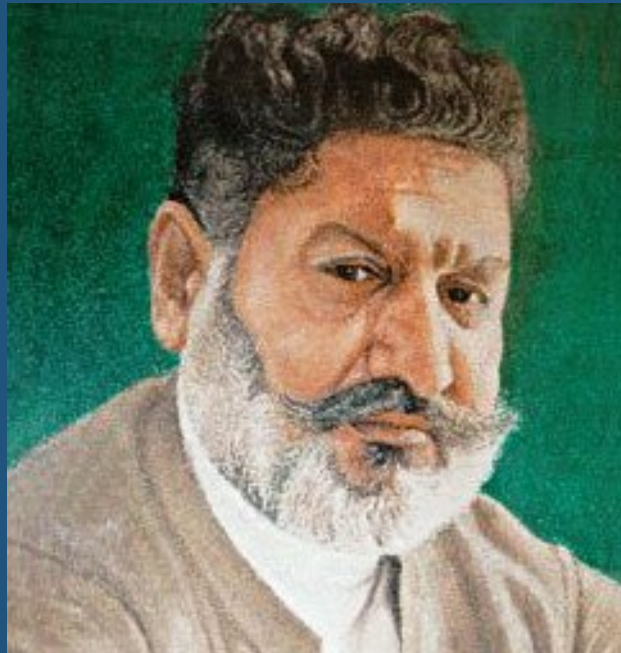


# **Policing Insurgency: The Hurs of Sindh**

*Aftab Nabi*



*Reproduced by  
Sani H. Panhwar*

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## Introduction

This paper examines the policing and administrative strategies of the colonial government of Sindh in response to the Hur insurgencies of the 1890s and the 1940s. An effort has been made to assess the concept of British justice, as meted out to Pir Sibghatullah Shah, the Pir Pagaro, in the context of a situation when the government was under pressure, both from internal and from external forces during the Second World War.

Within certain parameters, I have attempted to incorporate the social contexts and general characteristics of the Hur insurgency. Similarly, I have tried to describe the orientation and complexion of the colonial administration's reaction through their efforts to crush the rebellion.

The subject matter is dealt with in three segments: the first part deals with the policing of the Hur insurgency, the second covers the Martial Law trial of Pir Sibghatullah Shah, and the third section is a summary of events and developments from 1944 to 1954.

## History and Background

### Historical and social contexts

Among the most important and influential of Sindh's immigrants were saints. A large number of Saiyid's had settled in Sindh, most numerous being around Sehwan, Thatta, Matiari and Rohri. The really famous Saiyid in Sindh was Pir Pagaro.<sup>1</sup> The Pir Pagaro's ancestry is 'traced to Pir Bakadar Shah who came from Arabia and settled in Lakiari in Sindh.'<sup>2</sup> The order that Bakadar Shah initiated, however, 'came of age in the time of Pir Mohammed Rashdi and today his descendants bear the title of Rashdi with their names.'<sup>3</sup> Subsequent to the attack on Pir Sibghatullah I, by his brother, Yasin, around the 19th century, the Rashdi clan split into two groups, the *Pag wara* (owners of the title) and the *Jhande wara* (the owners of the flag).<sup>4</sup>

The followers of the Pir Pagaro are located in a vast area that stretches from Khairpur and Bahawalpur, to Jaisalmer, Katchh, Bhuj and Gujarat, and to the deserts of Rahim Yar Khan and Tharparkar. The Pagaro disciples have an organized and close knit brotherhood which they call the *Jamiat* and the affairs of the brotherhood are run by *khalifas*. There are two kinds of *murids*: the *salims* and the *farqis*. The *salims* are common folk who religiously visit the *dargah* and follow the Pir and act upon his word. The *farqis* are diehard followers and it was from among them that a radical group called the Hurs was formed in the middle of the last century.<sup>5</sup>

As of 1909, the Makhi Dhand forest, then in the Tharparkar district, 'was a sort of Alsatia.' The most notorious criminals could find safe refuge in its secret recesses because people of the neighboring settlements were 'in sympathy with these Robin Hoods', and supplied them with food and necessities.<sup>6</sup>

### The rebellion of the 1890's Bachu, Piru and Hur excesses

In 1888, a *khalifo* was murdered and a few years later a police head constable and two of his men were shot down in cold blood.<sup>7</sup> By 1890, the whole countryside was terrorized, and landowners dared not move about without armed escorts and Hindus were

<sup>1</sup> D. Cheesman, 'Rural power and debt in Sind in the late nineteenth century: 1865-1901. (unpublished Ph. D. thesis), University of London, 198 0, pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> N. Shah and H. Mujtaba, 'Raiders of the past', *Newline* (Karachi) vol. 6, no. 9, 1995, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 68.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p 69.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Edward Cox, *My Thirty Years in India* (London: Mills and Boon Ltd., 1909), p. 214.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Ray Eates, 'The Kingri Pirs and Hurs of Sind', *Eates Papers*, Chapter XVIII, p. 2.

compelled to pay subsidies. When the police attempted to arrest them, the accused retaliated by murdering policemen, *zemindars* or land holders who assisted the police. Two outlaws, known as Bachu Badshah and Piru Wazir, became famous 'because of their defiance of the police and the local gentry and the great hold they acquired over the whole Hur community.' By 1895, the Hurs had gained the upper hand; the police were becoming demoralized and loyal *zamindars* who had assisted them were terrorized.<sup>8</sup>

Around September 1895, the Pir was pressurized so much by the Commissioner in Sindh and the Deputy Commissioner that he announced to take the Hurs back into his spiritual blessings if they cooperated with the police.<sup>9</sup> He also declared that all outlaws under the lead of Badshah and his Wazir must surrender to the authorities. Subsequent to this, the Pir's chief *khalifo*, by the name of Hajio Nawazio, was murdered by the Hurs. In April 1896, Piru Wazir sent a defiant message to say where he could be found in the Makhi Dhand. The place 'was surrounded by men of the Baluch regiment and police', and Piru Wazir with his two companions 'was killed in the encounter which followed.'<sup>10</sup>

Four of the most desperate outlaws were still at large. They were entrenched on a small island and sent word to Charles Marston<sup>11</sup> to come and get them. With a party of police and the Bugti Levy under Sardar Mehrab Khan, Subedar Mohammed Baksh led 39 Rifles of the Baluchis to the attack. The Baluchis, enfilading the Hurs' position killed two of them. This success was soon avenged by three other Hurs, who shot and hacked to pieces another *khalifo*. The outlaws were tracked 22 miles by a small police party and two of the Hurs were shot and the third captured and hanged after trial. This blow put the finishing touch to the gang.

Bachu Badshah had surrendered to Khan Bahadur Mohammed Yakub, Lucas' Deputy.<sup>12</sup> However, it was decided to hang him and ISO. This was done under the supervision of Edmund Cox, the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Tharparkar. They were hanged at the village of Sanghar, near the scene of the crimes that they had committed. Unfortunately, the administration resorted to a profane technique by burying them 'under the public road.' This was done to prevent all possibility of their coreligionists erecting over the place of interment a tomb or shrine 'which would be a focus for the other Hurs.'<sup>13</sup>

### Colonial repressive techniques

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<sup>8</sup> J. C. Curry, 'The joys of the working: Memoirs of an Indian policeman', (unpublished memoirs), vol. I, 1968, available in the Curry Papers, Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge.

<sup>9</sup> S. F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> J. C. Curry, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Marston was Assistant Superintendent of Police, Tharparkar and was the son of Edward Charles Marston, Captain of Sind Police from 1845-1865.

<sup>12</sup> J. C. Curry, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Sir Edward Cox, *Police and Crime in India* (London: Stanley Paul and Co., 1910), p. 218.

Edward Cox<sup>14</sup> toured villages in the Hur areas to put 'the fear of God and of the British Raj' into the sympathizers of the movement. A very large number of arrests were made and punitive police was located on the villages, the cost being met by the villagers. In Hyderabad district, at one stage the residents had been fined 250,000 rupees, a blatantly enormous amount at that time. In addition, a Hur landholder had to pay an amount equal to the assessment on land revenue paid by him.<sup>15</sup> Three infantry companies and a squadron of cavalry were inducted, but their presence too, did not restore law and order.<sup>16</sup>

Intimidating action was taken against the leading Hurs, lists were compiled of active and known sympathizers, gun licenses and exemptions from the Arms Act were revoked and lands were attached. Announcements specified that canal water would be withheld till the trouble was over. Cox<sup>17</sup> confessed that 'a great deal more was done in subduing these malefactors than was ever placed on record' and also that 'it was no use to be squeamish about methods in running them to earth.' Eventually the Makhi Dhand, the stronghold of the Hurs was cleared of trespassing graziers and all unauthorized settlements. Punitive police were settled in the area and three companies of infantry and a squadron of cavalry employed to watch the Makhi Dhand.

Air Charles Napier, subsequent to his conquest of Sindh, in 1844-45, devised a strategy to consolidate Sindh by shifting, *en mass*, especially in the Upper Sindh Frontier, massive numbers of population, sometimes of the same tribes, and this was given the color of crime control measures. Like Napier's effort, non-Hurs from other areas were settled in order to dilute the Hur strength in the concerned districts. The Bugti chief was given 4,000 acres of land near Sanghar, to settle his tribesmen, in return for his offer of 200 men to assist in controlling the Hurs.<sup>18</sup> The colonial government recruited youths from militant Baluch tribes to bolster the available force and in 1895, rewards of 500 rupees were offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the wanted Hurs.<sup>19</sup> The administration also 'encouraged loyal people by gifts of swords, *puggrees*, and even grants of land.'<sup>20</sup>

### **Application of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871**

In 1900, the Hurs were proclaimed a criminal tribe. This was regrettable because much of the issue between the Hurs and the government was political and not criminal. Sir

<sup>14</sup> Later, Sir Edmund Cox. After 1900, he became the first Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) of Sind Police. He wrote six books, fiction and non-fiction, some pertaining to policing of Sind and the Bombay Presidency.

<sup>15</sup> Commissioner in Sind Memo, 14 September 1895, Bombay Proceedings, Judicial Department, P. 5089, p. 292.

<sup>16</sup> Bombay Government, Judicial Department, to Government of India, 23 November 1896, Bombay Proceedings, Home Department [Pol.], P/5193.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Edward Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>18</sup> Commissioner in Sindh, Memo, 25 April 1895, Bombay Proceedings, Judicial Department, P/4869, n. 963.

<sup>19</sup> Commissioner in Sindh, Memo, 25 April 1895, Bombay Proceedings, Judicial Department, P/4869, n. 963.

<sup>20</sup> Sir Edward Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 219, 220.

Percival Griffiths admits that the Hurs 'were not, to begin with, criminal tribes within the definition of the Criminal Tribes Act', but because of the nature of their activities 'they fell within the purview of the Act.'<sup>21</sup>

Their prominent villages were 'constituted settlements under the Act, the movements of the main inhabitants being put under restriction and punitive posts permanently posted there to supervise them and take roll call twice daily.'<sup>22</sup> Regular searches were made to prevent 'bad characters' from visiting the Hurs. They were relocated in settlements which they could not leave without a pass. The intention of incorporating them under the Act was 'to bring the 5,000 or so adult Hurs' living in the most 'notorious' taluqas under the direct surveillance of the authorities. But this created problems. The then Inspector General of Police (IGP) emphasized that the 'maintenance of proper supervision over criminal tribes members' was becoming 'a heavy drain on the resources of the police force and in some districts the inadequacy of the police force to enforce the provisions of the Act' was being 'keenly felt.'<sup>23</sup>

The hardened types of Hurs were kept in the Visapur Special Settlement in the Bombay Presidency. This settlement was under the control of the jail department and not under that of the officer in charge of Criminal Tribes Settlements, Bombay, and it had 'little or nothing in common with those generally constituted under the Act of 1911 in Bombay.'<sup>24</sup>

### **The new Pir Pagara**

In 1921 Pir Sibghatullah, a boy of 12 years, became the Pir Pagaro. Relations between the authorities and the new Pir 'quickly soured.'<sup>25</sup> The administration therefore decided that he should be shown that he was not above the law. First, his arms licenses were cancelled. Then in 1930, he was arrested for possessing unauthorized weapons and also for kidnapping and murder. On August 28, he was convicted for eight years. Moreover, during the trial the Pir had not been allowed bail. This was taken very seriously by his followers and they condemned the administration at various protest meetings. The severity of the sentence was also criticized and later it became necessary for the administration to step in to ensure law and order.<sup>26</sup> One of his advocates was Barrister Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who, at that time was one of the top class lawyers of the Bombay Presidency. He was extremely critical about the severity of the sentence and

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 362-363.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pp. 362-363.

<sup>23</sup> W. L. K. Herapath, IGP Sind, Administration Report of the Police Department in Sind, Sind Government Press, Karachi, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Report of the Indian Jails Committee 1919-20, East India (Jails Committee), His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921, vol. I, p. 318.

<sup>25</sup> Ansari, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 131-133.



had observed in the Court that if such was the dispensation of justice, then Sindh was not a place worth living!

The Pir was sent to the Ratnagiri jail, spending some time at the Midnapur and Alipur jails in the Bengal also. Assistant Commissioner of Sindh David Symington<sup>27</sup> believed that the Pir had come into contact with the radical nationalist elements, including the Bengali 'terrorists' at Alipur Jail at Calcutta.<sup>28</sup> The period that Sibghatullah spent under detention (1930 to 1936) was one of intense activity by freedom fighters and terrorists, who, when arrested, were incarcerated in the same Bengal jails where the Pir was undergoing his sentence also.

In 1936, when the Pir had been released, many changes had taken place. Due to the 1935 Act and introduction of provincial autonomy, the quantum of political influence available to local notables, especially the Pir Pagara, had enhanced manifold. It was, therefore, possible between 1936 and 1941, for the Pir to assert himself more independently. Local politicians were more willing to accommodate him in return for electoral and ministerial support. The colonial power was 'equally anxious not to antagonize the Pir.'<sup>29</sup>

After his release, the Pir was welcomed everywhere, by the most respectable citizens and by the leading politicians. In 1934 the Pir began to enroll Hurs in a private army, organized courts and instructed that all disputes and quarrels should be referred to the *mashirs* of these courts and not to the police.<sup>30</sup> Subsequent to the 1934 election in Sindh when Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah became Chief Minister, he pressed him for the abolition of the Criminal Tribes Act and the release of the Hurs from their guarded settlements. The new ministry took a decision to 'bring back those deported to Bombay Presidency, close the settlements in Sindh and end the other restrictions enforced against the Hurs.'<sup>31</sup>

In the initial phase, the Hurs protested in a peaceful manner. According to some writers<sup>32</sup>, the Hurs were, in fact, the first people in Sindh to introduce the concept of courting arrest. Hundreds of people, including women and children, would surround police stations and court arrest. Later the Pir's statements became more political in tone and 'British intelligence reports frequently mentioned visits by Congress politicians to Pir jo Goth.' When war broke out, in 1939, the Pir's speeches to his ghazis were 'directed more and more against the injustices of British rule.' By 1940, although his ultimate

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<sup>27</sup> David Symington was Assistant Commissioner in Sindh and later the Acting Collector at Ratnagiri. Wrote under pen name, James Halliday.

<sup>28</sup> J. Halliday, *A Special India* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), pp. 68-70.

<sup>29</sup> S.D.F. Ansari, *op. cit.*, p.133.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> N. Shah and H. Mujtaba, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

objectives were not very clear, the colonial power was considerably worried on his account. His 'involvement with the Congress and his increasing antagonistic attitude towards colonial rule meant that he had strayed too far from the guidelines which regulated the relationship between the British and local elites in Sindh.' It was felt absolutely necessary that he should be made to conform to the requirements of colonial priorities.<sup>33</sup>

### **The 1940's Reluctance to collaborate and venom against collaborators**

Generally, the Pirs of Sindh 'actively promoted themselves in British eyes in order not to be excluded from the public display of honour.' This system of patronage, however, depended 'on the willingness of the local elites to participate.'<sup>34</sup> In 1843 when the British conquered Sindh, most of the powerful families joined, the Pagaros being an exception. The British saw this as flagrant defiance and decided to bolster the Pir's enemies. The Sunni Pirs and Shia Mirs of Khairpur were traditional rivals and the major dispute between them was over the ownership of *shikargahs*. The British restored the throne to those Mirs, who had collaborated with them and they also started interfering with the Pir's *jagirs*. The inevitable reaction was a feeling of extreme annoyance in the Pir. By late 1880s turmoil had gradually built up and by the last decade of the 19th century, the Hurs rebellion against the British started.

In 1936, on being released, Sibghatullah formally launched a rebellion against the British, calling it a jihad against the government and their 'chughals.'<sup>35</sup> The victims of Hur excesses, in most cases, were government servants, mostly police, or members of the public, who had helped, or who were suspected, rightly or wrongly, of helping the police in the investigations of Hur crimes.<sup>36</sup>

Kenneth Ray Eates, the SP Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Sindh, and one of the most competent police officer processing the Hur disturbances, believed, and projected in his reports, that in July 1940, the Pir secretly raised a large force of ghazis, with instructions, when the time arrived, to attack, capture and hold all police stations and posts after killing the personnel. A list was prepared containing the names of officials and others who were to be murdered on the outbreak of disturbances and Eates' name headed the list.<sup>37</sup> However, according to the Pir Pagara's press release, 'these men were merely volunteers', and were being offered to government as Civic Guards. In 1942, apart from an attack on a police station on 5 August 1942 and an

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<sup>33</sup> S.D.F. Ansari, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Ray Eates, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Ray Eates, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Ray Eates, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

unsuccessful attempt to derail a train on the 6 September 1942, all the Hur activity was directed against their fellow Sindhis.<sup>38</sup>

Narrating the cases of murders during the Hur disturbances in Sindh during 1942, Eates believed that they were responsible for '338 outrages in which 252 persons, including 4 hacked to death, and 251 persons including 4 women, more or less severely injured.'<sup>39</sup> Eates assessed that 'over a dozen government buildings, including ten railway stations and a police post were destroyed, telegraph and telephone communications sabotaged, a mail train derailed and twenty four passengers butchered in cold blood.'<sup>40</sup> MacKeith, a police officer of the FC on deputation to the Sindh administration, and a man who has been very frank in his memoirs, also maintains that the Hurs were 'robbing and murdering non-sympathizers and making it too dangerous for government servants like those who looked after the canals to do their work.'<sup>41</sup> Retaliation by the Hurs grew alarmingly and the movement assumed the character of an armed rebellion.<sup>42</sup>

### **Crushing the Hur insurgents via state terrorism**

In March 1942, Hugh Trevor Lambrick was posted as the Additional District Magistrate of Nawabshah and Tharparkar districts with 'special powers' and the task of restoring public confidence.<sup>43</sup> After the train derailment, he was posted as the Civil Advisor (CA) to the Chief Administrator of Martial Law (CAML). Lambrick was assisted by a SP, called Galbraith and an army officer, nicknamed Rosebud.<sup>44</sup> He decided to activate 'police morale and end the defeatist attitude' of non-Hur villagers. Lambrick believed that it was necessary to 'get the police out of their police stations and lead them to the attack.' His strategy was to initiate 'night patrols, ambushes, almost anything to attack the Hurs and keep them on the move.' Arms and ammunition were proscribed, and next, 'eight hundred prominent Hurs not yet outlawed or in hiding but known to operate occasionally with the gangs'<sup>45</sup> were rounded up. Special Tribunals, presided over by magistrates, were established. Action was taken against those who harboured them.<sup>46</sup> In order to achieve quick success 'three flying columns were organized, each with its own guides and trackers.' The strategy incorporated was that each column

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<sup>38</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, 'Memoirs of a Frontier policeman in the North West Frontier Province, Punjab and Sind 1934-1948,' (unpublished memoirs), 1993, p. 192.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Ray Eates, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Eates, Chapter 18, p 4.

<sup>41</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>42</sup> Basil La Bouchardiere Papers at the Oriental and India Office Collections, The Indian Police, 1854-1944. See p. 30, 'The Hurs of Sind, 1941-43.'

<sup>43</sup> P. Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India: The Guardians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 328.

<sup>44</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>45</sup> P. Woodruff, op. cit., p. 329.

<sup>46</sup> Sir P. Griffiths, op. cit., pp. 363-364.

'should move swiftly here and there, with no prepared programme, striking wherever they believed there was a chance of meeting the Hurs in the field and beating them.'<sup>47</sup>

All passenger trains had armed guards provided by the army.<sup>48</sup> Before April 1942, the Hurs had started a campaign of breaching canals. When MacKeith and the FC arrived, Lambrick directed him to arrange for the protection of Jamrao Head, the very important headworks on the Nara, where the Jamrao canal branched off. This was in a very desolate country where the Sindh Police were 'not at all keen to go.'<sup>49</sup> Griffiths quoted Lambrick to the effect that the police were demoralized, not as individuals, but collectively.<sup>50</sup> On the 24th May 1942, the FC Platoon had 'a little brush' in which one Hur was killed and also 'an unfortunate Bhil who had been caught in the FC fire.' Another Hur was killed in an FC ambush on the 24th night near Jamrao canal.<sup>51</sup>

Between March and May 1942, three very serious incidents took place in which Hurs were the perpetrators. First, a Member of the Sindh Legislative Assembly, Sitaldas, was murdered in his village near Mirpurkhas, next Inspector Musa Shah along with several passengers were brutally killed while coming in a bus from Khipro to Mirpurkhas. Subsequent to this a very daring attack on Sayed Ghulam Rasul Shah, the Nazim of Police, Khairpur, at a fortified rest house at Khenwari, in the midst of the desert, completely jolted and demoralized the administration.

In this attack, almost 150 Hurs participated, out of which a sizeable number were killed, but not before killing some of the guards and hacking to pieces the body of the Nazim. The significant and crucial aspect in the raid (also known as the Battle of Khenwari) was, first, the massive number of Hurs involved, second their bold and determined attack against a body of well trained and heavily armed personnel, and third, their determination to kill the Nazim via hatchet blows and decapitate him also, despite the fact that the task could have been accomplished quicker, and with far lesser Hur casualties, if firearms had been used. Another obvious implication of this major catastrophe was the complete failure of administration to gather any information at all about such a massive and bold Hur attack, the plans, strategy and operational requirements would have been worked out by the Hur leaders sometime in advance.

The motives and background to the attack on the Nazim were complex and, many believed that he had incurred the enmity of the powerful clan of (pro-Pir) Junejos, apart from the hatred of the Pir himself, but in the administration, there was speculation that some illicit connection with a woman was also a factor. MacKeith refers to this aspect in his memoirs and specifically mentioned that the 'only Khairpur policemen killed there

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<sup>47</sup> P. Woodruff, op. cit., p. 329.

<sup>48</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>50</sup> Sir P. Griffiths, op. cit., p. 363.

<sup>51</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 180.

had been the Nazim of the Khairpur State Police' and that 'the garrison of Khewari had simply deserted.' He highlighted that Holmes, the British Adviser to the Ruler of Khairpur and Bashir Ahmed, the second in command of the CRP came to suspect that 'the Chief of the Khairpur Police had been murdered by one of his own men, whose wife he had seduced, and that the whole garrison of Khewari Police Station had then thought it prudent to disappear.'<sup>52</sup> Perhaps, this aspect may be partially true.

Phillip Woodruff' also indicated that this gruesome murder was responsible for the 'passing of the special Hur Act.'<sup>53</sup> This was done in a hastily called top-secret session of the Sindh Assembly in which the Suppression of Hur Outrages Act was passed. This was also known as the anti-Hur Act, sometimes referred to as the Hur Act, and contained stringent repressive measures against the Hurs. Under this Act, giving refuge to a Hur was a crime which was understandable, but what was unique in criminal legislation was the fact that giving food or water to a Hur was also a crime. Since the administration had been in readiness for the implementation of this Act, mass arrests were started. In one swoop alone Lambrick detained almost 800 Hurs who had come for 'hazri' as per the provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act.

On 16 May 1942, the Lahore Mail train (the 4 UP proceeding from Karachi to Lahore) was derailed between Shadadpur and Hyderabad. Many of the passengers died due to the accident while others were killed or injured by the 'axe wielding Hurs.'<sup>54</sup> In this sabotage and massacre more than 35 persons died. The attitude of the administration hardened further due to this carnage. As MacKeith recollects, they were 'not in the mood to deal lightly with any Hurs' whom they encountered.<sup>55</sup> Subsequent to this, on the 1 June 1942, Martial Law (ML) was declared in the two districts of Tharparkar and Nawabshah.

The derailment case suspects were tracked by a *paggi* (foot print tracker) to a particular village. MacKeith and his Platoons found the village deserted, took this 'as evidence of guilt', and 'burned it down.' Perhaps, a guilty feeling prompted him to recollect whether 'this was within his instructions from Lambrick' but, whether it was or not, he 'heard no more about it.'<sup>56</sup> A week after ML, MacKeith was 'officially ordered' by the Upper Sindh Force Head Quarters to dynamite four villages near Sanghar and also 'made responsible for dealing with them.' The villagers were believed to have given shelter to the Hur gang responsible for the murder of an officer of the Public Works Department. Some houses in Goolan Bhumbro and another village were blown up after removing the cattle and horses while other houses were burned.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp. 364-368.

<sup>53</sup> P. Woodruff, op. cit., p. 329.

<sup>54</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 181.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 183-184.

After the declaration of Martial Law, initially, a brigade was sent; later the strength was increased to that of a division. The Upper Sindh Force, with headquarters at Hyderabad, comprised of the 84th Indian Infantry Brigade (including the 15th Punjab Regiment), the 'Winnie Brigade' and some civil armed forces. The last consisted of the six FC Platoons, two companies of the CRP, two platoons of the Zhob Militia from Baluchistan and the four platoons of the Punjab Additional Police. MacKeith admits that they 'had far more men' than needed.<sup>58</sup>

Before the imposition of ML, a consensus was building up regarding the destruction and the clearing up of the Makhi Dhand and by mid June 1942, it was decided to clear the Makhi Dhand of the Hurs via a joint army and FC operation. An Indian parachute battalion was dropped in the desert to be inducted into this task. The camel regiment of the Bikaner State, the Ganga Risala, as well as the Kachawa Horse, were also used in the operation. The Makhi Dhand and the desert, as far as Jaisalmer border, had been declared a Proscribed Area under ML regulations and anyone found there was liable to be arrested, or shot, if he attempted to escape. The object of the combined operation was to flush out any Hur gangs that might have based themselves in the Makhi Dhand, but it soon became apparent that there were no permanent Hur camp or settlement there.<sup>59</sup>

On 31 July 1942, on Lambrick's directives, Edward Harland Holt, the Collector Sukkur, accompanied with Major Burrell of the Sappers, visited the Pir's palace and not to assess the feasibility of blasting them and the quantity of explosives needed. He believed that the 'destruction would have a very good effect' in that 'it would make people think that the Government was in earnest.'<sup>60</sup> After examining the Pir's various categories of moveable property kept at the palace, Holt suggested that 'some of the stuff should be sold', because it was deteriorating where it was, and that 'some could be used by the army.'<sup>61</sup> It is interesting that on 5 August 1942, the Pir, although arrested, had not been convicted – in fact the trial had not started as yet. Between 21 August and 4 September 1942, the troops were engaged in destroying the Pir's palace at Pir Jo Goth, near Sukkur.<sup>62</sup>

On 21 August 1942, the Brigade Major of the HQ Upper Sindh Force sent a reference, enclosing two lists of villages, to the Officer Commanding, Jhol, for action to be taken so as to rid the area of Hur women who had 'harboured and assisted Hur gangs' and that 'such women would be tried collectively according to place apprehended under ML

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 182-185.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp. 185-188.

<sup>60</sup> Lambrick to Holt, no. 961, 5 August 1942, and Holt to Lambrick, 5 August 1942. Lambrick Papers (henceforth will be referred to as LP), MSS. EUR. F 2 08/16.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, Holt to Lambrick.

<sup>62</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 334.

Regulation No. 8 by Summary Court and sentenced up to six months imprisonment.<sup>163</sup> The directive further stipulated that the women would subsequently be dispatched to the Hyderabad Jail and the ones under trial would not be placed in enclosures in which men were incarcerated. They were, however, allowed to take their children. The lists enclosed pertained to the authorized villages of *taluka* Sanghar and the unauthorized hamlets and houses in the Makhi Dhund area which belonged to the Hurs.<sup>64</sup>

The Thar Desert and parts of Sanghar were minutely surveyed from the air. Paratroopers and bombs<sup>65</sup> were used against bands of armed men. Robertscot<sup>66</sup> encountered some Hurs at a village called Jinhar, 24 miles from Hathungo and casualties were inflicted on the Hurs by machine gunfire from a supporting aircraft.<sup>67</sup> In another incident, near Paksiri, an aircraft of the Indian Air Force, from Squadron No. 4 that had been specially shifted from Peshawar to Hyderabad, while on a patrol near the Makhi Dhand, saw a movement of men and families towards the Makhi Dhand and strafed them from the air. More than 20 Rajirs died, including women and children.

During Martial Law, the desert parts of Khairpur State and the Tharparkar District of British India, north of the railway line, had been declared a proscribed area and 'the object of Robertscot was to arrest anyone found there and to block most of the wells upon which its sparse population depended.'<sup>68</sup> Robertscot spent its time blocking wells and rounding up any inhabitants of the desert disobeying the Proscription Order or who were not aware of it.<sup>69</sup> The idea was that the desert would no more provide a refuge to Hur outlaws.<sup>70</sup> On 25 January 1943, upon reaching a village called Sumrahu on the eastern border of Khairpur, to arrest Hur outlaws, MacKeith and his party found that 'the only well and the few grass huts had been burnt down by Robertscot.'<sup>71</sup>

In February 1943, the SP Mirpurkhas, John Jenner, received a report that six well known Hur outlaws were in a village near the town of Pithoro, about 30 miles due east of Mirpurkhas. He collected a party of police and the FC and, with Krishnamurthy and Subedar Said Ahmed Shah, set off for the village by lorry. As Platoon Sixteen came opposite the village, disembarked and crossed the channel, six men carrying guns ran out of two huts a little apart from the village, only to meet the fire of the police and Platoon Forty Six. The Hurs were completely surprised and fired 'three wild shots

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<sup>63</sup> ML Administration in Sind, LP, MSS. EUR. F 2 08 / 41, pp. 5-4.

<sup>64</sup> Brigade Major, HQ, Upper Sind Force, Hyderabad, to Officer Commanding, Jhol, Shadadpur, No. 1 0/L/ G, 21 August 1942, pp. 44 - 51, LP, MSS. EUR. F 2 08/64.

<sup>65</sup> ML Administration in Sind, LP, MSS. EUR. F 2 08/41, pp. 5-4.

<sup>66</sup> Abbreviation for Robert's Column, a name given to the force after its commander, Colonel Robert, the officer commanding the 4th/13th Frontier Force Rifles.

<sup>67</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

before they all fell, riddled with bullets.<sup>72</sup> Five died on the spot and the sixth was badly wounded. Two of the dead and the wounded man were well known outlaws, each with a price of 5,000 rupees on his head. One rifle, one revolver, four shotguns and a hatchet, a dagger and some ammunition were recovered.<sup>73</sup>

The administration tried to exploit the Hur refusal to accept food or drink 'from anyone outside the brotherhood and instituted trial by ordeal which was upheld by the Sessions Courts: anyone who would not accept a glass of water was deemed to be a Hur.<sup>74</sup> Hur villages were raided and their cattle herded into other districts. Each FC detachment of 10 men had a Sindh policeman attached as an interpreter and to pick out any stranger that appeared. The objective was to prevent the Farqi Hurs 'from receiving food and other home comforts from their relations and sympathizers in the villages.'<sup>75</sup> To ensure this, the FC 'patrolled the fields in which the villagers worked by day and the thorn fence by night.'<sup>76</sup> An old woman, who suffered during the Hur operations, stated that 'military personnel used to come in the dark along with their chughals' and their money and jewellery were seized. Hurs complained that the colonial administration did not even leave their 'pots and pans' and their families had recourse only to plain bread.<sup>77</sup>

An idea of the stage and level that abuses were tolerated against the Hurs can be had from the profanity of Lt. Bishop, 'a wild character' of the Sindh Police Rifles. One day he returned to Sanghar after an encounter with Hurs, some of whom were armed, in the desert. Six of them were shot dead by his party. According to instructions 'the body of anyone who was killed had to be brought in for identification.'<sup>78</sup> Since he did not have 'room on his camels for six bodies, so he cut their heads off, put them in a sack and buried the bodies.' He arrived in Sanghar 'with his sack looking for someone with a camera or for someone who could identify their heads.' In the middle of his breakfast, hearing a commotion, MacKeith came down and saw that the heads were arranged on the steps of the Rest House where he was staying.<sup>79</sup>

Frederick Young, a police officer from the United Provinces, with no experience of Sindh, had been appointed Police Adviser to General Richardson.<sup>80</sup> He managed to gather some 'real hard intelligence' upon which they were able to act 'by attracting' onto his staff two other 'real policemen' from the Sindh Police, a Deputy SP from the Punjab called Mohammed Sharif and an Inspector called Mohammed Usman Jamali. Sharif

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

<sup>73</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>74</sup> S.D.F. Ansari, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>75</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit. p 224.

<sup>76</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 224. 44 Shah and Mujtaba, 1995, p 45.

<sup>77</sup> Shah and Mujtaba, 1995, p 75.

<sup>78</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, 1993, op. cit. p 216.

<sup>79</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 189.



depended to a great extent upon information obtained by Jamali.<sup>81</sup> According to MacKeith, 'an unattractive feature' of Young's methods was 'his practice of screwing the last drop of information out of a captured outlaw and then sending him off to be tried and hanged.' This, to MacKeith, 'seemed to be not quite cricket', but then, as he admits, he was 'never as good a policeman as Freddy.' Elaborating further, he mentioned that Young may not have 'ever promised the captured outlaws anything, but his manner of interrogation was so friendly that he may have raised their hopes.'<sup>82</sup>

### **The Colonial enigma: Absence of genuine information**

The colonial predicament was that effective information could not be obtained, 'though the Hurs barely troubled to conceal their movements.'<sup>83</sup> The Hurs had full faith and trust in the Pir, were loyal to him, and prepared to suffer at his wish or command. Aggravating the potentially dangerous vacuum of authentic information was the colonial recruitment policy.

Generally, the imperial policy did not favor indigenous recruitment in Sindh. Most battalions based in Sindh had either Punjabi, Hindustani (that is, from the United Province), Dogra or Jat manpower. Similarly, the armed branch of the police substantially, and the mounted branch partially, had manpower from outside Sindh. For example, the Crown Representative Police (CRP) commanded by Nicholas Holmes, had Khan Bahadur Bashir Ahmed Khan, KPM, as the second in command who was seconded from the 1 Punjab Regiment. These police units had been formed mainly from a disbanded battalion of Sikhs, Jats and Punjabi Muslims.<sup>84</sup> MacKeith confirms the preponderance of non-Sindhis in it and that a high proportion of the Indian officers and non commissioned officers had been seconded from the army.<sup>85</sup>

British requirements, in 1943, did not favor enlistment of Hurs, 'even if they had been prepared to serve.' Colonial policy dictated 'a non-Sindee force', but any non-Sindee force stationed permanently in Sindh 'would have tended to get soft.' Hence the strategy devised was to induct the FC comprising of men from the mountain tribes of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Since they 'were accustomed to having bullets whistling around their ears', both on duty and at home, and 'did not panic in warlike situations', they were the logical choice,<sup>86</sup> considering the policies and priorities of the Government. FC manpower was recruited, platoon wise, from the same tribe and there was homogeneity and loyalty, comparable and as effective as within the Hur

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 190-215.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> P. Woodruff, op. cit., p. 329.

<sup>84</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., pp. 364-368.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, pp. 209-210.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

jamiat. Four platoons of the Punjab Additional Police joined the operations subsequent to the derailment of the Lahore Mail, or the 4 UP.<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, a policy of having trustworthy strangers to police the 'natives' had its shortcomings also. The Makhi Dhand, in June 1942, was declared a proscribed area and anyone found there could be arrested or shot if he attempted to escape. For the non-Sindhi security forces, it was difficult to assess who was a Hur and who was not. Even the Sindh Police could not be sure because 'the Hurs were not a tribe or clan but a sect, who drew its membership from several clans.'<sup>88</sup>

Due to the absence of genuine information, most of the time, the police, the FC or the armed forces were operating either on the basis of incorrect or inadequate intelligence or on sources which had a vested interest. Therefore, the colonial action or reaction was either too late or inappropriate. There were instances of excesses committed by the forces responsible to restore order. Even action, which under normal circumstances should have been strongly deprecated, was either ignored, or even appreciated. One case pertained to the Garrang bungalow. Lambrick received information that a gang of 200 Hurs was guarding the Pir Pagaro's Ganang Bangla near Sanghar. On the night of 29th April 1942, Lambrick and MacKeith 'along with five platoons of FC, a large body of police and a company of the Punjab Regiment in support' set off for the target. The Sindh government had concluded that the presence of the Hurs at the Ganang Bangla provided the Hurs with 'a rallying point' and hence it was decided to shift the Pir's wives and two sons to Karachi. The FC surrounded the Bangla, but there was no sign of an armed guard.<sup>89</sup>

However, this inadequacy of correct advance information could lead to disastrous consequences and one such example was when Lambrick himself was trapped in the desert, but saved due to the bravery of some of the FC personnel. On 20 May 1942, Lambrick went off with Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Lang to 'investigate a hot report' that a number of Hurs were going to congregate out in the desert to celebrate a wedding. In the desert they came across a band of 13 to 14 Hurs who, 'when challenged, made off into the desert.' Lambrick gave chase, and fired two shots with his pistol. In the pursuit that followed, two Hurs were captured, out of which one was wounded seriously also. Later the wounded Hur died, but 'they left his body at an abandoned house.'<sup>90</sup> At night, Lambrick decided to camp in the desert. At about 9 p.m., the police picket was attacked, and only three police personnel succeeded in reaching the FC picket, but these three policemen 'put their rifles down and took no further part in the battle', because they had seen their colleagues being killed in action. Out of the three FC personnel, two still had their rifles and they 'opened up with their Veery

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 182.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, pp. 188-189.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 144.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

Lights.' In all three policemen died, two bodies of Hurs were found and 'there were signs of many other bodies having been dragged away.' By morning, ASP Lang with extra force had arrived, but by then Lambrick had received news that the information about the wedding 'had been wrong as to the date.'<sup>91</sup> It had taken place earlier and the Hurs whom he had encountered were returning from it and had later dispersed. On Lambrick's recommendation, Sher Ali and Hassan Nawaz of the FC were awarded police medals.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 149-180.

## II

### The trial of Pir Sibghatullah Shah: The end justifies the means

#### Pre-trial manipulations

An important aspect in the induction of Martial Law was that this would facilitate a death sentence on the Pir, which the administration desperately desired and that this was not at all possible under the normal civil / criminal law and the procedural system of the courts. There is a very interesting hand-written note in the Lambrick Papers. It starts by the premise that it was 'impossible to eradicate the Hur movement so long as the Pir was alive.'<sup>93</sup> The question was how to secure his conviction, adding that 'of course the thing has to be done legally, by a fair trial.'<sup>94</sup> Debating the issues under both civil law as well as Martial Law, the note observes that under the civil law 'the procedure is tedious and the pleaders' legal quibbles and some judges' softy conscience may present serious obstacles.'<sup>95</sup> An acquittal could not be risked, as it would 'spoil things.'<sup>96</sup> The best course, therefore, was the Court Martial procedure. The issue highlighted was that 'Martial Law in Sindh would have no meaning if its arms cannot reach the arch devil, the author of the whole evil.'<sup>97</sup>

A major problem was that the cases, in which the Pir Pagaro was being tried, had all taken place prior to the imposition of Martial Law Lambrick's theory was that the entire Hur movement should be 'treated as an organization, a continuous transaction', then ML could cover the case of the Pir also. Martial Law Regulation 52 was, therefore, drafted in a manner to cover the incidents prior to the imposition of Martial Law. Thus expediency resulted in a precedent for initiating trial and inflicting punishment for something that was not a crime at the time of its occurrence. In a letter to Peter Cargill,<sup>98</sup> then working as a Staff Officer to the Chief Administrator of Martial Law, on the 5 December 1942, Bernard Budd, the DM Tharparkar, wrote that 'the Hur problem' would never be solved 'till its leader' was hung, and to that end a case was being prepared. In a conference, civil and military officials discussed the prospects of building up a 'really firm hanging case' because anything short of that would create more problems than solve.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Confidential Note on hurs, (n.d.) pp 16 -18, LP. MSS. EUR. F 208/16.

<sup>94</sup> Confidential Note on Hurs, (n.d.) pp. 16-18, LP, MSS. EUR. F 208/16.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p 16.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Cargill, a British officer, belonged to the Indian Civil Service, had a very promising career, and married a very pretty British lady who divorced him while he was posted in Sind. Much later, however he joined the World Bank in Washington DC, and progressed to the post of deputy M.D. Later, however, on a flight from Washington to London, he had a heart attack and died in the plane.

<sup>99</sup> Proceedings of Conference on Hur Situation held at Viceroy's House, 8 August 1942, L/P/&J/4/4436, pp. 122-8.

Realizing the crucial role of the prosecution witnesses, the Sindh administration felt the necessity to 'take infinite pains' to keep them 'in a happy frame of mind.'<sup>100</sup> They were also not prepared to take the risk of letting crucial and sensitive witnesses wander about as they pleased. Hence some restrictions on the movements of witnesses were inducted, ostensibly to cater for the threat from the Hurs, but actually, to ensure that extraneous influences did not deter them from deposing in favour of the state as and when required. They also realized that ration diet in the confined state was not likely to keep them happy, therefore they could allow 'their servants to cook food brought from the bazaar.'<sup>101</sup>

Some other complications were arising, probably because those in the lower rungs of the administration were not in the picture *vis-à-vis* the decision to execute the Pir and were, therefore, not aware of the exigencies of contented and secure witnesses. A staff officer to the Lambrick, to Civil Advisor, wrote that Khuda Bux Pitafi was 'a very useful witness', but was arrested almost immediately after his statement was recorded in Sukkur. This was done by Mr. Holt, the DC Sukkur, under Regulation 46.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, 'twelve relatives of Hajji Musa' were 'arrested for fabricating false evidence in connection with the recent dacoity in his village.' The same staff officer, though he knew nothing of the merits of the case, wrote to the DC on 'grounds of policy' that it was 'inexpedient to press the prosecution.' Moreover, Pitafi was one of the 'most important witnesses' and had given the administration 'a great deal of help in other ways.' If the dacoity was 'bogus', the motive was only to 'excite some sympathy' so as to 'induce the authorities to provide more protection.' The arrests were considered to have 'the most depressing effect on him and the other witnesses.' Hence the staff officer strongly urged 'that the prosecution be dropped.'<sup>103</sup>

### **Procedural irregularities**

In early January 1943, the Pir was informed that his trial would begin on 29th of the month and that postponement would not be permitted on the ground that he or his legal advisers were not ready.<sup>104</sup> The Pir wrote that if they wished 'to do justice' then his case 'should not be hurried on' until he was 'able to secure some Barrister.'<sup>105</sup> The accounts of the Pir at the Imperial Bank of India were frozen, his silver, jewellery and moveable and immovable property was seized. All this appeared to be a strategy to create financial hurdles so that the Pir could not secure the services of a top class lawyer.

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<sup>100</sup> LP, MSS/EUR/F 208/16, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p 24.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p 26.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.

A public prosecutor of Nawabshah named Dialmal Lalwani was placed at the disposal of Pir Sibghatullah for making the preliminary arrangements for his defence. He got down to the task of building up his case. The Lambrick files indicate that he wanted to highlight that the Nawabshah police 'started a number of false cases against the Murids of the Pir' and that the Hurs were being 'unbearably harassed by the police round about Ganang Bangla which was subsequently desecrated.'<sup>106</sup> The Pir, he advocated, was 'in no way responsible for the misdeeds alleged to have been done by the Hurs.' They 'rose up to a man because the government officers disrespected the Pir's family, made a search of the Ganang Bangla, burnt the hedge of the Ganang Bangla, removed the ladies from a sequestered place to the Bunder Road, Karachi.'<sup>107</sup> He added that 'never in the history of the Pirs' had the ladies been 'lodged in such a fashion.' The army officers, moreover 'destroyed the Ganang Bangla and blew up the Pir's Headquarters in his village.' In his note to Lambrick, he emphasized that the Hurs rebelled because 'acts of sacrilege were committed by government servants, acts which according to the notions, ideas and beliefs of the Hurs were such that their religious allegiance to their Pir and to their God demanded of them to do so, if they ever would attend salvation.' He highlighted the doubtful validity of the 'oral evidence of witnesses of questionable credibility' and that most of the prosecution witnesses were government officers. Moreover, he emphasized that 'during the lifetime' of the Pagaras, 'the Hurs behaved in much the same way' as they had done in the 1940s and 'there was no question of any of the Pirs trying to become King of Sindh.' Although connected to the main issue, these points were turned down as irrelevant. Again, the advocate emphasized to Lambrick, the Civil Advisor (VA) to the Chief Administrator that 'the genesis of a Hur, his temperament, his mood, his life, his belief, his prowess and his utter brutality' were all admissible, relevant and important facts' which were 'bound to throw a flood of light on the delicate and pregnant issues involved in the case.'<sup>108</sup> Unfortunately, the CA either categorized these pertinent issues as delaying tactics or considered them as irrelevant.

Hashim Gazdar, a Minister of the Sindh Government was cited as a defence witness, but he wanted to wriggle out of it. He was advised that his only chance was to tell the advocate that his answers would be unfavorable, and then his name might be cancelled.<sup>109</sup> Nichaldas Vazirani, another Minister, also expressed his unwillingness to appear as a defence witness. Mir Khuda Baksh Talpur, of Tando Bago, sent a certificate that he was sick and the doctor had advised him complete bed rest. Khan Bahadur Ayub Khuhro, however, gave evidence as a defence witness, but this cost him the displeasure of Governor Dow.

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<sup>106</sup> Dialmal to Lambrick, 26 January 1943, p. 69, para 4, LP, MSS. EUR. F 208/16.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. The ladies were removed via Government of Sindh, Home Department, (Special), Sind Secretariat, Karachi, 8 May 1942, Order No. 41/XIII - H (S), p. 80.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, Dialmal to Lambrick, p. 40.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, Maurice to Lambrick, p. 82.

A recent article in a Pakistani journal indicates that the prosecution witnesses were not prepared to 'come face to face with the Pir; all the witnesses were examined behind a curtain.'<sup>110</sup> This is also confirmed by MacKeith who mentions that Colonel Holmes gave evidence at the Pir of Pagara's trial, but 'did not see him as there was a partition between him and all witnesses.' This was because 'he was said to have hypnotic eyes.'<sup>111</sup>

The Lambrick Papers contain another very interesting extract from a private letter dated April 1941 from A.G. Wells, the District Judge Sukkur. During 1940-41, he went three times to Karachi and on all three occasions he saw the Governor who said that 'the police had their knife into the Pir and had continued to *shikar* him.' The Governor was further reported as having said that 'some years ago when they could not get him any other way they ran him under the Arms Act.'<sup>112</sup> Wells further quoted the Governor as having thought the Pir 'an injured innocent' and also as having said so.

### **Execution, burial and issues connected with the Pir's family**

On 18 March evening, Young visited the Pir in his cell and informed him that his appeals for mercy<sup>113</sup> had been rejected. He found the Pir's attitude resigned and dignified.<sup>114</sup> The Governor of Sindh reported that the Pir took the 'announcement of the date of his execution extremely well' and 'seemed quite content.' The Pir told the Commissioner of police that he would 'meet his death with dignity.' However, he wanted to know what would happen to his body because he desired 'to be buried in the Pir's burying place in the Durgah.' He was even prepared to 'be given a very small tomb' and mentioned that 'there was plenty of room.' On the 20th March 1943, the Pir Pagaro was executed. Even at the time of his execution, the Pir was composed and behaved with dignity.<sup>115</sup>

The burial of the Pir was kept a very tight secret and, very few persons, mostly top officials, were aware of the mode of disposal of the dead body or the location of the grave. In January 1943, the Governor Sindh wrote a Demi Official letter to the Viceroy on the subject of the disposal of the body of the Pir Pagaro and stated that the general opinion was against burial at sea. He further mentioned that General Richardson, Chief Martial Law Administrator, believed that the body should be shipped to British territory near Aden and interred there. However, the Sindh Ministers thought that this was unnecessary and at that stage, Dow agreed with them.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> N. Shah and H. Mujtaba, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>111</sup> Alastair A. MacKeith, op. cit., p. 368.

<sup>112</sup> LP, MSS. EUR. F 2 08/16, p. 104.

<sup>113</sup> The colonial documents only mention the appeal of mercy by Soreh Badshah, however no any sources or documents by Soreh Badshah prove the evidence of the mercy appeal. It seems an attempt by the colonial administration to downplay the Hur Resistance and Soreh Badshah.

<sup>114</sup> Demi Official (D.O.) letter no. 135/84a, no. 28, 1 April 1943, p. 32, para 3, p. 35, para 11, Correspondence with the Governor Sind, 1943, at the Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) of the British Library.

<sup>115</sup> Linlithgow to Dow, op. cit., 1 April 1943, p. 14.

<sup>116</sup> Dow to Linlithgow, op. cit., 29 January 1943, D. O. no. 51/4 - A, p. 8, no. 8a.

On 10 February 1943, the prospects of burial outside India or at Jiwani, a coastal town in Baluchistan, were also debated upon. The Governor General was apprehensive that subsequent to his execution, the Pir may be 'regarded as a martyr' and his grave could become 'centre of disturbance.'<sup>117</sup> At one stage, it was thought that he was buried either along the coast of Baluchistan or the Gulf.<sup>118</sup> Sorely, an officer of the Indian Civil Service, in his manuscript memoirs, thought that the late Pir was buried on Churna island, off the coast of Karachi and Hub, but this was not correct. For years and years, there has been speculation, and a common belief was that his body was dumped into the sea.

On 20 February 1943, however, it was decided that the military authorities would arrange for disposal of the body 'outside Sindh without touching Karachi.' Finally, the Pir was buried on Astola Island, in the territorial limits of Kalat State. This is confirmed from the secret cipher telegrams sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India and also from Lt. General Molesworth's comments and observations in his book *Curfew on Olympus*. Molesworth's comments carry a tremendous weightage because, around 1942-43, he was at the GHQ and monitoring the situation in the North West Command (which included the Sindh area also). Some of the reasons for the selection of Astola Island were that it was a tiny island, with no vegetation or water and about 40 miles off the coast of Kalat, in the Arabian Sea. The island, according to Molesworth, was infested with snakes and scorpions.

Even around the end of March 1943, two sons of the Pir, aged around ten and twelve, along with their mother were being maintained as security prisoners in a house at Karachi. At one stage, the Governor Sindh had 'seriously considered the possibility of permanently exiling the two boys from India.'<sup>119</sup> The military court which convicted the Pir Pagara had also ordered the confiscation of his personal property and the Government assumed that it applied 'to all his personal possessions as an individual.'<sup>120</sup>

### **Colonial priorities and justice.**

In the trial of the Pir Pagara, apart from the overt concern shown by the office of the CA in the disconnected cases against the prosecution witnesses, a significant pointer is the criminal background of the witnesses themselves. Strong enmity, acute vested interest, substantial financial gain, or out of turn promotions, in the case of government officers, were very important factors in motivating witnesses. Criminals, who saw the prospects of getting their record washed out, would always be willing to be used as tools. The

<sup>117</sup> Linlithgow to Dow, op. cit., Telegram R, 9 February 1943, no. 384 - G , p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> N. Shah and H. Mujtaba, op. cit., p.40.

<sup>119</sup> Dow to Linlithgow, op. cit., D.O. No. 246/84 (b), 10 August 1943, p 110, (b).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, from Sind, Karachi, to Home, New Delhi, Express Letter, 18 May 1943, no. 41/2 0-H (S), p. 113.



trial of the Pir Pagara illustrates that such categories had an important place in the witness box also, because the end justified the means.

The way the trial was manipulated and law, rules and procedures twisted, a judgement pronounced and finally the victim executed, indicates the ruthless approach of the colonial administration and a total absence of administrative and ethical values. On the other hand, the murder of the ex-Premier of Sindh, Allah Baksh Soomro was tackled in a routine manner.

### III

## Murder of Allah Bux Soomro and developments from 1944 to 1954

### Murder of ex-Premier Allah Bux Soomro

On 14 May 1943, Allah Bux Soomro, the ex-Prime Minister of Sindh, was shot dead by a gang of men who jumped over some walls and 'got clean away'.<sup>121</sup> The Sukkur Police established that 'the murderers were Hurs and no more.' The Inspector General of Police was G.G. Ray, and he took over the investigation himself and put Khan Bahadur Ghulam Akbar Khan on special duty to help the investigation. Some arrests were made and Basil La Bouchardiere, who was the District SP Larkana, mentioned that 'the witnesses could not remember or they were not at all sure about the statements they might have made to the police.' Hence they were acquitted by the Sessions Court. Initially, it was felt that there was 'nothing to support the possibility that Hurs' were behind the murder. By the last week of May, the Sindh Government had offered a reward of 10,000 rupees for information leading to the arrest of his assailants.

However, when the investigation was personally looked into by Eates, he concluded that the accused was a Hur who was already wanted in three other murders.<sup>122</sup> Later, the accused were arrested and one of the main accused, either implicated, or was made to implicate, Khan Bahadur Muhammad Ayub Khuhro who was challaned in the Sessions Court Sukkur for conspiring and abetting the murder.

At that time the District and Sessions Judge of Sukkur District was Burjor B. Paymaster,<sup>123</sup> a competent and upright ICS officer. Assessing the case very comprehensively, he gave Khuhro the benefit of doubt and acquitted him.<sup>124</sup> Later, however the two main accused directly in the murder were hanged and later Mohabat Bihan, one of the most important confidante, was arrested and, in 1946, he was hanged also.

### Lifting of ML, continuation of repressive laws, mass arrest and activation of Lorhas

At the end of May 1943, ML was lifted but by then the major objective of induction of ML, that is, the execution of the Pir had been accomplished. A very large number of active Farki Hur leaders, especially those close to the Pir were hanged via summary

<sup>121</sup> Basil La Bouchardiere Papers, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 25th May, DO no. 166/88 (4).

<sup>123</sup> After partition, Paymaster migrated to India where he ultimately became the Chief Secretary of Maharashtra.

<sup>124</sup> See his article in the 1949 issue of Indian Administrative Review regarding the acquittal due to benefit of doubt. See also Dr. Hamida Khuhro's book on her father, K. B. M. Ayub Khuhro. She argues, rather convincingly, that Khuhro was implicated in the case by Governor Dow, IGP Ray and DSP Ghulam Akbar Khan.

trials by the ML authorities, for example, in the year of ML, 1 June 1942 to 31 May 1943, almost 200 Hurs were hanged. Most of the cases were hastily prepared with little or no evidence, in a majority of cases, evidence was only of police officers or that of persons with vested interests, such as his enemies, disgruntled relatives or aspirants for the post of Pir Pagaro. It is abundantly clear that in the absence of ML, it would have been impossible to secure a conviction, let alone a death sentence in such cases.

Since the Hurs appeared to be were subdued, and further continuation of ML would bring a bad name to the government, the administration decided to lift ML. Later, however, in 1944, when serious Hur outrages erupted persistently in 1944, the administration realized that the Hur inactivity during the year 1943 was artificial.

Towards the end of 1943, the Sindh Police Rifles (SPR), a para-military force, had not only been set up with HQ at Shadadpur, Senior ranks were from the army, including Col. Abernethy, the first Commandant of the SPR. A reasonable percentage in the force were from the Baluch tribes, such as Brohis, Bugtis, Marris, with very little or no representation of the local Sindhis.

H. T. Lambrick continued as the Special Commissioner for the Hur areas while Frederick Young<sup>125</sup> returned back to the UP Police and was, for the sometime, posted as the IGP of Bhopal State. Coercive measures against Hur *zamindars* were in full force, mass arrests under the Hur Act became a routine feature and the DIR were indiscriminately applied. Land confiscation policy for landlords having linkages with Hurs was fine tuned by Lambrick and Halford, the Revenue Commissioner for Sindh. The conditions in the Lorhas continued to deteriorate while the number of inmates was rising each week. There was a shortage of doctors, compounders, dais, paramedics, *munshis*, medicines, bedding, clothing, and, in fact, every item necessary for housekeeping, while sanitary conditions were horrible. Sickness and death, especially amongst the very young children and the old, infirm, was very common and relief from suffering and despair was not available.

#### **End 1943 to end 1945: Recrudescence of Hur outrages and some administrative measures**

The year 1943 went on peacefully, but by the close of the year, Hur outrages had started and the year 1944 was particularly bad for the administration with a serious recrudescence of law and order on a large scale. In many cases Hurs retaliated by killing those that had co-operated with the administration in the arrests of the Hur leaders or had collaborated with the army or the police. This revival of the Hur trouble alarmed Lambrick as well as Bernard Budd, Cargill and the others. By mid 1944 Rahim Hingoro

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<sup>125</sup> Frederick Young, a very tall and extremely bulky officer, died of a heart attack and is buried in the Christian cemetery in Bhopal.

had become the undisputed leader of the Hur commando gangs and was known as 'Rahim Badshah.' Many bold and violent attacks were made on collaborators, spies, and those who had given evidence against the Pir Pagaro or the other hurs executed during the ML days. Amongst such victims of Hur vengeance were police officials, paggis and some *waderas*. In addition, several breaches were carried out by these Hur desperados on the important canals.

Around early 1944, there was a Hur raid on the town of Sanghar itself, despite the presence of the FC Platoons. Some non-Hur Sindhis were killed. Subsequently, FC Outposts were established and the 'lorha' system of the 1890s (initiated by the then District Magistrate Hyderabad, W.S. Lucas) was revived. According to MacKeith 'this resembled the concentration camp system used at the end of the Boer War, but was more like the system which was developed in Malaya in the fifties.'<sup>126</sup>

As a measure of overall crime control and consolidation of the government's writ, a comprehensive plan was initiated for the establishment of a Sanghar sub division to include Sanghar, Jhol, Sinjhor, Khipro and other 'troubled Hur areas.' Earlier these areas formed part of Nawabshah District, Tharparkar District and Hyderabad district, and hence there was an acute problem of co ordination, liaison, monitoring. Once consolidated, control and monitoring would inevitably, improve. Later the Sanghar sub division was expanded and formulated as the Sanghar district.

However, the most important development of 1944 to 1946 was the destruction and burning of the Makhi Dhand and later its development and its re-colonisation by ex army settlers from the Punjab through a very fine and comprehensive coordination between Lambrick, the GHQ and the Revenue Commissioner for Sindh. The idea was to have a homogenous and very closely knit population of rural settlers who would have a natural desire to stay and cultivate the lands rather than to acquire and then sell and finally move back to the Punjab. Such a well knit and integrated population would, in view of the fact that 100 per cent of the allotted were ex-Army, be an equal match for the Hur gangs. This policy was implemented gradually and steadily and by August 1944 settlers had taken over the land allotted to them. Surprisingly, the scheme of re-colonisation by outsiders continued after the creation of Pakistan and the same colonial priorities became the policy for the nascent government. This was so because at that time the country, and especially Sindh, was being administered by the former Pakistani ICS officers who were junior colleagues to the British ICS that had formulated and implemented the anti – Hur policies.

Lambrick had initiated a scheme to dispatch a reasonable number of the most hardened Hurs to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Around 1942, the Andaman and the Nicobar Islands had fallen to the Japanese. However, by end 1944, Japanese defeat was

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<sup>126</sup> Alastair A. Mackeith, op. cit., p. 223.

expected and Lambrick again raised the issue and pursued it with the federal government of India. But around mid 1945, the British were committed to the withdrawal from India and the mechanics was under consideration and study. The proposal of the government of Sindh was therefore not accepted.

### **Repressive Hur policies: Media and political criticism**

By the end of 1944, the colonial repressive policies against the Hurs were being criticized in the press, as well as by the Congress and also by the Muslim League. Hence the issue of the Hur Uplift programmes assumed importance. The unfortunate aspect is that the reconstruction and reduction in the misery of the Hur and his family, had been completely ignored from 1900 to 1944 and lip service was paid to this extremely sensitive issue. By 1945, the time had come when serious attention was required to be devoted towards the planning for the education of the Hur orphans, many of whom were the offspring of those hanged (indiscriminately) during the Hur Martial law and even later, and many were the orphans of those killed in the so called encounters with the military, SPR or the police. An idea about the prevailing feeling of guilt can be had from the correspondence of the Governor Sindh.

Towards the latter part of 1945 and the first few months of 1946, Government functionaries, especially the then Governor, R.F. Mudie, had realized and also acknowledged that their earlier handling of the Hurs was flawed. While there was indiscriminate repression, there was no uplift plan or at least, no visible effort appeared to be on the ground. As of 9 April 1946, Mudie observed:

But I feel very strongly that, if we are to continue a repressive policy against the dangerous Hurs ... as we must..., so must combine it with a definite policy of uplift for the rest. Merely classifying them as criminal tribes and relying on the very vague uplift provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act will not do. The Hur problem is altogether on a different scale from that of the ordinary wandering tribes or thieves who are generally dealt with under this Act. We will have to get out a definite scheme and give it publicity. This will help us politically and morally in pursuing the repressive policy where it is necessary. A merely negative policy of repression is to no avail. This is recognized by the Sindh Government, and so far little has been done to prepare a definite plan of uplift or to provide funds.<sup>127</sup>

In relation to the uplift aspect, the inaction of the Government of Sindh, especially the Government of India, since the early 1940s, appeared to be a glaring case of a callous

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<sup>127</sup> LP 80, pp. 41-42 (Microfilm nos. 26 0-263). Secret, 9 April 1946. Note by His Excellency on the Disposal of the Pir's Immoveable Property, items 3, 4, 5 and 6.

approach to a sensitive issue. Even the Governor Sindh realized this in 1946 when he wrote:

The Government of India, in claiming the whole of the Pir's property, relies on the judgment of the Court Martial forfeiting that property to the Central Government. I do not think that fact is a very strong ground, but there is little use arguing about the legality of anything under martial law. In any case, taken at its face value, all that the court's order can possibly mean is that the Pir's property was put at the disposal of the Government of India to use as they liked. The position that I challenge is the Government of India's refusal to apply this amount to the uplift of the Hurs.<sup>128</sup>

However, Mudie<sup>129</sup> suggested the formation of a Trust by the Government of India and the money obtained from the sale of the Pir's property 'be placed at the disposal of the trustees for the education and uplift of the Hurs.' His argument was that this 'would give the trustees a considerable say in the treatment of the Hurs', even if the Governor's powers were abolished. While he felt that 'it would be approved by all reasonable men', the advantage for the Government was that it would make 'it easier for the government to pursue a policy of repression when and where necessary.'

### **Post-Partition developments**

By early 1944, Lambrick had left Pakistan to join Oriel College, Oxford, as a Research Fellow, while Bernard Budd continued on various assignments till 1951. A few other officers of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police (IP) also continued. For example, Basil La Bouchardiere, IP, worked for a few years but left bitter and frustrated. Roger Pearce, ICS, also continued for a few years after partition, but then got frustrated with the political interference in official work, and went back to England, quite disappointed.<sup>130</sup> After the creation of Pakistan, for some years, the policy of the Federal Government, as well as that of the Sindh Government, appeared to follow the earlier orientation of the colonial days. Most of the senior officers at the helm of affairs were the same who had served in the Hur areas in junior ranks. While the Hur terror and tactics were emphasized, the repressive policies (which may have aggravated or triggered – off a violent reaction) inflicted on them were ignored.

More than four years after the creation of Pakistan, in December 1951, the two sons of the Pagara returned from England and, in a very well attended ceremony, Sikander Shah was inducted as the Pir Pagara. Many Hurs surrendered on his advice and the

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<sup>128</sup> LP 80, op. cit.

<sup>129</sup> LP 80, op. cit.

<sup>130</sup> See Roger Pearce, *Once a Happy Valley: Memoirs of an ICS Officer in Sindh, 1938-48* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001). He was rather friendly with Mr. and Mrs. Cargill and they are mentioned in his book. Around 1944-45, Pearce wanted to intervene and save their marriage but both Peter and his wife were determined to separate.

situation started improving. Unfortunately Rahim Hingoro did not surrender and was later arrested, tried and sentenced to death. His wife led a raid, with about 40 Hurs on the Hyderabad jail, to facilitate the escape of Rahim, but the parapet wall had been electrified with a wire. During the escape bid, Rahim fell down from the top and landed between the jail building and the boundary wall and, in the process, broke his leg. He was hauled up and put in solitary confinement with elaborate security arrangements. In 1954 he was hanged. During the early fifties, the Pakistan Government abolished the Criminal Tribes Act and Lorhas were also discontinued. This, perhaps was a very wise step and in many ways, directly and indirectly, contributed not only to the easing of tension between the Hurs and the government, but also calmed down the Hurs and made them realize that they would no longer be treated as savages or as animals and confined in prison like camps.

The Hurs successfully improved their image by their participation and invaluable contribution as a contingent attached to the Pakistan Army in the 1965 War with India. Due to the familiar terrain, their rugged physique and their intelligence system, the role and achievement of the Hurs was significant. During this War, in Sindh, it was only due to them, their strategy and tactics, that the Pakistan Army successfully took over a very large chunk of Indian Territory in the Rajasthan Desert across the Sindh border. Since then, for various reasons, the Hurs appear to be rehabilitated in the main stream of Sindh society and while occasional crimes are committed by Hurs like other deviants, the remarkable development is that the savagery and venom of the colonial days has completely eroded.

## About The Author

Mr. Aftab Nabi M.A. in Economics, 1967, from Karachi University, L.L.B. 1982, from Sindh University Jamshoro, M.Sc. in Defence and Strategic Studies from QAU, (via National Defence Collage) Islamabad 1994, and M. Phil., in Criminology, from the University of Cambridge, U.K. In 1995-96.

Currently registered for a Ph. D at the University of London (Royal Holloway College, London). His thesis will be on the "Criminological Consequences Due to the Application of the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act on the Hurs of Sindh, 1900 to 1952."

Earlier, he wrote many articles in the Friday Supplement of the Dawn newspaper, mostly on (i) the evolution and role of the police in colonial Sindh (ii) the trial and execution of the Pir Pagaro in March 1943. These have been translated into Sindhi and Urdu and published as a book (iii) cattle lifting and on *karo kari* in colonial Sind, these articles were published in The Journal of Criminology. Since last four years have been writing articles for The Pakistan Horizon, the Journal of The Pakistan Institute of International Affairs. Some of these are (i) "1916, The Great Arms Scare in Karachi," (ii) 1915-17, German and Afghan Intrigues on the Dadu-Larkana border in Sind," (iii) "Policing Insurgency, the Hurs of Sind," (iv) "Sind in the Vortex of The Great Game," (v) the "Battle of Miani and the Conquest of Sind" and the last (vi) on "Kala Pani, the dreaded incarceration centre."

In government service, last posting was as Director General (DG), National Police Bureau and DG National Forensic Science Agency, Ministry of Interior, Islamabad. Earlier worked as Additional DG FIA, Islamabad, Deputy DG Anti-Narcotics Force, Islamabad. Between 1997 and 2001 was twice posted as IGP Sindh. At the DIGP rank, between 1980 and 1997, have been posted on almost every assignment available in Sindh Police and on some federal government postings.

Was awarded the President's Police Medal and the Qaide Azam Police Medal for gallantry.