

# HISTORY AND ROLE OF A FEUDAL REGIME IN NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS: A CASE STUDY OF SARGODHA, JHANG AND CHINIOT

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## 1. Abstract

Feudalism refers to a dynamic socio-political and economic system in which possession of land is the driving force behind power or authority, with a hierarchical framework. This research highlights the fact that feudalism still continues to exert its control over rural populated districts of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot despite of democratic functional order. This paper examines how feudalism, specifically in the form of lambardara nizam in these districts, continues to persist and influence the governance. With the help of qualitative analysis, the research truly depicts the essence of feudalism in these regions and how tradition is in transition. Despite this fact, feudalism poses to be resilient highlighting the weak institutional apparatus which can be seen as a limitation of democratic governance in Pakistan. Taking into account these dynamics, this research demands influential reforms and strong governance to ensure an inclusive system.

### 1.1 Key Words

Nizam, jagirdar, chawkidar, malia

## 2. Introduction

Feudalism as a significant socio-political system has structured societies throughout various historical time periods and expanses. This research work explores the tribal history and governance of feudal regimes in the districts of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot, investigating their development, sustainability and impact at social and political level. Interpreting the history of feudalism particularly in European discourse, this research paper allows contextualizing feudal hierarchy within the Indian subcontinent, where institutionalized feudal system was augmented. Delving into Pakistan's Jagirdari system and contemporary feudalism, the paper highlights the deep-rooted influence of feudalism on rural power structure. Additionally, this paper explores the Lambardara Nizam, providing a local perspective of feudalism by analysing the ruling and indigenous tribes in Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot. Also, it deeply delves into their ancestry and influence at social and political level. As far as the collection of data is concerned, a qualitative method of research is used. In order to capture the diverse perspectives, semi structured interviews are taken from people of nine different villages in the district of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot. The data collected by the participants provides insights into the factors which contribute to the persistence of feudalism in these areas and a detailed review is also written on its roots and growth.

### 2.1 Research Questions

1. How did the Lambardari nizam evolve from the British Raj time to the present-day governance in Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot?
2. What role does feudalism play in shaping the Lambardari regime?

3. How do the local communities perceive the Lambardari nizam, and to what extent do they prefer it over the democratic system?
4. What are the challenges posed by the Lambardari nizam in terms of democratic reforms in rural areas?

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1. Feudalism

The term 'feudal' stems from a latin word 'feodum'. According to some scholars, it originated from Germanic language or said to be influenced by Arabic terminology. Historically, looking at the writings of ancient medieval Latin Europe, one can see the practice of giving land in return for services known as 'beneficium' which subsequently became well-known as Feudum or Foedum. This terminology entered into multiple languages such as French (1823), Italian (1827), English (1839) and German in the second half of the nineteenth century. Typically, the term 'Feudalism' is interpreted in the context of agrestic system.(Parveen, Arif.D).

Taking into account the uncertainty of terminology 'Feudalism', historically European feudalism varied considerably, and the term can be viewed as a later construct whose traits still persist in South Asia. The term is often misused as derogatory for traditional rural systems and in Marxist ideology it refers to any non capitalist rural system. Marxist scholars put an emphasis on coercion and extra-market domination in feudal appropriation. Non-Marxist scholars see feudalism as a governance system based on personal loyalty and power-sharing among military suzerains. (Herring, R. J. (1979))

In the subcontinent, feudalism was reinforced by Delhi Sultans, the Mughals and the British in order to occupy and maintain their control over it. However, it was about 1857 when the rebellion urged the British to realize the fact that the area should be made subordinate to it. During British rule, revolutionizing of feudal lords into capitalists began which continued even after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 (Kosambi, 1956).

#### 3.2. Feudalism in Pakistan

In the context of Pakistan, classical feudalism is better portrayed in the 'Jagirdari' system where the military chiefs acquire lands in exchange for order maintenance and provision of troops. These feudalistic traits persist particularly in Balochistan, Swat, Dir and N.W.F.P where local leaders possessed rampant powers. However, the rigid feudalistic basis can be seen after abolition of Jagirs in 1959. Contemporarily, in Pakistan's Northern and Western borderlands, feudalistic traits persist. The veritable efforts to reduce the zamindari system began in 1971 through slogans like Roti, Kapra aur Makan (food, cloth and shelter) as raised by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and land reforms which can be considered as a ray of hope for rural population constituting almost 80 % of total population (Herring, 1979). An increasing curiosity surrounds the question of why the tenants are unsuccessful in achieving significant prosperity as compared to the large landowners. The answer to this question lies in the fact that they are unable to cope with Agro-automation and pesticides and are less likely to handle the economic and natural problems adequately (Nabi, Hamid & Zahid, 1986). The land reforms were introduced with the purpose of dividing the large fiefdoms into the smaller ones particularly for the enhancement of agricultural production and addressing social injustice regarding exploitation of peasantry, so these reforms pose to be an important step to reduce the curse of feudalism.

Furthermore, the acknowledgement of feudalism varies by certain aspects ranging from the subjugation of women to the oppression of the rustics. The suffering of women under feudalism is

highlighted when they are deprived of their inheritance rights and freedom to get married. Instead, they are pressured for symbolic marriages like with the Koran to keep the share of land with male lineage. This portrays the patriarchal aspect of feudalism demonstrating the male dominance (Siddiq, 2014).

### **3.3. Lambardara Nizam**

The Lambardara Nizam is a feudal regime and a patriarchal mode of governance in the villages in Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot. Originated during the British colonial rule, Lambardara nizam continues to play an important role in rural governance in district Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot, despite the formal adoption of democracy in Pakistan. Typically, the term Lambardar also known as Numberdar is a combination of two words i.e. 'Number' refers to the percentage of the land revenue whereas 'Dar' means owner. A lambardar basically functions as a delegate of people to the government, and considering this designation it is the primary responsibility of a lambardar to gather the tax (also known as malia) from landlords and submit it to the government. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that a lambardar plays a vital role in bridging the gap between government and the rural population. To perform this significant duty effectively, the lambarar is being assisted by a helper known as *chawkidar*. Delving into the history, the British Rule in India established three primary revenue systems i.e. Zamindari, Ryotwari and mahalwari. In exchange for his work he received one fifth of the total collected tax revenue and most importantly his designation was hereditary (Hussain 2017).

At a social level, a lambardar is responsible for communicating information about epidemics and illegal expansion onto the public roads which are near the village. Moreover, he is to notify the government about transgression within the locality, unveil the number of mortalities, report public nuisance, and to look after government's property. At the political level, undoubtedly the village headman has a significant role. By digging into the history, it is evident that during the British rule in Punjab these village headmen were quite helpful in maintaining colonial control (Awan 2016). The British also nominated the privileged class which served as a helping hand in revenue collection and additionally in exporting the yielded crops to the international trade arena (Agha 2016).

### **3.4. Nissoana, Dab and Rehan tribes in neighbouring districts**

Along the river Chenab and Jhelum, the neighbouring districts' history is associated with that of the tribes that governed in the region. The *Nissoana* tribe traces their lineage to Nisso and independently ruled a region named Kalowal illaqa in Jhang Sargodha border. Like the other descendants, Khokhars and Awans, the Nissoana tribe are claimed to be the progeny of Qutab Shah, an Arab who arrived in India along with the army of Mahmood of Ghazni. Thousands of years ago, a state was governed by Gorla, the Khokhar Raja of Sharab, was the ancestor of the Nissoana tribe. He had two sons, Badal and Bharth from his Rajpoot wife, who later on succeeded him and governed two regions. Badal governed the region Chiniot and Kokrana (near modern Sargodha) and Bharth was granted the land in the east of river Chenab which he further extended to Gujrat. A ruler sprang in the progeny named Rajah Sandar who ruled the Sandar Bar and later on his four sons, Mandar, Ratanpal, Bala, and Jal took the control. The descendant of Ratan Pal was Rehan and his son was Nisso, the ancestor of the Nissoana tribe. They mainly resided in the Jhang and Sargodha region but today Nissoanas are found in the northeast of Chiniot and Sargodha in thirty villages. The chief or malik resides in the Kandiwal village and the other prominent villages are Bhabhrana, Lakseen, Chak Khana, Lole, Kot Naja, Luqman, Balianwala, Nawah Lo, Dinga, Bhukhi, Loley Hayatpur, Bahiwaal, Mundrana, Wassuana, Kiradiwal, Yaarewala,

Raajewal, Bhounk, Chak 54 SB, Chak Jodh, Bhuttran Chak and Icharwal. The Rehan tribe was the other Jat tribe like Nissoana and Dab with Khokhar origin. Today, they reside in Jhang district's village Kalowal.

### 3.5. Challenges to Feudalism

Contemporarily, feudalism is confronted by multiple challenges in both economic and political domains. A primary obstacle is the advent of industrialization which has led to the increasing ratio of profit from the industrial sector rather than agricultural raw produce. Infact, setting up an agro based industry calls for a significant capital acquired usually by leasing or selling the land (Naqvi, Khan & Chaudhry, 1987). Secondly, the democratic consciousness plays a vital role which is being portrayed through human rights campaigns and advocacy putting a strong emphasis on liberty, freedom and volition (Prosterman & Riedinger, 1987). Thirdly, the role of the media is undeniable. The inception of electronic media has benefited the population by giving voices to their sufferings under feudalism, and this has proved to be vital in fighting against brutality of feudal class (Lieven, 2011). Lastly, the state has emerged as a formidable challenger to feudalistic control. In earlier times, the feudels were left unpunished even for serious crimes, but with the emergence of state institutions like the judiciary and the police are way more challenging for feudal authority than before. In a similar way, the strength of the Army cannot be underestimated which urges the feudals to develop cordial relations with it, highlighting a significant obstacle to their dominant authority.

### 4. Methodology

A qualitative method of data collection was used in this research. People from villages of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot were interviewed regarding the awareness about the history of the lambardar system and their satisfaction with the current socio-political form of governance. People were also questioned regarding the change in the form of governance. While there were three choices to conduct interviews: structured, unstructured and semi structured, the one used for this work was semi-structured. As the goal of the research was to collect the data in an unbiased way, the semi-structured form of interviews provided the best fit. In many cases, compensation to age, knowledge and other factors were required. For example, a response from an 80 years old person could be different from a 20 year old. So, semi-structured interviews bridged this gap by asking open ended questions by participants above the age of 60. However, participants in the age group of 20 to 59 were asked the probing questions to extract as much information as possible. The participants under the age of 20 were asked the closed ended questions as their exposure under the governance is not vast.

### 5. Analysis & Discussion

The interviews were conducted with nine participants from nine different villages of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot. Three participants from distinct three villages of three districts were interviewed. From each village, the participant was either asked open or probing or closed ended questions based on his or her age. The questions asked to each participant in the same category were the same to keep the data protected from confirmation, affinity and age biases. In order to evaluate the satisfaction of people from the current form of administration and influence of feudalism, three people were interviewed from districts Sargodha, Jhand and Chiniot. The verbatim of their responses are as follows. According to respondent 2 from Sargodha (62 years old), "I would say that I am not really satisfied with the current form of governance because although we have our elected representatives, the real game changers are the feudal lords; they have more say in the bureaucratic process rather than the common public of the village." From the

village Basti Lal of Jhang, respondent 6 (65 years old) claimed that, “In my village, there is some kind of transition such that the control of feudalism is slipping away. Now there is a possibility of people approaching the government rather than solely relying on landlords. So, I believe that democratic system is improving.” A resident of the village Kandiwal of Chiniot, respondent 8 expressed his views in the following words, “There is still a significant dependence on the lambardar in my village. As the Lambardar is quite helpful in solving problems, I wouldn’t say that I am dissatisfied but with respect to the existence of a full democratic system, I disagree.” From these responses, it is deduced that the involvement of feudalism is still playing an essential role in local governance despite democracy.

The valuable responses gathered through questionnaires from people of different age groups and backgrounds demonstrate the continued impact of Feudalism particularly in the form of lambardari nizam in the villages of the districts of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot. Particularly, the interviewees over the age of 60 acknowledge a deep connection with feudalism. For instance, according to Arshad from sargodha, although there is a formal existence of democracy and bureaucracy, feudalism still acts as a behind-the-scenes operator, especially in mediating disputes. Respondents aged between 20 to 60 years claimed that the lambardari system provides a stabilizing and supportive force for governance. This perspective is claimed by Yaseen from Chiniot who states that a lambardar is the supportive figure in the times of adversity in village Bhawana. However, the younger generation is prone to a change in their so-called semi-feudal form of governance. This is evident from the point of view of Hasan from Bula village of district Jhang who asserts that governance is more inclined towards democracy, and he believes that the traditional feudalism is now gradually being replaced by democratic and bureaucratic frameworks. As far as the regional variation is concerned, Chiniot demonstrates a stronger influence of feudalism, sargodha is witnessing a transition whereas Jhang is highly influenced by the bureaucratic governance.

## 6. Conclusion

Feudalism is more than just a historical manifestation and plays a crucial role in framing the social order and governance. Despite the inclusion of democratic policies in the sociopolitical structure of Punjab, the legacy of feudalism continues to impact the region. Particularly, the districts of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot, illustrate the persistence of feudalism in the form of Lambardari nizam in rural areas. Taking in account the current status of democracy, institutional reforms are required to ensure transparency in the system and mitigate the consequences of unequal distribution of power.



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