A ‘Good Qaṣba:’ Chamkanī and the Confluence of Politics, Economy and Religion in Durrānī Peshawar, 1747–1834

Timur Khan
PhD candidate, Leiden University Institute for History
timur.khan8@gmail.com

Abstract

Between 1747 and 1834, Durrānī Afghan rulers built webs of alliance to political, economic, and religious elites in Peshawar. The village of Chamkanī serves as a useful case study of these networks. Chamkanī housed an influential Indian merchant family, Afghan landed nobility, and a powerful Sufi lineage. Reflecting the fundamental tension between the Durrānī ideal of universal sovereignty and the reality of diffuse power, these groups both cooperated and clashed with royal authority, and maintained ties between themselves. Ultimately, the most durable legacies of Durrānī rule were left by these local elites.

Keywords

Durrānī – Peshawar – Chamkanī – Afghan – empire

Introduction

Central and South Asia’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history has undergone a major shift in representation since the 1990s. Formerly characterized as an era defined by imperial decline, economic stagnation and isolation, and the inexorable conquests of the British East India Company, revisionist scholars have since attempted to emphasize the political, cultural, and economic vitality...
of the Central Asian khanates and the Mughal successor states. However, the Durrânî dynasty has found itself oft left behind. Rather than integrated political actors in their own right, C.A. Bayly conceived of the Durrânîs as part of a phenomenon he termed “tribal breakout.” In this formulation, the Durrânîs were described primarily as an outpouring of temporarily mobilized energy by a peripheral people. Their “breakout” was an explanatory factor, accounting for the weakening of established empires, in this case that of the Mughals, and the eventual dominance of the British.

Authors like Jos Gommans and Christine Noelle-Karimi, or A.M.K. Durrani in Pakistan, have been engaging with the Durrânîs as primary agents rather than external phenomena since the 1980s and 90s, and the study of the Durrânî empire on its own terms is still being developed. A relatively robust body of work has emerged on the dynasty itself, ranging from the history of the Abdâlî-Durrânî confederacy prior to 1747 to the ideologies of Durrânî chronicles. Other studies have examined broader dynamics such as the recruitment of Iranians into the central bureaucracy, economic trends and transformations, slavery, or the circulation and characteristics of literature within the empire.

Studies of Durrani rule east of the Indus River have also been developing, especially in recent years. This recent research has demonstrated that the Durrânîs were not an ephemeral or isolated presence in the region. Naveena Naqvi’s doctoral dissertation examines many facets of the history of Afghans in

---


northern India, including links between the Durrānī court and Delhi.6 Jagjeet Lally explicitly counters the “tribal breakout” concept. He argues that the Durrānīs meaningfully engaged with the political and economic life of Multan.7 Waleed Ziad, similarly maintaining that Durrānī rule was not merely “ephemeral,” has fleshed out the religious and intellectual history of the Durrānī world, including the city and wider region of Peshawar, the focus of this article.8 A recent article by Neelam Khoja briefly discusses Durrānī Peshawar, focusing particularly on a building project supposedly launched there by Ahmad Shāh according to his court chronicle, the Ṭārīḵ-i Aḥmad Shāhī (c.1772).9

Pakistani scholarship in English has also produced works on Durrānī Peshawar, largely in the last decade. Two of Razia Sultana’s articles discuss Peshawar’s importance under the Sadōzays and Bārkazays respectively.10 A recent article by Altaf Qadir and Fatima Asghar provides some discussion of Durrānī administration in Peshawar, and the former of these authors has also produced an important volume on the ideologies and activities of the religious-military leader sayyid Aḥmad of Raebareli (d. 1831), who clashed with the Bārkazay rulers in the 1820s and 30s.11 These recent contributions are important steps in fleshing out the history of Durrānī Peshawar, but the articles especially are brief relative to the potential scope of the topic, and Qadir’s volume deals mainly with final eight to ten years of Durrānī rule.

I propose a different approach to this recent literature on Durrānī Peshawar. Qadir and Sultana generally view Durrānī rule from the perspective of the imperial state, its systems and interests. As her article is primarily concerned with analyzing a court chronicle, Khoja focuses on and repeats the assertions

---
6 N. Naqvi, “Writing the Inter-Imperial World in Afghan North India ca. 1774–1857” (PhD diss., University of California, 2018): see ch. 2 section 11 for the role of a Rohilla Afghan from Rampur in mediating between Mughal Delhi and the Durrānī court.
of the chronicler Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī concerning infrastructure at Peshawar, naturally replicating a top-level view of Peshawar’s Durrānī history. Ziad focuses on non-imperial actors, namely Sufis of the Naqshbandī order, and their creation of a parallel sovereignty alongside that of the Durrānī rulers. However, his work largely highlights the creation of this parallel superstructure as a result of cooperation with Durrānī rulers, in the context of “urban revival” owing to Durrānī investments and the place of Peshawar and Kabul as “bolstering Afghan imperial capitals.” His wider view of the Naqshbandīs is also as a “trans-regional” network, an entirely valid perspective but one which leaves room for more localized studies.\footnote{Ziad, “Hażrat”: 120, 134, “Transporting”: 105, and “Traversing the Indus and the Oxus: Trans-regional Islamic Revival in the Age of Political Fragmentation and the ‘Great Game’ 1747–1880” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2017): 15–18.} I argue that a regional study of Durrānī Peshawar should focus more on relations between imperial and local-level powerbrokers, in terms of conflict as well as alliance.

The ebb and flow of cooperation and conflict reflects a fundamental tension of the Durrānī empire: between the ideal of universal rule and the reality of highly diffuse, localized political power on the ground. As André Wink argues, the idea of universal sovereignty “postulates state-monopoly of land, a despotic king as the guardian of order, and the absence of the territorial nobility,” and claims to transcend the politics of varied and ever-shifting alliances.\footnote{A. Wink, “Land and Sovereignty in India under the Eighteenth-century Maratha Svarājya” (PhD Diss., Leiden University, 1984): ix, 15–24. Wink refers to these shifts in alliance as \textit{fitna} (literally, ‘sedition’).} In reality, empires of the era depended on local powerbrokers.

This tension is a useful prism through which to read the history of Durrānī Peshawar, allowing us to examine its local and imperial dimensions in dialogue with one another. By focusing on these dynamics, I believe that we can develop our understanding of the Durrānīs as more than a transitory force in early modern history. In this article, I argue that it is primarily (but not exclusively) the local elites based in Peshawar, rather than the rulers themselves, who left legacies that lasted beyond the period of Durrānī rule. An excellent case study through which to examine these dynamics is the town of Chamkani/Tsamkani, where various imperial and local networks of power converged.\footnote{Ziad similarly argues that the trans-regional institutions built up by Sufi orders were more resilient and lasting than military-state structures, see “Traversing”: 16. Once again, I aim to look more towards the local, rather than the trans-regional, and open the topic to non-Sufi powerbrokers. Since it is a widely-used spelling and transliteration in today’s Pakistan, I will adhere to the Persianized form ‘Chamkanî,’ rather than the formal Pakhtu ‘Tsamkani’ or the local vernacular ‘Tsawkanay/Sawkanay.’}
Durrānī Economic Policies at Peshawar: Canals, Merchants and Moneylenders

Chamkanī lies around six miles east of the walled city of Peshawar. H.G. Raverty, writing three years after the British annexation of Peshawar in 1849, includes it in the tappa (or district) called khāliṣa, which would place it within crown lands, but Munshī Gōpal Dās' meticulous 1870s survey of Peshawar places it in the Mohmand tappa. Both are in agreement that the political chiefs or mālikās of the village are Mohmand Afghans. The village was likely founded by the Chamkanī/Tsamkanī tribe of Afghans. As these were cousins of the Khalīl and Mohmand tribes within the wider Ghōriya Khel confederation, they entered the region no earlier than the early sixteenth century. According to Dās, this "good town" (acchā qaṣba), was founded a second time "from scratch" (az sar-i nau) by Ḥājjī Daryā Khān, at an unspecified date. Unlike its unsure origins around the early Mughal era, there is much to say about Durrānī-era Chamkanī. It served as a focal point for a web of relationships, ever shifting from conflict to cooperation, between the Durrānīs and local military, economic, and religious elites.

As Gommans argues, the Durrānī empire’s economy took advantage of both nomadic, raiding-based and sedentary, agricultural revenues. Campaigns in India were essential sources of wealth, and mobile Afghan-Pakhtun trading communities functioned as “the everyday conductors of the commercial relationships among Kabul, Peshawar, and Qandahar,” on behalf of various patrons including Durrānī elites and officers.

In the case of Chamkanī, however, we have a clearer picture of how its prosperity related to the sedentary economic dynamics of Durrānī rule. Taxes were, in principle, subject to a large, detailed system of classification and calculation overseen by state officers and taking into account local conditions. In practice, however, a wide variety of local elites were exempt from, or otherwise avoided,

16 Dās, Tārīkh, 178.
taxation. In the period 1793–94, Peshawar paid 2.95 lakh rupees, out of an overall tax base of 11.91 lakh, to the king: only 24.7 percent.\(^\text{19}\) As we will see more closely in section four, populous Chamkanī’s revenues were largely or wholly allotted to the family of the influential Sufi, Shaykh Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar (d. c.1776/77).

Infrastructure may have been technically under royal jurisdiction, but its development was highly dependent on local elites. It is telling that in and around Peshawar, by far the best-known Durrānī-era garden, the Wazīr Bāgh, was built not by a Sadōzay king but by the powerful Bārzay wazīr Fath Khān (d. 1818).\(^\text{20}\) Durrānī khāns bought uncultivated lands or “wilderness” (zamīn-i virāna) to establish settlements, especially in the khāliša tappa. One Sadōzay, Zardād Khān, settled in Peshawar during Timūr Shāh’s reign. He exchanged his Qandahar jāgīrs for several villages in the Dāūdzay tappa, gardens, and the “qaṣba of Bagrām.” The primary monument to his presence was a canal that irrigated his possessions.\(^\text{21}\) To this day a village, Dherī Zardād, and distributary bear his name.

Peshawar was bustling under this arrangement: Lieutenant Irwin, a member of Mountstuart Elphinstone’s 1809 mission to Peshawar, remarked that “no space of the same extent in the Cabul dominions is equally cultivated,” and commented on its fine maize and rice as well as considerable imports and exports in grain.\(^\text{22}\) Agriculture was not the sole basis of the economy either. Kohat, south of Peshawar, possessed a number of salt mines taken over in the late 1820s by the sardār Pīr Muḥammad Khān Bārzay.\(^\text{23}\) Pīr Muḥammad’s brother Yār Muḥammad (d. 1829) sunk a well near the Kohat gate of Peshawar city, the so-called chāh-i sardār (sardār’s well).\(^\text{24}\)

---


21 Dās, Tārīkh: 435–37, 698.


The gap between the universal ideal of royal power and the diffuse reality in which locals often played a greater role is evident in the sources as well. According to Aḥmad Shāh’s main chronicle, the Tārīkh-i Aḥmad Shāhī, the shāh planned a large-scale building project in Peshawar around 1752–3. ‘Azīz al-Dīn Wakil Fūfalzay refers to this as project as the creation of “the city of Aḥmadshāhī in Peshawar,” suggesting that Aḥmad Shāh planned to build a new settlement in the area. This would have been a powerful statement of sovereignty in parallel to the creation of his capital city, Aḥmadshāhī, at Qandahar.25 A significant component of this plan was to erect a caravanserai and a “splendorous market” (bāzār-dil-kushāi-yi rawnaq agīn).26

Fūfalzay and Khoja write as if the entire building plan was completed, but this merits scrutiny. I know of no other references to an Aḥmadshāhī in Peshawar, and its description appears more aspirational than factual. Indeed as Khoja illustrates, the relevant passage of the chronicle serves a clear rhetorical purpose. Aḥmad Shāh creating a thriving new space provides a human parallel with descriptions of his miraculous power to make nature bloom with his very presence. As he brings harmony and peace to plants and animals, so too does he improve the lot of his subjects.27 Aḥmad Shāh left Peshawar in 1753 and apparently left Timūr Shāh with the title of nāʾīb al-saltana and control over the construction projects, but how much he could accomplish is unclear—especially since the Marathas may have overrun Peshawar in 1758.28

Other details are difficult to corroborate. The mention of new homes, including for state officials, is somewhat better supported in Fūfalzay’s work by a specific reference to munshī bāshī (royal secretary) ‘Abd al-Hādī building one.29 British colonial sources also picked up on the idea of the Durrānī period being one in which Afghan nobles settled and built many homes.30 This does

27 See analysis of this passage and comparison with similar passages in Khoja, “Competing”: 272–4.
28 Fūfalzay, Ahmad Shāh: vol. 1, 262. The extent of the Maratha advance has been the subject of debate, but their taking of Peshawar is taken seriously by some, see e.g. Om Prakash, ed., Marathas and Ahmad Shah Abdali (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2002): 85–7.
29 Fūfalzay, Ahmad Shāh: vol. 1: 262–3.
30 See e.g. Government of the Punjab, Gazetteer of the Peshawar District, 1897–8 (Lahore: no publisher, 1898): 63. This idea probably owed something to Elphinstone’s report of “splendid palaces” of nobles at Peshawar, see M. Elphinstone, An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul (London: John Murray, 1815): 56. For an example of a yet more positive depiction,
not mean that they did so as a result of the new ‘city of Aḥmadshāhi’ being built. Rather, it indicates that Durrānī elites had a proactive role in settling in the region and transforming its landscape.

Aḥmad Shāh is supposed to have ordered a magnificent mosque (masjidi-yi ‘āli-shāh) built. From the seventeenth to nineteenth century, however, it appears that the only major mosque in Peshawar was that of Mahābat Khan; this remains the primary Friday mosque in the city today. Gōpal Dās lists five major mosques in a table of holy sites in Peshawar, none of which is dated to the Durrānīs.31 al-Ḥusaynī, the chief author of Aḥmad Shāh’s glittering universal imperial image, would have us believe that the king built a range of glorious buildings to provide for his subjects. His account belies the fact that local actors had a greater impact on Peshawar’s infrastructure than the supposedly universal sovereign.

That is not to say that the shāhs had no role. Timūr Shāh undertook perhaps the most important royal infrastructure project in the Peshawar valley, including Chamkanī, when he built a major new canal around the 1780s. It was a new cut to an existing canal connected to the Kabul River. Timūr Shāh’s new Royal Canal (nahr-i shāhī) brought water towards Chamkanī and its environs. Presumably it was further cut into, locally and at a later date, to support Chamkanī itself, which was watered by at least one walled canal by the British period.32 Given the location of Chamkanī either in or on the fringe of the khāliṣa, any extension of irrigation in its direction may have implied an increase in revenue for the crown, though as discussed, taxes were often collected by non-state parties. Revenues also accrued in the form of canal


For Chamkanī, see Dās, Tārikh: 179. Whereas Dās mentions a single walled canal, Raverty describes two “rivulets,” see Raverty, “Account”: 29.
maintenance fees and usage taxes, which in these fertile areas were unlikely to be at reduced rates.\textsuperscript{33}

Mirzā Mughal Beg further mentions that the canal, along with another that diverted water from the Bāra River, was under the jurisdiction of an officer (darūgha), indicating the integration of water control into the apparatus of royal government.\textsuperscript{34} The nahr-i shāhī is a clear case of Timūr Shāh intervening in the province’s water supply and agriculture. Its nomenclature enforces the message that the shāh and his sovereignty were an integral part of the local geography and economy: a process of “attempting to metamorphose the rule of arms into the legitimacy of a state.”\textsuperscript{35}

Even this self-styled ‘royal’ project very likely involved coopting local powerholders into state offices, given Mughal and Durrānī precedent. During Awrangzēb’s reign (1659–1707), a major canal was overseen by a local Mohmand lord, Muḥībb Khān. Indeed the Mughals “elevated and entrenched” leaders in the heavily irrigated zones “to maximize revenues from rich lands.”\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, under Aḥmad Shāh one Zain Khān Mohmand was given twelve villages “in consideration of [his tribe’s] command of the dams which turn the water of the Kábul river into the irrigation cuts of Khalīl, Daudzai and Khālsa.”\textsuperscript{37}

Imperial policies, Mughal and Durrānī, reflect just how significant water was to the political and economic life of Peshawar. The 1897–8 colonial district gazetteer for Peshawar states that “rights in water assume almost as great importance in Peshawar as do the rights in land,” owing to the depth of the water table, which made wells difficult to use.\textsuperscript{38} Questions of water access could lead to violent confrontation. In the 1830s, the Sikh-employed French officer M.A. Court remarked that the Khalīl and Mohmand tribes frequently came to blows over water access, a pattern also noticed by Elphinstone in 1809.\textsuperscript{39} Timūr Shāh’s intervention in matters of canal-building was thus a potent expression of legitimate power not just over resources and land, but as a means of arbitrating local conflicts.

\textsuperscript{33} Gankovsky, “The Durrani Empire”: 78–9: unirrigated lands, or newly built settlements irrigated by canals not built by the state, were often taxed less (between 1/10 and 1/5 of produce) than the usual rate (1/3). By the end of Timūr Shāh’s reign Peshawar’s irrigated lands were apparently taxed at between ¼ and 1/3.

\textsuperscript{34} Raverty, Notes: 35.


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid: 83.

\textsuperscript{37} Government of the Punjab, Gazetteer: 135–6.

\textsuperscript{38} Government of the Punjab, Gazetteer: 173.

Arbitration and cooption were essential to maintaining systems of local alliance; not just with military elites like the Mohmand khāns, but also with traders and bankers. That is not to say that the Durrānī empire’s mercantile allies were always well treated. Elphinstone reports that from cities, one shop representing its particular trade (out of thirty-two trades) was obliged to furnish Durrānī army camps with services. In smaller towns this duty apparently did not apply, but for the large cities, including Peshawar, it lasted as long as the army was on the march. While the artisans or shopkeepers enlisted in this way were in principle salaried as “servants of the King” for this service, pay tended to be inconstant and paid in one sum at the end of the service period. Prices in the camp also favored the Durrānī or other chiefs.40

Nevertheless, relations between traders and the Durrānī rulers and nobles were often good. Armenians and even a small Jewish community were active in Peshawar commerce, as they were further west in Afghan and Uzbek territories.41 However, some of the most influential and well-known traders in the Durrānī context were Indian. Numerous Hindu traders and moneylenders

settled in and around Peshawar, providing crucial (if at times resented) financial services, which the state could also appreciate. Through loans and investments, they could improve agricultural productivity by providing cultivators capital to purchase better tools and technologies, while also easing taxation through monetization of rural areas. They also acted as tax farmers on behalf of the state.\textsuperscript{42} Even shopkeepers could rise in the political ranks of the Durrānī world. Ātmā Rām (given as “Atmaran” in the sources), a Hindu shopkeeper from Peshawar, became a high-ranking minister (\textit{dīwān begī}) to Muhammad Murād Beg of Kundūz around the early 1820s. Not forgetting his economic skills, he was noted by British traveler William Moorcroft to control the regional trade with Yarkand entirely.\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Illustration of Ātmā Rām, in a collection by James Rattray, c.1840s}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Note:} J. Rattray, \textit{The Costumes of the Various Tribes, Portraits of Ladies of Rank, Celebrated Princes and Chiefs, Views of the Principal Fortresses, and Interior of the Cities and Temples of Afghaunistan} (London: Hering & Remington, 1848): plate 9


Not all Indian traders and financiers were Hindu. The label ‘Hindki,’ often applied to Indians in Peshawar and other Afghan-ruled lands, is complex and need not denote a Hindu religious identity.⁴⁴ Perhaps the most famous of the Indian financial elites under the Durrānīs were the Shikarpūrī and Multānī firms; many of these traders were Khatri Hindus, but others were Muslim. Their significance to the Durrānī state has been addressed on several occasions, and some authors ascribe to them the near-total financing of Āḥmad Shāh’s Indian adventures.⁴⁵ By bankrolling these military campaigns, the Indian firms allowed the Durrānīs to expand their territories. More crucially, they enabled the Durrānīs to plunder northern India and redistribute this wealth to their allies. As discussed in Lally’s work, these campaigns were an essential source of wealth and an exercise of legitimate royal power.⁴⁶ Echoing the experience of Ātmā Rām, one merchant, Mullā Ja‘far Sistānī, was high in Shāh Shujā’’s (r. 1803–1809, 1839–1842) favor and thus was of a similar standing to “ministers of state.”⁴⁷

In Peshawar, Chamkanī was host to a number of Hindu traders. Mohan Lal asserts based on a visit in 1833 that Khatri Hindus ran the town bāsār. Dās puts this market at fifty shops and one dharamsāla or serai, though Raverty claims there were 150 shops at time of writing around a decade before. Dās further mentions a longstanding community of cobblers, for whose high-quality shoes Afghan traders were willing to pay five to seven hundred, or even a thousand, rupees.⁴⁸

Along with these groups, Chamkanī hosted one of the region’s most important trading families, the Sethīs. These Punjabi financiers pledged their allegiance to the Durrānīs early. When Āḥmad Shāh first took Peshawar in 1747, they met and presented gifts to him. Initially based in Chamkanī, the Sethīs

---


established themselves more firmly in Peshawar city from the end of the eighteenth century, and by the nineteenth had created their well-known houses in the Sethi muballa (neighborhood), which are prominent heritage sites today. As they settled in the town proper, the Sethis also extended their import and export activities to Iran, Central Asia and northern India. One Miyān Shahāb al-Dīn set up the first Sethi office at Kabul in 1779. By the Bārakzay period they had bought up numerous valuable properties, and forged good relationships with the Durrānī nobility.49

Sethi ties to the Durrānīs lasted well beyond the end of Afghan rule at Peshawar, into the reign of amīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (r. 1880–1900) of Afghanistan. The amīr allowed them to lease a forest in Paktia (today in eastern Afghanistan), out of which they exported wood back into British India. The Sethi representative would visit ‘Abd al-Raḥmān at the public baths, and the family patriarch had direct correspondence with the amīr. However, they also tried to avoid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s heavy taxes and fees, for instance by cooperating with Hindu and Jewish financiers in Bukhara and Moscow to totally circumvent Afghanistan in the trade of Chinese tea.50

When ‘Abd al-Raḥmān sought to strong-arm the Sethis and other Peshawaris into providing him with a “share of their capital and profits” in this trade, the Sethis leveraged contacts with Durrānī officials to disperse the bill-collectors sent against them.51 This blend of amicability and confrontation echoes that core tension between the ostensible powers of Durrānī rulers and the actual power of their local allies. However, this later history also indicates that the ties between the Durrānīs and Peshawar’s economic elites were not easily undone, even decades after Durrānī rule ended.

For the Sethis, Chamkanī had been an important stepping-stone. The so-called Sethi Bridge, located just west of the village, probably gained its name after renovations done by either Hájjī Karīm Bakhsh Sethī (1861–1930) or Ilahī Bakhsh Sethī (fl. c. early-to-mid nineteenth century), but the association points to continued economic involvement with the village.52 Chamkanī was

49 S.M. Khan, “The Sethi merchants’ havelis in Peshawar, 1800–1910: form, identity and status” (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2016): 131–5. It is worth noting that in Hanifi’s interview with an elder Sethi, the latter placed their move to Chamkanī in the Sikh period (see Hanifi, Connecting: ch. 6, p. 1 (eBook)). However, Khan’s research, making use of a family history produced by the Sethi family, roundly disagrees; the later ties between Sethis and Afghan authorities also suggest a long relationship.
50 Hanifi, Connecting: ch. 6, 1–2, 15–18 (eBook).
51 Ibid, 21–5.
therefore an important site not only for the economy of Durrānī Peshawar, but for the political economy of local alliances on which the Durrānīs built their rule. Once again, these local allies often left clearer marks on the region than the imperial sovereign did.

2 Peshawar and Chamkanī’s Afghan Military-Administrative Elites

Afghan military-administrative elites were yet another crucial link in the system of alliances that sustained Durrānī rule in Peshawar. Nobility from the Durrānī confederation were an important extension of imperial rule in Peshawar. As settlers, they could embed themselves in the region, develop the land, and provide military support. Some were given lands around Peshawar in exchange for military service. Zardād Khan, noted at an earlier juncture, was governor of Peshawar under Zamān Shāh, and all his sons were in royal service.53

Durrānī officers were not merely agents of imperial control, though: again reflecting the tension between universal and diffuse power, they were building their own networks of patronage and alliance in Peshawar. When the Bārakzays’ localized rule took the place of imperial control, they possessed potent legitimacy. East India Company agent Alexander Burnes noted in 1837 that the Khaṭāks of Terī still acknowledged Sulṭān Muḥammad Khān Bārakzay as their overlord, despite the annexation of the region into the Sikh kingdom three years prior. At some point before Burnes’ arrival, a Sikh officer assigned to Kohat and the wider Bangash country had been forced out, prompting Lahore to leave regional administration to Sulṭān Muḥammad, who evidently held greater sway. On one occasion, when the Sikh authorities were moving ships for a bridge-building project, the sardār had to intervene and dissuade locals from blocking their path. In the north, Sulṭān Muḥammad was an intermediary for exchanges of gifts between Ranjit Singh and the Yūsufzay.54

Looking beyond British annexation in 1849 further indicates the longevity of these localized Durrānī networks. A few hundred people in the districts of Kohat and Peshawar were recorded as Sadōzays and Pōpalzays (both subtribes

53 Dās, Ṭārīkh: 698.
of the Durrānīs) in the 1868 census. Their small numbers may reflect their status as elite landowning families, of which there are some prominent examples. One is the ‘princely’ Sadōzay family of Kohat, which flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century, building gardens and mausoleums which still stand. Another clan with illustrious genealogy was the Wazīr Khayl, descendants of Fatḥ Allāh Khan, known as ‘Wafādār Khān,’ an influential Pōpalzay chief under Āḥmad and Timūr Shāh. After fighting on the British-Sadōzay side in the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42), they settled first in Ludhiana, then Peshawar. Durrānī elites apparently considered Peshawar a secure, familiar place to settle: the end of Afghan rule there did not prevent them from taking advantage of their own, localized support networks.

For the Afghans hailing from the Peshawar valley, Durrānī rule involved a large-scale reclassification of tribal identity, at least in principle. Āḥmad Shāh renamed all Afghans east of the Khyber Pass ‘Bar-Durrānī,’ an appellation which may mean ‘upper Durrānī’ or may be a contraction of ‘brother (barādār) Durrānī.’ ‘Durrānī’ was Āḥmad Shāh’s own neologism, based on his kingly title durr-ī durrānī (pearl of pearls): his tribe was originally known as the ‘Abdālīs.’ The use of the Durrānī name in ‘Bar-Durrānī’ indicates a further attempt to organize tribal power networks around himself as the universal ruler.

Further emphasizing how the Bar-Durrānī category incorporated eastern Afghans into imperial orbit is a diagram representing both the Durrānī camp and court (Figure 3 below). Various Durrānī subtribes, and some larger Bar-Durrānī tribes such as the Khaṭaks, Tarin, Bangash and Tarkalānī, are individually named or arranged in places of honor near and around the shāh. The Bar-Durrānīs of Peshawar are lumped together, relatively far from the pavilion.

57 Dās, Ṭārīkh: 652. For discussion of Fath Allāh and his son Ṭaḥmat Allāh (d. 1801), who was also named ‘Wafādār Khan’ and served as wazīr under Zamān Shāh, see Fayż Muḥammad Ḋātib Ḟazaˈa, The History of Afghanistan: Fayż Muḥammad Ḋātib Ḟazaˈa’īḥ’s Sīrāj al-tawārīkh, ed. and trans. R.D. McChesney and M.M. Khorrami (Leiden: Brill): vol. 1, 88, and Noelle, State and Tribe: 5.

The organization of tribes around the king projects an ideal image of universal rule onto which the Afghan tribes are grafted. Outside these idealized representations, the Bar-Durrānī label appears to have found some use in the west of the empire, as indicated by records from Herat which identify them as a distinct group with a district in the city, and by the existence of a Bar-Durrānī gate in Qandahar.59

59 Noelle-Karimi, The Pearl: 128. Their headman under Tīmūr Shāh was Khanjar Khān, see Fūfalzay, Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī, (Kabul: Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Afgānistān): vol. 2, 416. For the gate see Hazāra, The History: vol. 1, 179, transliterated by McChesney and Khorrami as “Bardaranī,” see also vol. 2, 49 for mention of a “Bardaranī” politician at Herat in 1855. W.B. Trousdale, in Kandahar in the Nineteenth Century (Leiden: Brill, 2021): 67 states they were Durrānī-Abdālī Pakhtuns relocated from the Attock area, but this does not gel easily with the use of Bar-Durrānī as a separate term for distinct eastern tribes, not referring to Durrānīs who lived in the east.
These imperially-conceived divisions were also enshrined in text. Perhaps the clearest example is the **Aḥwāl-i aqwām-i chahārgāna-i Afghān** (c.1809) of Māhmūd al-Mūsāwī, likely a Durrānī courtier at Delhi. Al-Mūsāwī’s division of the Afghans into four confederations, namely the Durrānīs, Ghilzays, Sūrs (in this case referring to the Yūsufzay) and Bar-Durrānīs, is a noteworthy simplification, seemingly reflecting Durrānī administrative divisions more than self-identification. A notable parallel example of tribal, military and administrative divisions eliding under the Sadōzays is that of the “four tribes” (**chahār ūymāq**) of Herat, a designation which applied to districts, military units, and tribes.\(^{61}\)

al-Mūsāwī praises Bar-Durrānīs for their bravery, chivalry, and devotion to the faith, comparing them favorably to Indians, whom he considers “unmanly” (**nā-mard**). Still, apart from differences in character he maintains that the condition of the Bar-Durrānīs is much like that of the Indians. He further makes clear their separate status compared to the Durrānī tribe: the latter, he notes, consider themselves Afghans of Iran, and consider the Bar-Durrānīs Afghans of India. In fact, according to him it is the Bar-Durrānīs who consider themselves part of the Abdālī-Durrānī tribe.\(^{62}\)

Furthermore, al-Mūsāwī frames the Bar-Durrānīs and “Sūr”/Yūsufzay largely in terms of their relationship to the Durrānī empire. When discussing the latter, he complains that they live in mountainous regions and are difficult to tax.\(^{63}\) One of his first comments on the Bar-Durrānīs concerns Aḥmad Shāh’s relocation of various clans to Qandahar and Herat, itself a potent display of control over imperial subjects. When praising Bar-Durrānī zeal, al-Mūsāwī states they are willing to give their lives for “faith and state” (**īmān u dawlat**), and approvingly calls them “soldiers” (**sipāhī**). In his accounts of the different Bar-Durrānī leaders, he emphasizes their role within the state, for instance as elephant handlers (**fīl-nashīn**), kettledrummers (**sāhib-i nawbat u naqqāra**) or recruits for the royal slave corps (**ghulām khāna**).\(^{64}\) This is the case for the Mohmands, whose **tappa** abutted Chamkanī: al-Mūsawi states they are known for military service (**sipāh-gari**), and that some enter the slave corps. He also provides some data which very roughly prefigures later surveys, numbering the

---

62 al-Mūsāwī, **Aḥwāl**: 32b–33a, 43a.
overall Mohmand families at ten to twelve thousand and outlining the geographic location of a prominent Peshawari Mohmand chief’s territory.\textsuperscript{65}

In ‘Abd al-Karīm Bukhārī’s early nineteenth-century history of the region, one ‘Bar-Durrān’ is named as a son of the Durrānī progenitor Abdāl.\textsuperscript{66} On the one hand, this suggests that Aḥmad Shāh’s tribal classification was being rationalized in genealogical terms, further tying the two tribes together. However, using ‘Bar-Durrān’ as an ancestral name dissociates the moniker ‘Bar-Durrānī’ from Aḥmad Shāh as durr-i durrān, suggesting that new understandings of tribal divisions were escaping the confines of imperial ideology. As usual, the universal ideal of reordering entire populations was belied by a reality in which people reinterpreted these labels on their terms.

We should not, therefore, overstate the power of this tribal reclassification. Probably of greater immediate importance to Peshawar’s Afghan elites were the favors and status they received from the Durrānī shāhs. Cultivating local leaders was partly accomplished through the granting of titles. A prominent example is Saʿādat Khān Khaṭāk of Terī, who was named Sarafrāz Khān by Timūr Shāh in honor of his services, both to Timūr and Aḥmad Shāh. A late eighteenth-century route map marks “the home (maskan) of Sarafrāz Khān” as a prominent rest stop on the highway from Delhi to Qandahar via the Khyber Pass, suggesting how these royally-bestowed titles could become established in general use; indeed Charles Massy notes that he was “generally known” by the name Sarafrāz.\textsuperscript{67} Titles both ennobled the recipient, and acknowledged that the Durrānī ruler had the legitimacy to grant them. This was much as it had been under the Mughals: the leading Khalīl chiefs were given the title arbāb under Shāh Jahān, and the powerful Khaṭāks were often beneficiaries of Mughal patronage.\textsuperscript{68}

Along with titles, stipends were often paid to local elites. Often these were given for particular services, such as tax collection, providing road security, or

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid: 35b.


\textsuperscript{67} S. Gole, Indian Maps and Plans: from earliest times to the advent of European surveys (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989): 90, 103; C.F. Massy, Chiefs and Families of Note in the Delhi, Jalandhar, Peshawar and Derajat Divisions of the Panjab (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1890): 499. Massy was a major in the Bengal Staff Corps who derived his information from both colonial documents and from the “Darbaris themselves,” see Chiefs: Preface.

\textsuperscript{68} Massy, Chiefs: 464, see Nichols, Settling: 72–3 for Akbar’s grant of ḫāḡīr to “The first great Khattak, Malik Ako” and some discussion of the tribe’s lucrative Indus ferry toll-collecting privilege prior to the 1680s.
providing a bodyguard for the king. Durrānī rulers were engaged in a long-standing process by which states empowered local elites, partly by demanding they accept an imperial political culture and participate formally in it. As mentioned above, al-Mūsawi details that eastern tribesmen found roles as elephant handlers, kettledrummers, or royal slaves. Bar-Durrānī khāns were given powerful positions in major Durrānī provinces, from Balkh to Kashmir and Sirhind. Predictably though, these governors could often become enemies of the crown, refusing to deliver revenues and battling royal armies, again demonstrating the tension at the heart of ostensibly universal rule.

A core feature of Durrānī statecraft among local elites was the jāgīr. Jāgīrs, land grants entitling the holder to revenue collection and usually held on condition of military service, had been essential to royal power in the wider region for centuries. Nichols notes the typical pattern in which land rights were established when a new power entered the Peshawar valley. Afghan khāns mounted armed resistance, and then entered into negotiation and compromise. Nichols refers to this as an “elite political etiquette” through which the prevailing order was perhaps internally reconfigured, but maintained overall. For a conquering empire, forging these ties, after a requisite show of strength, allowed them to “link a nascent central authority to the established legitimacy of dominant regional lineage chiefs.”

Aḥmad Shāh’s conquest of Peshawar likely entailed similar clashes, but its retelling in chronicles or Durrānī-sponsored histories paints a very different picture: that of a bloodless takeover in cooperation with Peshawar’s Afghan chiefs. Such rhetoric forms a potent expression of Durrānī claims to universal dominion in the region. When discussing Aḥmad Shāh’s imminent conquest of Peshawar, the Tārikh-i Ḥusayn Shāhī (c.1798) describes the Mughal governor Nāṣir Khan worrying: “now that sovereignty (bādshāhī) has come to the Afghans, the Afghans from around Peshawar will plunder me […]” This portrays Afghans from regions like Peshawar as natural parts of the Durrānī imperial project, who would naturally join it by ousting the Mughal governor. Beyond the moment of conquest, there are examples of the Durrānī monarchy altering the makeup of jāgīrs through intervention in local conflicts. Once again, the state could assert its power by reorganizing the particulars of the political scene without disrupting its core structures. For instance, around 1782

69 Massy, Chiefs: 535–45.
70 al-Mūsawi, Aḥwāl: 33b, 35b, 37b, 39a, see also Hazāra, The History: vol. 1, 19–27, 43–4 for examples of regional governors from the eastern tribes rebelling.
72 Imām al-Dīn Ḥusaynī, Tārikh-i Ḥusayn Shāhī, ed. ‘Abd al-Khāliq La’alzād (London, 2018): 21. This chronicle was written by a courtier of Zamān Shāh.
Timūr Shāh supported the son of a murdered chief of the Katī Khel Afghans in Tank, near Ćera Ismā’īl Khān, in taking back his lands. In doing so the shāh secured an eight-to-twelve thousand rupee tributary. Changes to local power networks could also be affected in the aftermath of rebellion against the state. When Fayż Allāh Khān Khalil and his son were executed for rebellion by Timūr Shāh in 1779, another Khalil noble, Nūr Muḥammad Khān, was able to take the reins of leadership (an episode discussed further in the following section).

Returning to Chamkanī, the experiences of its zamīndārī families reveal a relatively underexplored aspect of jāgīr politics: apparently nonviolent disempowerment of one party in service to another. Gopāl Dās relates that the Chamkanī family, a Mohmand clan, held Chamkanī, Kachōrī and Bābī/Bāpī (the latter a khalīsa village) as jāgīr since the Mughal period. When Aḥmad Shāh took power in the region, he confiscated these lands from Žābāt Khān, the mālik at the time, and gave Chamkanī and Kachōrī over to Shaykh Miya‘ Muhammad ‘Umar, “in whose seniority Aḥmad Shāh was a believer” (un kī buzurgī par Aḥmad Shāh mu’taqid thā). Another related mālik, Khān Gul Khān, was similarly deprived of a jāgīr.

This act aligns with Ziad’s wider discussion of the Durrānī empowerment of religious elites at the expense of other landowners. Still, the Afghan zamīndārs did attempt to reassert themselves, not by resisting the state but by leveraging other alliance networks within it. Khān Gul Khān was still alive when one of his children, Qamar al-Dīn Khān, aligned himself with the powerful Bārakzay wazīr Pāyinda Khān (d. 1799) in the hopes of taking Bāpī and two other villages. Despite this, the Chamkanī Mohmands do not seem to have ever regained their old status, instead being allotted new lands and positions under the Sikhs. Mirzā Mughal Beg in c.1790 noted that the revenue of Chamkanī and some villages around were assigned for maintenance of ‘Umar’s famous shrine, and while some landlords did hold jāgīrs in the village under the British, their value seems negligible given the size of the settlement, and it is unclear if they are of the same family.

---

73 Massy, Chiefs: 574–5.
74 Dās, Tārikh: 661.
75 For example, in the case of Shikarpur in Sindh, where Durrānī land distribution favored “pīrs, Makhdums, and members of the Durrani nobility” as opposed to contemporary Hyderabad, whose landlords were largely local Baluch “tribal elites,” see Ziad, “Traversing”: 452–3.
76 Dās, Tārikh: 661.
77 Raverty, Notes: 34, Government of the Punjab, Gazetteer: 386–7.
These episodes indicate that, in the process of exerting control through a network of subordinated jāgīrdārs, the Durrānīs did more than reconfirm older, Mughal patterns of landholding. Nor did they reconfigure these patterns only in the event of armed conflict, either between local parties or between the state and a local party. Furthermore, the Durrans were not always acting in the interests of Afghan landowning nobility.

A similar pattern played out in Kohat, where the Durrānī government stripped Baīzay Bangash landowners of proprietary land rights in the most productive zones. The three main landowning clans who seem to have replaced them, and were later confirmed by the British, included an Iranian Sistānī and a sayyid family. Nevertheless, the sovereign was not the primary beneficiary of these edicts from above. It was the sovereign’s local allies: in Chamkanī’s case the Shaykh, whose descendants would continue to live there and whose shrine stands today.

3 Shaykh Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar of Chamkanī and the Durrānīs

Shaykh Miyān Muḥammad ‘Umar represents the final elite group whose alliance bulwarked Durrānī rule over Peshawar: religious authorities. A number of different categories of spiritual leaders existed in Durrānī Peshawar, from sayyids to legal scholars and heads of Sufi orders. Lines between these categories were often blurred, and as Ziad has pointed out, their affairs were deeply entwined with politics and trade. A good example from Peshawar is Shaykh Muhammad Shayb (d. 1816), whose father and grandfather were Durrānīs who settled in the region after serving in Aḥmad Shāh’s army.

Many prominent Sufis of the era were Mujaddidi, members of a seventeenth-century reformist movement within the Naqshbandi order. In the mid-eighteenth century, the major Mujaddidi center of Sirhind was often conquered and re-conquered as Mughal authority lapse. This process culminated in a violent sack and takeover by Sikh troops in 1763. During this time, Naqshbandi Sufis were able to form a reciprocal relationship with the Durrānī rulers, who provided them patronage and security and thereby gained legitimacy as sponsors or disciples of revered holy men.


Miyān ‘Umar of Chamkanī was a close ally of Āḥmad Shāh, who became his disciple during the initial march through Peshawar in late 1747. Alongside him, a large entourage of Durrānī chiefs accepted the Shaykh as their pīr (spiritual guide). Āḥmad Shāh revered ‘Umar, granted him substantial landholdings in the vicinity of Chamkanī as religious endowments (awqāf), and visited him regularly when staying in Peshawar. There is even one account of Miyān ‘Umar giving Āḥmad Shāh the epithet durr-i durrān, though this appears to be an isolated reference.81 ‘Umar was said to have assured the shāh that wherever the latter went, his pīr would be with him in spirit: to that end the Shaykh gave his blessings to the shāh’s invasions of India, and possibly prior to the climactic Battle of Panipat (1761).82

Miyān ‘Umar’s contributions to Durrānī rule were not just spiritual: he was actively involved in Āḥmad Shāh’s expansion and governance. One of ‘Umar’s sons accompanied another prominent Sufi ally of the king, Šābīr Shāh, who went to Lahore to demand its surrender to the Durrānīs in 1748. When Šābīr Shāh was killed by the Mughal governor, Shāh Nawāz Khān, this son of Miyān ‘Umar was imprisoned, and subsequently killed while trying to escape. Šābīr Shāh’s killing became a new casus belli for Āḥmad Shāh, and he soon attacked Lahore.83

Further obfuscating the distinctions between spiritual and military-administrative elites, the Shaykh undertook armed expeditions to support Durrānī rule in the region. Around 1748, ‘Umar and his disciples (muřidān o mu’taqadān) helped a Durrānī officer, Khān Jān Khān, defeat and arrest Khān Bahādur, the son of the former Mughal governor of Peshawar, Nāṣir Khān. When the Durrānī commander Sarbuland Khān was besieged by Sikh troops at Rohtās in Punjab in c.1769, the governor (ḥākim) of Peshawar marched to his aid along with a disciple (shāqird) of Miyān ‘Umar, called Muḥammad Akram. To send troops into Punjab was a demonstration of considerable power and commitment on the Shaykh’s part. Furthermore, ‘Umar advised the shāh on


Singh, in Ahmad: 28, states that the reference to the coronation is from Shayr Muḥammad Khān’s Ansāb-i Ru’asā-yi Dera Ismā’īl Khān, a manuscript in his collection.


83 Fūfalzay, Ahmad Shāh: 100–1.
matters of state, and was appointed the qāżī (judge) for the Kamalzay branch of the Yūsufzay.\footnote{Mahmūd al-Ḥusaynī, Ṭārīkh: vol. 1, 62b–3a, vol. 2, 624b–5a, Quddūsī, Ṭuzkira: 450–5.}

Among Peshawar’s people, the Shaykh was also a powerful figure with an enduring legacy. In the later nineteenth century, his ziyārat (shrine) drew pilgrims from Peshawar, Bajaur, and the Bangash country every Thursday.\footnote{Dās, Ṭārīkh: 180.} In his lifetime, he mentored a number of other prominent Sufis, and was pîr to various chiefs. These included the powerful head of the main branch of the Khaṭak tribe based in Akōra, Shahbāz Khān (d. after 1772).\footnote{Muḥammad Ḥanīf, “Ḥayāt wa ʿāsār-i Ḥaẓrat Miyaīn Muḥammad ‘Umar Chamkanī,” (PhD diss., Peshawar University, 1979): 567–75. The Khaṭaks as a whole fielded thirty thousand foot soldiers with guns according to al-Mūsawī, Ahwāl, 37b.} Another of his followers was Āzād Khān Mohmand, son of the leading Mohmand lord, Moḥsin Khān Arbāb. Moḥsin Khān bore “enmity and hatred” (ʿadāvat uʾīnād) for ‘Umar according to Muḥammad Ḥanīf, author of probably the most comprehensive study of the Shaykh. Unfortunately, Ḥanīf does not explain the cause of this bitterness, but it does temper the idea that the Shaykh was universally loved in Peshawar. Still, his son Āzād Khān became a devotee, and was highly impressed by the strength of ‘Umar’s miraculous powers (taṣarruf).\footnote{Ḥanīf, “Ḥayāt”: 532–5.} A number of miracles were ascribed to the Shaykh, detailed in a volume gifted by ‘Umar’s son to Elphinstone during the latter’s time in Peshawar.\footnote{Elphinstone, An Account (1839): vol. 1, 289.}

Along with his close ties to Aḥmad Shāh, Afghan chiefs and the religious elite, Miyaīn ‘Umar had a foot in economic affairs. The community of cobbler mentioned by Gōpal Dās maintained that the Shaykh had always prayed that so long as they lived in Chamkanī, their wares would be prized, suggesting a spiritual, if not financial, guardianship of such artisanal groups.\footnote{Dās, Ṭārīkh: 179.} The Sethī family also settled in Chamkanī under his auspices. It is entirely possible that they were able to make obeisance to Aḥmad Shāh in 1747 due to their association with Miyaīn ‘Umar, since the shāh visited Chamkanī at the time of conquest.\footnote{Khan, “The Sethi merchants’ havelis”: 131, 151 no. 22. The family history cited by Khan states that the Sethis were present at a meeting between the shāh and Shaykh.}

Shaykh Miyaīn Muḥammad ‘Umar was thus an invaluable asset to Aḥmad Shāh’s rule over the province, and one of Durrānī Peshawar’s leading men in his own right. For an emperor, such powerful friends could later make powerful enemies. An episode during the reign of Timūr Shāh demonstrates vividly the limits of universal dominion against local networks. ‘Umar’s son,
generally known in Persian sources Pîrzâda Miyân Muḥammad and in Pakhto as Muḥammadi Şâhīb-zâda (d. 1805/06), was implicated in an assassination attempt on the shâh in 1779. The plot was spearheaded by the Khalil chief Fayţ Allâh Khân. Different authors take different approaches to the Pîrzâda’s involvement. Some British sources like the 1897–8 gazetteer or Raverty are direct in accusing him; indeed the former names him as the principal conspirator, “joined” by Fayţ Allâh.\textsuperscript{91} Mahmûd al-Mûsawî states disapprovingly that the Shaykh had emerged as part of a “movement that was unworthy of him” (harkatî ke šâyân-îshân na-bûd).\textsuperscript{92}

Gîpâl Dâs is more cautious, stating only that Timûr Shâh reacted to the suspicion of sedition (ba-gûmân-i fitna angîzî), and Fayţ Muḥammad Kâtib likewise states that is was “believed” he was among the rebels. The late-nineteenth-century Târikh-i Sultânî is rather noncommittal, stating that the king “heard that he too was an accomplice of the rebels” (shînûd ke nîz ham-dâstân-i baghâvatîyân bûd).\textsuperscript{93} Whatever the case, Timûr Shâh’s attempt at retribution made clear the restrictions on royal power. The shâh was able to execute Fayţ Allâh Khân and his son, along with a prominent khwâja sarâ in royal service, Yâqût Khân. However, when he gave the order to raid Chamkanî, the Durrâni sardârs intervened to prevent the violence from continuing. This detail of the sardârs’ intercession is echoed in the Târikh-i Ḥusayn Shâhî and Târikh-i Sultânî.\textsuperscript{94} Pîrzâda Miyân Muḥammad himself fled to Amânkoṭ, between Swat and Buner, but was soon allowed to return to Chamkanî, where he remained until his death.\textsuperscript{95}

The Pîrzâda’s prestige secured his comparatively easy return to Chamkanî. Thus the alliance, forged to good effect in Aḥmâd Shâh’s time, had exposed Timûr Shâh’s weakness. The intercession of the Durrâni nobles in particular lays bare how royal power could be held in check by the subjects who otherwise sustained it. Indeed Timûr Shâh’s relocation of the capital from Qandahar to Kabul is usually ascribed to his frustration with the Durrâni nobility and desire to build power away from their influence.\textsuperscript{96} Even the senior Miyan ‘Umar may have subverted state power in association with Afghan military elites. We know of one occasion on which a noble of the Tarîn tribe, whose father had fought

\textsuperscript{91} Government of the Punjab, Gazetteer, 63; Raverty, “Account of the City”: 8.
\textsuperscript{92} al-Mûsawî, Ahwâl: 36b.
\textsuperscript{94} Sultân Muḥammad, Târikh: 153–4; al-Mûsawî, Ahwâl: 37a refers to the town as the qaşba of “Jamkan,” and Imâm al-Dîn, Târikh: 147 refers to it as “Jamkanân.”
\textsuperscript{95} Yûsûfi, Yûsufzay: 287.
alongside Ahmad Shāh, settled in the khāliṣa with the Shaykh's permission. It is possible he also obtained state permission, but Gōpal Dās' silence on that front, and foregrounding of Miyān ‘Umar, suggest the holy man's acquiescence was more important.97

One advantage Timūr Shāh gained from the affair was a solution to a leadership crisis among the Khalil, securing dominance for Fayż Allāh Khān's rival Nūr Muḥammad Khān.98 However this again demonstrates that the Durrānī rulers' pretensions of universal sovereignty were belied by the reality of diffuse power vested in their local allies. Well into and beyond the end of Durrānī rule, the khānqā at Chamkani was still drawing pilgrims. Once again, it was often local powerbrokers of the Durrānī era that could claim lasting legacies in Peshawar.

Conclusion

Durrānī rule in Peshawar was rooted in networks of local alliance. While these alliances were instrumental to maintaining control of the region, the balance between cooperation and conflict with local parties was ever-changing. This reflects the core tension between the ideal of universal rule that the Durrānīs projected, and the reality of diffuse power on the ground. By focusing on Chamkani, we have seen how the Durrānīs ruled over and patronized Peshawar's economic, military-administrative, and religious elites. We have also seen how these groups pursued their own interests, often in conflict with imperial authority and in cooperation with other regional players.

It was largely these elites who left durable legacies in Peshawar, which outlasted Durrānī rule. Villages, tombs, canals, heritage sites, shrines, and the communities attached to them can all be tied back to Peshawar's Durrānī-era local elites, from Zardād Khān to the Sethīs and Miyān ‘Umar. Thus it was through their patronage of these local allies that the Durrānī rulers left their mark on Peshawar, more than by their own presence.

Future regional studies of the Durrānī period, including studies of Peshawar, can bring this localized focus to greater fruition by delving into more primary materials originating from the different elite groups discussed here. In particular for Peshawar, the lineage of Miyān ‘Umar merits a great deal more study in English-speaking scholarship than it has been afforded thus far. Texts from the khānqā itself would provide a great deal more insight into the history of this order, from its intellectual traditions to its political connections, than

98 Massy, Chiefs: 465.
I have been able to provide here. There are a wealth of approaches and methods waiting to be used in the study of Durrānī Peshawar; I hope that this article has gone some way to opening up the topic.

**Bibliography**

**Primary Sources**


Burnes, Alexander. 1843. *Cabool: a Personal Narrative of a Journey to, and Residence in that City, in the years 1836, 7 and 8*. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart.


Forster, George. 1808. *A Journey from Bengal to England, Through the Northern Part of India, Kashmire, Afghanistan, and Persia, and into Russia by the Caspian-Sea*, vol. 2. London: R. Faulder & Son.


Masson, Charles. 1844. *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjāb, & Kalat, during a Residence in those Countries: To which is Added an Account of the Insurrection at Kalat, and a Memoir on Eastern Balochistan.* 4 vols. London: Richard Bentley.


**Secondary Literature**


