. (2016). *Politics, landlords and Islam in Pakistan*. Routledge.
- Massy, C. F. (1890). *Chiefs and families of note in the Delhi, Jalandhar, Peshawar and Derajat divisions of the Punjab*. Pioneer Press.
- Mazari, S. (1987). International regimes and concepts of hegemony: A comparative case study of the international trade and nonproliferation regimes (PhD Thesis). Columbia University.
- Mazari, S. K. (1999). *A journey to disillusionment*. Oxford University Press.
- Meyer, W. S. (1908). *Imperial gazetteer of India* (Vol. 11). Oxford Clarendon Press.

- Mignolo, W. D., & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the borders: Shifting to geo- and body-politics of knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>
- Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On Decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Duke University Press. 10.1215/9780822371779
- Millar, K. M. (2014). The precarious present: Wageless labor and disrupted life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Cultural Anthropology*, 29(1), 32–53. <https://doi.org/10.14506/cuan29.1.04>
- Minchin, C. (1869). *Memorandum on the Beloch tribes in Dera Ghazi Khan District*. Punjab Printing Press.
- Muhammad, I. (1972a). *Manshur*. Mazdoor Kisan Party.
- Muhammad, I. (1972b). Pakistan ke tarik-tarin alaqa Punjab main hain. *Circular*, (38), 3–6.
- Niazi, T. (2004). Rural poverty and the green revolution: The lessons from Pakistan. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 31(2), 242–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0306615042000224294>
- Patel, R. (2013). The long green revolution. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 1–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2012.719224>
- Pollock, F. R. (1860). *Memorandum on the Dehra Ghazee Khan district*. Hope Press.
- Raza, S. (2022). The sufi and the sickle: Theorizing mystical Marxism in rural Pakistan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 64(2), 300–334. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417522000068>
- Rizvi, M. (2017). The moral ecology of colonial infrastructure and the vicissitudes of land rights in rural Pakistan. *History and Anthropology*, 28(3), 308–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2016.1253566>
- Rouse, S. (1983). Systematic injustices and inequalities: “Maalik” and “Raiya” in a Punjab village. In H. Gardezi & J. Rashid (Eds.), *Pakistan: The unstable state* (pp. 257–273). Vanguard Books.
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.
- Shahid, (1976). Markazi sadr ka dora Punjab. *Circular*, (73), 5–6.
- Singh, S. (2002). Contracting out solutions: Political economy of contract farming in the Indian Punjab. *World Development*, 30(9), 1621–1638. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(02\)00059-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(02)00059-1)
- Sopranzetti, C. (2017). Framed by freedom: Emancipation and oppression in post-Fordist Thailand. *Cultural Anthropology*, 32(1), 68–92. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.1.07>
- Special Branch, Punjab. (1971a). The fortnightly police abstract of intelligence, Punjab: For the 2nd half of May 1971. Abstract of Intelligence. Library of the Special Branch Punjab (No. 10065–138/GSB). Retrieved from Library of the Special Branch Punjab.
- Special Branch, Punjab. (1971b). Daily situation report: August 31st, 1971. Library of the Special Branch Punjab (Secret No. 242). Retrieved from Library of the Special Branch Punjab.
- Special Branch, Punjab. (1972). Daily situation report: April 7th 1972. Library of the Special Branch Punjab (Secret No. 84). Retrieved from Library of the Special Branch Punjab.
- Special Branch, Punjab. (1976). Daily situation report: March 9th 1976. Library of the Special Branch Punjab (Secret No. 59). Retrieved from Library of the Special Branch Punjab.
- Special Branch, West Pakistan. (1970a). Daily situation report: November 1, 1970. Library of the Special Branch Punjab (Secret No. 113). Retrieved from Library of the Special Branch Punjab.
- Special Branch, West Pakistan. (1970b). Daily situation report: November 30, 1970. Library of the Special Branch Punjab (Secret No. 142). Retrieved from Library of the Special Branch Punjab.
- Stokes, E. (1959). *The English Utilitarians and India*. Clarendon Press.
- Talbot, I. (2007). The Punjab under colonialism: Order and transformation in British India. *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 14(1), 3–10.
- Thomas, P. D. (2009). *The Gramscian moment: Philosophy, hegemony and Marxism*. Brill. 10.1163/ej.9789004167711.i-478
- Unknown. (1975). Jagirdar-Police Gathjor. *Circular*, (62), 16.
- Unknown. (1979). Sonmiani ki tahqiqati report. *Circular*, (94), 24.
- Wilson, W. R. (1926). *Final report of the second revised settlement (1916–1920) of the Dera Ghazi Khan District*. Government Printing Punjab.

How to cite this article: Raza, S. (2023). (Landlord) Theory from the South: Empire and estates on a Punjabi Frontier. *J Agrar Change*, 23(2), 266–285. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12503>