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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**Historical Overview of Rajanpur District****Ms. Faiza Gul**

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[deanis@tuf.edu.pk](mailto:deanis@tuf.edu.pk)**Abstract**

*This study explores the historical evolution of District Rajanpur, focusing on its geographical setting, political transformations, tribal organization, socio-cultural traditions, and developmental dynamics. Situated between the Indus River and the Suleiman Mountain Range, Rajanpur has historically served as an important link between Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan. Despite its strategic location, the district remains understudied due to fragmented historical records and geographical isolation. The study traces Rajanpur's origins from Makhdoom Sheikh Rajan's town establishment in 1732–33 to administrative development under Sikh, British, and Pakistani rule, culminating in independent district status on July 1, 1982. It examines 1981 Census demographics (population: 637,325), tribal institutions including three Tumans (Gurchani, Darishak, Mazari), Baloch customs, spiritual heritage through Sufi saints (Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Farid, Hazrat Noor Muhammad Narowalley), literary contributions (Muhammad Ismail Ahmadani, Ashiq Buzdar), political leadership (Meer Balakh Sher Mazari, Shireen Mazari), urbanization patterns, and tourism potential (Mari, Harand ruins). The research employs qualitative-historical methodology using primary sources (revenue records, settlement reports, census data, district gazetteers) and secondary sources (books, articles, newspapers). Data were analyzed through historical-descriptive and analytical approaches. Findings reveal geography, tribal structures, and spiritual traditions shaped Rajanpur's social-political identity. Persistent challenges include poverty (78% below poverty line in Mari), flood vulnerability (2006/2010 submerged 70% cropland), and infrastructural limitations. However, Rajanpur possesses considerable potential for urban growth, cultural preservation, and tourism development. This study contributes to limited scholarly literature on Rajanpur, providing a comprehensive historical framework for understanding contemporary developmental challenges and cultural significance. Understanding its historical trajectory is essential for addressing socio-economic issues and preserving rich cultural heritage.*

**Key Words:** District Rajanpur, Historical Evolution, Tribal Organization, Suleiman Range, Tumandari System, Baloch Society, Sufi Heritage

## 1. Introduction

Rajanpur District, established on 1 July 1982 through administrative separation from Dera Ghazi Khan, occupies a distinct corridor in southwestern Punjab named after the town of Rajanpur, founded by Sheikh Rajan Shah in 1732–33. The modern district incorporates the former tehsils of Rajanpur and Jampur along with the southern tribal tract of Rojhan, which extends from the foothills of the Sulaiman Range toward Sindh. Physically constrained by the Indus River to the east and the Sulaiman Range to the west, Rajanpur forms a narrow strip roughly 20–40 miles wide, a geographic configuration that has significantly influenced settlement patterns, land use, and transport links in the area (Government of the Punjab, 1984). The district's coordinates are 29°06'12"N, 70°19'30"E, and its mean elevation is approximately 97 meters above sea level; it lies about 736 km from Karachi and contains notable topographic features such as Marri Peak (c. 5,385 ft) in Jampur tehsil (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998).

The historical evolution of Rajanpur's administrative status reflects broader colonial and postcolonial territorial reorganization in the region. After the British defeat of the Sikh polity in 1849, Dera Ghazi Khan was constituted as a district with multiple tehsils; catastrophic floods in 1856 that destroyed Kot Mithan prompted the relocation of the district headquarters to Rajanpur under Assistant Commissioner A. A. Munro, while other tehsils (Sanghar and Dajal) were moved to Taunsa and Jampur respectively. These shifts illustrate how environmental events, colonial administrative decisions, and local settlement histories combined to shape the present boundaries and governance structures. Bounded to the north and northwest by Dera Ghazi Khan, to the south by Jacobabad (Sindh), to the southwest by the Loralai and Marri-Bugti areas of Balochistan, and across the Indus to the east by Muzaffargarh and Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur's peripheral location has implications for inter-district connectivity, resource allocation, and socio-economic development policies (Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908).

## 2. Research Objectives

1. To trace the historical origins and political transformations of District Rajanpur.
2. To analyze the district's geography and demographic characteristics.
3. To describe tribal structures, customs, and socio-cultural traditions.
4. To evaluate the role of spiritual personalities, literary figures, and political leaders in shaping local identity.
5. To assess processes of urbanization, development dynamics, and tourism potential.
6. To provide a historical basis for understanding current socio-economic and cultural issues.

## 3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and historical research methodology to examine District Rajanpur's historical evolution from 1732–33 to present. The research integrates primary and secondary sources for comprehensive data collection and analysis.

Primary sources include historical revenue records (1872 ledgers confirming Rajan's land grants), settlement reports (British colonial documents, 1849–1947), census data (1981 Census: population 637,325; 1998 extrapolation: 48,505 residents in Rajanpur town), district gazetteers (District Gazetteer Dera Ghazi Khan, 1983; District Gazetteer of Rajanpur, 1980, 1982), official government documents (Government of Punjab, 1984; Punjab Tourism Department, 2019), and The Imperial

Gazetteer of India (1908) documenting British administrative relocation from Kot Mithan to Rajanpur (1862).

Secondary sources comprise books (Tareekh Makhzan-e-Punjab, 1877; Misl-e-Haqiat, 1872; A Literary History of the Baloches, Baloch, Vol. I), research articles (Caroe, 1958; Howell, 2011; Ali & Khan, 2022), historical accounts (V.A. Smith; Cunningham, 1875; Dani, 1986), newspapers (Dawn, 2021), and scholarly publications (World Bank, 2021; CSIS, 2012).

Data were analyzed through historical-descriptive approach (chronological reconstruction of Tribal Fragmentation 1758–1827, Sikh Expansion 1819–1849, British Consolidation 1849 onward; event narration including 1862 floods, 1857 War of Independence, 1982 district status; biographical documentation of spiritual personalities, literary figures, political leaders) and analytical approach (thematic synthesis across geography, political transformations, tribal organization, socio-cultural traditions, spiritual heritage, developmental dynamics; triangulation through cross-verifying multiple sources; interpretation of socio-political transformations; pattern identification of tribal institutions persisting across ruling powers and flood vulnerability cycles in 2006/2010).

Fragmented historical records, geographical isolation limiting tribal area access, outdated census data (1981), and language barriers were mitigated through triangulation, oral accounts (Atta Muhammad Khan Buzdar's notes), and cross-referencing with broader Southern Punjab narratives. This methodology enables comprehensive historical framework development for understanding Rajanpur's contemporary developmental challenges and cultural significance.

#### **4. Literature Review**

The historical and socio-political development of District Rajanpur has received limited but significant attention in regional and historical studies of Pakistan. Existing literature highlights Rajanpur's strategic geographical position as a border district connecting Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan, making it an important area for understanding interregional interactions, trade routes, and cultural exchanges. Scholars of regional history have emphasized the district's role as a gateway between different provinces and its influence on political and administrative developments in southern Punjab.

Several historical works and government publications provide valuable information regarding the administrative evolution of Rajanpur under various ruling powers, including the Mughal period, Sikh administration, and British colonial rule. The town was established by Makhdoom Syed Rajan Shah in 1732–33, and Rajanpur was formed as a new District in 1982 with the formation of Division Dera Ghazi Khan. These studies examine changes in governance, revenue systems, and local administration, demonstrating how historical transitions shaped the district's political structure and institutional development.

The socio-cultural dimensions of District Rajanpur have been explored through ethnographic studies and regional literature focusing on tribal organization, local customs, and the Tumandari system. Existing literature indicates that Baloch tribes dominate the population, embodying fierce tribal honor and adherence to custom. Researchers have discussed the significance of tribal identities and traditional leadership structures in influencing social relations, conflict resolution, and political participation. Such studies indicate that tribal institutions continue to play an important role in the social fabric of the district.

Literature related to the Pakistan Movement acknowledges the contribution of southern Punjab, including District Rajanpur, in the struggle for independence. Historical documents,

biographies, and academic studies provide insights into political awareness and participation of local leaders and communities during this period, although comprehensive research specifically dedicated to Rajanpur remains limited. The politics of Southern Punjab have historically been determined by political agendas of large national parties, with limited localized priorities addressed.

Contemporary studies on Rajanpur primarily focus on socio-economic development, urbanization, education, tourism potential, and developmental challenges. Government reports, census data, and recent scholarly publications highlight issues such as poverty, infrastructure deficiencies, and uneven development while also identifying opportunities for economic growth and cultural tourism. Historical importance research highlights Rajanpur's important geographical location due to adjoining boundaries with Balochistan and Sindh, its past role as a trade route, and the famous ancient fort Harand located in the district. Critics note that greater parts of public primary schools lack accurate structure and fundamental services, with rising dropout rates and poor teacher-student performance.

The existing literature collectively provides a foundation for understanding the historical and contemporary significance of District Rajanpur, while also revealing the need for more comprehensive and interdisciplinary research on the district's historical evolution and regional importance. Most studies treat Rajanpur as part of broader southern Punjab narratives rather than examining it as a distinct case with unique historical characteristics. This study fills gaps in the literature by integrating archival records including revenue records, settlement reports, census data, district gazetteers, and official government documents with secondary scholarly sources. The research employs historical-descriptive and analytical approaches to trace chronological developments and interpret socio-political and cultural transformations, providing a comprehensive historical framework for understanding Rajanpur's contemporary developmental challenges and cultural significance.

## 5. Geography characteristics

### 5.1. Total area and landscape

**5.1.1. Total area:** 11,665 km<sup>2</sup> (2,857,758 acres), including a tribal "De-excluded" zone (988,421 measured acres; 2,000 sq mi unmeasured).

The landscape comprises three geographic circles:

1. **Pachad (western hills):** Rain-fed near Suleiman base; Kala Pani torrent sustains Jampur's unique perennial circle amid saline soils.
2. **Chahi-Nehri:** Wells (tube-wells replacing Persian wheels, boosting orchards) and canals (Dajal/Jampur Link III from Taunsa Barrage).
3. **Sindh Circle (Kacha/Selaba):** Flood-dependent eastern belt, annually replenished by Indus spills for winter sowing.

### 5.1.2. Climate

4. **Type:** Arid throughout
5. **Winter:** Brief chill (December–January; night mins 40–50°F)
6. **Summer:** Prolonged scorching heat (May–August; peaks 41°C; nights reach 80°F)
7. **Monsoon:** Dust storms (50–80 mph) ravage crops
8. **Annual precipitation:** Meager 4.5 inches (Sulaiman receives heavier summer rainfall)

### 5.1.3. Major Flood Events

9. 2006 & 2010: Worst floods; submerged ~70% cropland

10. Indus River: 3,180 km total; ~180 km through Rajanpur; swells 15–20 km wide during May–August (Himalayan melt + monsoons)
11. Hill torrents (rod-kohi): Dammed for sparse irrigation; Kala Pani vital at Chucha/Murunj (World Bank, 2021).

## 6. The Obscurity of Rajanpur's Recorded History

The name "Rajanpur" carries poetic grandeur, yet its past remains veiled in folklore. Primary records come from faded revenue documents of the former Rajanpur tehsil. Settlement registers yield few solid insights into origins. While the surrounding landscape may date back to earliest eras of the Indian subcontinent, the district's recorded history suffers fragmented narratives stemming from political detachment and remote geography (Baloch, 1984).

### 6.1. Key factors contributing to historical obscurity:

- **Peripheral Location:** Rajanpur lay well off primary invasion corridors from the Hindu Kush, rendering it unappealing for northern raiders.
- **Harsh Environment:** Difficult soil and climate discouraged permanent settlement from Aryan times through later migrations.
- **Baloch Tribal Dominance:** Baloch tribes dominate the population, embodying fierce tribal honor. Their lineage consciousness preserved distinct identities, often elevating heroic lore over documented fact.
- **Indus as Barrier:** As Jean Fairley observes: "For now at last the lion river can stretch itself. Within a few hundred yards it is a mile wide." The river widens further near Rajanpur, posing a formidable barrier without naval support (Fairley, 1965).

## 7. Early History: Antiquity to Muslim Conquest

### 7.1. Pre-711 CE: Ancient Towns

Prior to Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest (711–12 CE), the area hosted three modest towns: Asni, Harrand, and Mari.

### 7.2. Alexander's Campaign (326 BCE)

Alexander's forces navigated the Indus along the district's eastern edge through Jampur, Rajanpur, and Rojhan tehsils. Historian V.A. Smith notes Alexander ordered his naval commander to survey regions en route from the Jhelum to the sea. Megasthenes records Alexander granted Kabul and Indus-west territories to Seleucus, later ousted by Chandragupta Maurya (Smith, 1921).

### 7.3. Muhammad bin Qasim's Conquest (711–12 CE)

Muhammad bin Qasim's campaign reshaped the area, then part of Raja Dahir's realm governed by his son from Kashmore (capital at Alor near Bhakkar). Arabs settled widely here; Harrand Fort's vast 8-square-mile layout echoes Arab garrisons in Sindh (Lovemore, 1882).

### 7.4. Post-Conquest Period

Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni's 1026 CE seventeenth raid scattered Jats across the Indus into the district; these "Zaths," per General Cunningham, ranked among India's oldest peoples (Cunningham, 1875).

### **7.5. Arrival of Ghazni Khan Mirani (c. 1482 CE)**

Around 1482 CE, Ghazni Khan Mirani (Baloch founder of Dera Ghazi Khan) arrived. Mahars clung to southern lands until Nadir Shah's era, when Makhdoom Sheikh Rajan, their agent, seized Sitpur. Mazari Baloch revolts challenged them further in 1733; Mahars now dwell in Kashmore, Barkhan, and Harrand.

## **8. Sheikh Rajan's Rise and Legacy (1732–33)**

### **8.1. Lineage and Inheritance**

Records from Tareekh Makhzan-e-Punjab reveal the Lingah family of Multan arranged a marriage between one daughter and Sheikh Syed Hassan Bukhari, accompanying the union with a substantial estate near Sitpur as dowry. Of the saint's two sons, elder Syed Munib Shah predeceased him, leaving Makhdoom Sheikh Rajan to inherit spiritual leadership and political authority (Lahori, 1877).

## **9. Political Alliances**

Unlike his father, Rajan channeled influence primarily into governance, initially serving Mahar rulers of Multan as Sitpur's appointed leader before gradually asserting independence. Rajan cultivated a key alliance with Nadir Shah Durrani, securing territorial control and wealth; Nadir granted him provincial governance over the region.

### **9.1. Misl-e-Haqiat (1872)**

Describes the area as originally uncultivated wilderness, granted roughly 130 years earlier (~five generations back) to Rajan by Ahmad Shah of Khurasan. The award recognized his efforts excavating Nala Qutab canal, populating, and developing land; Rajan appended "Pur" to his name, christening it Rajanpur (Misl-e-Haqiat, 1872).

## **10. Founding and Development**

Dating from Misl-e-Haqiat evidence places Rajanpur's establishment around 1732–33, near a local site called "Their" (denoting ruins from earthquake or lightning). The inaugural settler, reportedly a Hindu, erected a modest home and temple at the town's future heart.

Rajan proved a shrewd leader, warrior, and organizer:

- Evaluated soil fertility
- Launched systematic colonization
- Prioritized farming self-sufficiency
- Lured followers and allied tribes with land grants in exchange for crop shares (1872 revenue ledgers confirm)
- Engineered irrigation canals and wells

These initiatives spurred rapid economic growth. Rajan presided over justice at Sitpur with impartiality, drawing scholars and poets to his court.

**10.1. Three Eras Before British Dominance**

Phase	Period	Events
Tribal Fragmentation	1758–1827	Petty chiefs carved enclaves; Gurchani/Lund defied Taimur Shah appointees
Sikh Expansion	1819–1849	Ranjit Singh annexed Dera Ghazi Khan (1819); tribal revolts continued
British Consolidation	1849 onward	British victories toppled Sikhs; pacification completed by 1857

**10.2. Phase One: Tribal Fragmentation (1758–1827)**

Petty chiefs carved out enclaves; Gurchani and Lund tribes held Harrand and Dajal, defying Taimur Shah Durrani's appointees. Taimur, battling Marathas with Kalat's Nadir Khan Berohi's aid, rewarded Berohi with the tract post-victory (District Gazetteer Dera Ghazi Khan, 1983). Kalat controlled it until Sikh conquest in 1827.

**10.3. Phase Two: Sikh Expansion (1819–1849)**

Sikh resurgence followed Mughal and Maratha declines. Ranjit Singh, elevated by Zaman Shah, consolidated Punjab by 1805, halted eastward by the 1809 Treaty of Amritsar. He annexed Dera Ghazi Khan in 1819, gifting it to Bahawalpur's Nawab Sadiq for tribute. Bahawalpur took Dajal and Harrand (1828–1830), followed by Sikh commander Swan Singh's fort renovations at Harrand, Drigri, and Asni. Yet Gurchani and Mazari revolted Gurchanis slew Harrand's warden; Mazaris used guerrilla tactics under Behram Khan. Gurchanis, led by Ghulam Haider, backed British advances in 1845 against unwilling appointee Bijar Khan.

**10.4. Phase Three: British Consolidation (1849 Onward)**

British victories in 1848–49 toppled Sikhs; post-Multan, General Cortlandt took Dera Ghazi Khan, pushing into Rajanpur territory. Mokha Chand, Harrand's kardar under Sawan Singh, resisted with 200 men but fell to Lt. Ralph Young's force, aided by Gurchanis; Sawan died in combat. Buzdars in the hills fiercely opposed, plundering amid defiance subdued in 1857 by Generals Hodgson and Chamberlain after clashes (Davies, 1984).

**11. The 1857 Uprising in Rajanpur**

Although the 1857 rebellion is often narrated as a north-Indian phenomenon, Rajanpur was not passive. British forces strengthened posts at Asni, Harrand and Muhammadpur, stationing units such as Capt. Hughes' Punjab Cavalry. Captain Pollock rapidly mobilized ~300 cavalry, followed by local levies of some 300 horse and foot; most local groups joined the colonial side, though Mazari bands conducted raids on Asni. In August 1857, 230 Mazari horsemen engaged Bijar Khan Darishak and Bugti allies; contemporary reports record heavy Mazari casualties, including death of their chief and son. Other tribal contingents such as Khosa horsemen performed poorly, attributed to weak leadership. Subsequent disturbances continued: in 1867 an attack of 1,200 men on Harrand were repulsed by Gurchani and Tibbi Lund tribesmen in concert with Harrand garrison (Government of the Punjab, 1984).

**12. British Crown Rule and Tumandari System**

Once the Bugtis retreated from British-held lands, the region enjoyed prolonged stability, enabling colonial authorities to implement structured governance. Operating under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, they appointed a Political Assistant headquartered at Dera Ghazi Khan to oversee tribal

zones, while settled areas fell under standard Indian administrative frameworks. To leverage local leadership, the British established the Tumandari system shortly after stationing an Assistant Commissioner initially at Rajanpur from 1862, which later became the district headquarters on July 1, 1982 (Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908). This system, echoing Akbar's Mansabdari model, persists in Rajanpur's tribal belts today, dividing territory into Tummans aligned with tribal domains, where Tumandars wielded supreme judicial power resolving murders via blood money (wani), women, or land principles, and theft through restitution (Caroe, 1958; Howell, 2011).

### 12.1. Administrative Tribal Tummans

Tumman	Dominant Tribe	Posts
Gurchani	Gurchani	Harrand (HQ), Chucha, Murunj, etc.
Darishak	Darishak	Kot Subzani (HQ), Muhammad Pur
Mazari	Mazari	Bhundowala (HQ), Dilber, Sheikhwala, Bara, Thoyani

These arrangements combined limited coercive presence (Border Military Police) with formal recognition of tribal jurisdiction, reflecting British strategy of indirect control adapted to social geography.

### 13. Population Demographics (1981 Census)

According to the 1981 Census of Pakistan, District Rajanpur's total population was approximately 637,325 persons, slightly male-dominated:

Category	Count
Males	338,072
Females	299,273
Total	637,345

This distribution indicates modest gender imbalance, potentially attributed to migration patterns, underreporting of female population, and socio-cultural factors (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1981).

#### 13.1. Tehsil-wise Population (1981)

Tehsil	Total	Males	Females
Jampur	274,668	144,629	130,039
Rajanpur	214,641	114,064	100,577
Rojhan	21,503	68,702	57,831
De-excluded Area	21,503	10,677	10,826

Among all tehsils, Jampur was most densely populated, indicating better agricultural conditions. Rojhan recorded the lowest population, linked to proximity to tribal/hilly regions. The de-excluded area remained sparsely populated.

### 13.2. Tribal Population Structure

The tribal belt represents a distinct demographic and socio-cultural segment. Population density: only 10 persons per square mile, indicating geographically challenging terrain and scattered settlements.

Tuman	Total	Males	Females
Gurchani	17,413	8,384	9,031
Mazari	3,478	1,957	1,521
Darishak	1,521	-	-

Gurchani had highest population concentration, suggesting relatively more stable settlement patterns. This division is historically rooted in geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, and tribal socio-political organization. Such conditions influenced education levels, economic participation, and mobility patterns.

### 14. Spiritual Luminaries of Rajanpur

Rajanpur's cultural landscape consistently elevates figures of spiritual depth over those of mere temporal authority; a pattern rooted in the region's tribal and nomadic heritage.

#### 14.1. Hazrat Noor Muhammad Narowalley

A towering mystic, he profoundly shaped Khawaja Ghulam Farid, who secluded nine days in a hujra by his Hajipur tomb fasting days, meditating nights. Farid's own murshid, Noor Muhammad Maharvi, remarked he'd disciple under Narowalley if possible. The tomb west of Hajipur features a southern "Gate of Heaven," opened yearly for pilgrims, beside an ancient mosque; Narowalley's imprint endures on contemporaries.

#### 14.2. Hazrat Khawaja Noor Muhammad of Muhammad Pur Dewan

Nestled in Mohammadpur Dewan, Tehsil Jampur, stands the unadorned tomb of Hazrat Khawaja Noor Muhammad, disciple to the revered Hazrat Noor Muhammad Narowalley. His annual Urs draws pilgrims on the 14th of Ramadan, spanning three days of commemoration in a structure true to ancient architectural simplicity. He preached for over thirteen years before passing in 1251 AH. Legend holds that during his discipleship, while gathering timber with companions amid a sudden downpour, his load and he himself remained miraculously untouched by rain, while others were soaked through.

#### 14.3. Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Farid of Mithan Kot

Few saints match the stature of Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Farid, a peerless mystic and master poet in Seraiki, whose verses distill Islamic ethics, social equity, and the path of tariqat complete surrender of self to the Divine through unwavering devotion to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Born in 1261 AH in Chachran Sharif (Rahim Yar Khan District) to the pious Khawaja Khuda Bakhsh, he traced lineage to Basir bin Abdullah bin Umar Farooq, with Arab forebears. A prodigy, he memorized the Quran by age eight, mastered Arabic and Persian by sixteen, and succeeded his brother-mentor, Khawaja Fakhar Jahan, at twenty-eight. Mithan Khan, a devotee of the Khawaja lineage, crossed the Indus to establish Mithan Kot, where Farid later settled amid rising spiritual renown. Retreating often to the Rohi desert for contemplation, his poetry now translated into English and celebrated across Pakistan mirrors nature's harsh beauty against Islamic truths. Surface readings evoke a lover's longing; deeper layers reveal ecstatic union with the Divine, blending rhythmic grace, cultural resonance, and profound piety.

#### **14.4. Khawaja Muhammad Hassan Pitafi**

Buried in Rajanpur town itself, Khawaja Muhammad Hassan Pitafi ranks among the district's foremost mystics, likely a contemporary and follower of Hazrat Noor Muhammad Narowalley though precise birth and death dates elude records. His legacy shines through mass conversions of Hindus to Islam, reshaping local demographics. Donan Faqir, another influential contemporary, further enriched this era of spiritual outreach. These saints exemplify how Rajanpur's history intertwines the ethereal with the everyday, fostering resilience amid geographic isolation. Their shrines remain vital pilgrimage sites, sustaining a legacy of devotion that outlasts political shifts.

#### **15. Pakistan Movement in Rajanpur**

No dedicated chronicles document the Pakistan Movement here; insights rely on oral accounts and notes from Atta Muhammad Khan Buzdar, Dera Ghazi Khan's honorary magistrate. Until 1942, feudal Unionist dominance backed by British or Congress patronage stifled League efforts.

By 1946, momentum surged amid Punjab elections. In Rajanpur constituency, Sardar Bahadur Khan Darishak trounced a Mazari rival. Jampur ignited: Sardar Muhammad Khan Gishkori, Malik Ghulam Rasool, Mirza Ghulam Sarwar, and Mirza Ghulam Akbar canvassed door-to-door (Government of the Punjab, 1984).

#### **16. Eminent Parliamentarians from Rajanpur**

Rajanpur has produced a remarkable cadre of political leaders, predominantly from influential tribal lineages like the Mazaris and Dreshaks. These figures have risen through provincial and national legislatures, often leveraging hereditary authority alongside electoral success. Their careers reflect the district's enduring tribal-political nexus, shaping governance from Punjab Assembly seats to Islamabad's corridors of power.

##### **16.1. Meer Balakh Sher Mazari (1928–2022)**

Born July 8, 1928, in the tri-junction of Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab, Balakh Sher Mazari served as tumandar and paramount sardar of the Mazari tribe its 22nd sardar and seventh Mir. A seasoned statesman, he briefly acted as Pakistan's 14th Prime Minister from April 18 to May 26, 1993, following President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's dismissal of Nawaz Sharif's government. The Supreme Court swiftly reinstated Sharif, curtailing Mazari's tenure. His grandson, Mir Dost Mohammad Mazari, later held Punjab Assembly's Deputy Speaker role.

##### **16.2. Sardar Shoukat Hussain Mazari (b. 1948)**

Born February 10, 1948, in Rojhan to Sardar Muhammad Hussain Mazari, Shoukat graduated from Government College Lahore in 1967. He chaired District Councils in Dera Ghazi Khan (1979) and Rajanpur (1982), and represented Pakistan at the UN General Assembly (1974, 1995) plus an international conference in Basel, Switzerland (1988–89). A globetrotter across Europe, North America, and Asia, he secured three terms in Punjab Provincial Assembly, culminating as Deputy Speaker post-2002 elections.

##### **16.3. Dost Muhammad Mazari (b. 1970/1980)**

Grandson of Balakh Sher, Dost Muhammad Mazari entered politics decisively. Elected to National Assembly (NA-175 Rajanpur-II) on PPP ticket in 2008 defeating Sardar Nasrullah Khan Dreshak he shifted allegiances. An independent in 2013, he garnered 73,885 votes but lost to Hafeez ur Rehman. PTI's 2018 victory in PP-297 (Rajanpur-V) elevated him to Punjab Assembly Deputy Speaker (August 16, 2018–July 2022), ousted via no-confidence. He contested 2024 but fell to a PTI-backed independent.

**16.4. Shireen Mazari**

A scholar-politician with an LSE foundation, PhD in political science from Columbia, Shireen Mazari headed Quaid-a-Azam University's strategic studies and the Institute of Strategic Studies (2002–2008), later editing *The Nation*. Joining PTI in 2008 as Information Secretary, she briefly resigned in 2012 before returning. Elected to National Assembly on women's reserved Punjab seats (2013, 2018), she chaired the parliamentary committee on Election Commission appointments and served as Federal Human Rights Minister under Imran Khan from August 20, 2018.

**16.5. Nasrullah Khan Dreshak (b. 1942)**

Born June 28, 1942, in Rajanpur, Nasrullah graduated from Government College Lahore (1962), earned a law degree (1964), and MA (1966) from Punjab University. A perennial legislator, he served National Assembly terms (1997–1999, 2002–2007) and Punjab Assembly (1977–2018). PTI's NA-194 (Rajanpur-II) candidate in 2018, he embodies the Dreshak clan's enduring influence.

**16.6. Sardar Hasnain Bahadar Dreshak (b. 1974)**

Son of Nasrullah, born June 29, 1974, in Lahore, Hasnain holds a B.Sc. in Electronics Engineering (1996). Elected to Punjab Assembly PP-294 (Rajanpur-II) on PTI in 2018, he joined Chief Minister Usman Buzdar's cabinet August 27 appointed Livestock and Dairy Development Minister September 6.

**16.7. Sardar Ali Raza Khan Dreshak (b. 1977)**

Nasrullah's son, born October 9, 1977, in Lahore; B.Sc. Government College (1998), LLB (Hons) London (2000), Bar-at-Law Lincoln's Inn (2004). He represented Punjab Assembly PP-247 (Rajanpur-I) for PTI from 2013–2018.

**16.8. Sardar Sher Ali Khan Gorchani (b. 1980)**

Born May 17, 1980, in Dera Ghazi Khan; BA from Multan (2006). Elected Punjab Assembly PP-248 (Rajanpur-II) on PML-N (2013), he served as Deputy Speaker (June 2013–May 2018) after 2008–2018 terms.

**16.9. Muhammad Mohsin Khan Leghari (b. 1963)**

Born June 9, 1963, in Dera Ghazi Khan; Aitchison College alumnus, certified in global finance, postgraduate in applied economics (Punjab University), National Defence University graduate, and Friedrich Naumann Foundation fellow (Germany). A three-term Punjab Assembly member (2003–2007, 2008–2012, post-2018) and Senator (2012–2018), he became Irrigation Minister in Buzdar's cabinet August 27, 2018 (District Gazetteer Dera Ghazi Khan, 1983).

These parliamentarians underscore Rajanpur's outsized role in Pakistani politics, channeling tribal prestige into legislative heft.

**17. Literary Figures of Rajanpur**

Despite geographic isolation and tribal conservatism, Rajanpur has nurtured voices that preserve and elevate Seraiki expression. These writers bridged oral traditions with formal literature, earning national recognition amid a landscape historically resistant to intellectual pursuits.

**17.1. Muhammad Ismail Ahmadani (1930–2007)**

Born near Rasoolpur in 1930, Ahmadani began local schooling there in 1935, advancing through Jampur and graduating from Government College Dera Ghazi Khan. His work first gained notice in 1956 while teaching, later pursuing an LL. B in Sindh to practice advocacy in Sanghar. A polyglot author in English, Urdu, Sindhi, and especially Seraiki shifting eventually to prose his acclaimed titles include *Peet de Pandh*, *Chollian*, and *Ammar Kahani*. Posthumously published, his autobiography *Yadeen da Khawab*

Mahal joined others in receiving presidential honors. He spent final years between Rasoolpur and Karachi, passing June 6, 2007, and resting eternally in his birthplace.

### **17.2. Ashiq Buzdar (b. 1947)**

Hailing from Mehry Wala in August 1947, this Buzdar tribesman entered politics via Pakistan People's Party before channeling energies into columnism and Seraiki verse. Notable collections "Qaidi Takht Lahore De", 4th April, Jain Phul Chate alongside his memoir Jewan Jiven Guzria secured him the inaugural Seraiki Literary Award and presidential acclaim, cementing his role as a chronicler of local ethos.

## **18. Customs and Traditions**

Baloch society, as Muhammad Sardar Khan Baloch elucidates in *A Literary History of the Baloches*, endured chiefly under feudal hierarchies that stifled innovation, enforcing rigid traditionalism. Most families clung fiercely to ancestral practices governing daily existence, save for an educated elite. This unyielding cultural framework imbued social norms with profound, almost romantic rigidity shaping rituals from birth to burial, dispute resolution, and communal bonds. Principal observances, emblematic of tribal identity, underscore values of honor, hospitality, and collective solidarity amid arid environs.

### **18.1. Baloch Customs and Traditions**

Baloch society enshrines rituals that reinforce communal bonds and honor, often prioritizing male lineage while embracing daughters with pragmatic optimism. These practices, resilient against modernization, reflect a deep-seated traditionalism characteristic of tribal life in Rajanpur's arid expanse.

### **18.2. Birth Rites**

A son's arrival stirs profound paternal pride, yet daughters elicit no dismay elders may even prearrange betrothals, congratulating the prospective groom's family upon her birth. Boys receive names on the seventh postnatal day, marked by communal feasts of milk-rice shared after dusk with extended kin, blending instinctual joy with structured celebration.

### **18.3. Marriage Customs**

Endogamy within sub-castes prevails, sometimes sealed by reciprocal exchanges between families. Monogamy dominates, though second unions draw brides from outside the lineage. The groom receives a ceremonial sword borne by his attendant through festivities. Welcomed grandly at the bride's threshold, the procession enjoys her kin's lavish banquet, reciprocated later by his. Nuptials occur before midday; post-sunset, the bride departs amid farewells, offered busri ghee sweetened with raw sugar. A palm-mat hut shelters the couple at the groom's home for three days, symbolizing transitional intimacy.

### **18.4. Polygamy**

Reserved for affluent elites, polygamy garners little societal approval among common Baloch households.

### **18.5. Divorce and Haq Mahr**

Divorce remains exceedingly rare, socially stigmatized across tribes. Bridal Haq Mahr adheres strictly to Sharia stipulations.

### **18.6. Dowry Practices**

Wealthier families escalate dowry extravagance without clear bounds, while modest ones calibrate gifts to means invariably incorporating symbolic piety: a stone flour mill, Quran, and baking slab (Baloch, 1984).

### **18.7. Linguistic Landscape**

Seraiki serves as the lingua franca across Rajanpur's Sindhu-Sawera belt, spoken fluidly by all strata; Balochi persists domestically, especially Suleiman foothills. Immigrants master Seraiki adeptly. Throatily articulated at mid-pitch, it conveys nuance with romantic vigor, evolving into a near-regional language though lacking a formal dictionary. Its verse, immortalized by bards and poets like Khawaja Ghulam Farid, stirs national audiences, though rural variants grate with phonetic coarseness. Urdu finds comprehension but minimal use, save among Rohtak refugees; Punjabi thrives among Punjab settlers.

### **19. Ethnic Composition and Tribal Identities**

Rajanpur embodies a mosaic of races and tribes, preserving ethnic purity amid historical detachment from Indus-east heartlands. Legends tether its annals to antiquity Raja Hernakas at Harrand's fort amid Mohenjo-Daro's peak, or Sirkup-Rassaloo parallels to Taxila suggesting deep-rooted western Indus habitation.

#### **19.1. Jats**

Some trace to pre-Partition Hindu tillers; others migrated from Multan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalpur. Termed broadly for Muslim tenants under tribal lords (distinct from camel-herding "Zaths"), they excel in agriculture. Hindu Jats' exodus left cultural imprints, notably in erstwhile Shikarpur.

#### **19.2. Gopangs**

Straddling the Indus, Gopangs etymologically "animal rearers" engage petty trade, milk vending. Self-identifying as Baloch by descent but Gopang professionally, evidence contradicts: Seraiki fluency (not native Balochi), divergent customs, Indic physical traits, Baloch disavowal, and absence from Deaz's Baloch Tribes Tummans or genealogies. Scattered across contiguous districts, they likely link to subcontinental ancients.

#### **19.3. Mehtars**

Occupying Indus islets, nominal Muslims retain pre-Islamic rites akin to ancient Indian practices consuming aquatic fare, sweeping for livelihood, dog-rearing recreation. Chach Nama echoes their ilk, permitted urban access only by daylight, hinting at outcaste origins (government of the Punjab, 1984).

### **20. Urbanization and Development Dynamics**

Rajanpur serves as the administrative headquarters of the district, located 746 km from Islamabad, 472 km from Lahore, and 115 km from Dera Ghazi Khan, positioning it as a strategic nodal point along the Indus River corridor. Its origins trace to 1145 AH (1732–33 CE), when Sheikh Rajan Bakhsh Makhdoom, ruler of Saitpur, established the settlement after subduing the local Nahar tribe, or alternatively derive from the ancient Aryan term "Rajan" denoting a ruler, reflecting its historical connotation as the "city of kings" (Rashid, 2004). The city's modern trajectory pivoted dramatically after the devastating 1862 floods that submerged nearby Kot Mithan (also known as Mithankot), the former tehsil headquarters and burial site of Sufi poet Khawaja Ghulam Farid. This catastrophe prompted the British administration to relocate all government offices to Rajanpur, elevating its status from a minor outpost to the principal tehsil center and cementing its administrative primacy. Urban consolidation accelerated post-independence, though Rajanpur remained peripheral amid feudal landholding patterns and infrastructural neglect. Spanning a compact 6 km<sup>2</sup> with an estimated 48,505 residents (based on prorated 1998 census extrapolations), it exhibits a low-density urban form characterized by wide avenues, centralized canal infrastructure, and verdant public spaces hallmarks of incremental 21st-century revitalization.

A critical juncture occurred during 2009–2010, when Punjab provincial authorities contemplated shifting the district headquarters to Jampur, citing Rajanpur's relatively smaller population and underdeveloped civic amenities. This threat galvanized local stakeholders, particularly under District Coordination Officer (DCO) Ghazi Amanullah, whose targeted interventions construction of arterial roads, district courts, colleges, hospitals, parks, and a new jail successfully retained the status quo. These developments transformed Rajanpur into a clean, orderly urban hub, now emblematic of Dareshak tribal identity and emerging as southern Punjab's greenest administrative center. Contemporary challenges persist, including flood vulnerability (evident in 2010 deluges), limited industrial base, and migration-driven population pressures, yet recent urban plans propose IT parks and agro-processing zones on underutilized land (Urban Unit Punjab, 2024). This evolution underscores Rajanpur's resilience from flood-ravaged relocation site to a modest yet pivotal urban anchor in a predominantly rural district.

## **21. Cultural and Touristic Sites: Potential and Challenges**

**21.1. Mari (Koh-e-Suleman, Rojhan tehsil;** 100 km distant; pop. 25,247) evokes Saraiki "mari" (multi-story edifice), tied to Sar Kup lore Pakistan's coolest microclimate, yet hobbled by poverty (78% below poverty line), dilapidated access, and absent amenities. Infrastructure could catalyze eco-tourism.

**21.2. Harand's ruins** (86 km, Rojhan; national heritage) embody pre-Islamic antiquity fort defying Gorchani assaults (1540 CE, Mir Chakar era) its Hindu shastras crediting Harondo Pawan; now depopulated, it merits archaeological excavation (Cunningham, 1875).

## **22. Conclusion**

The historical development of District Rajanpur demonstrates that its identity has been profoundly shaped by its unique geographical location, tribal organization, and spiritual heritage. Although historical records remain fragmented, available evidence indicates that Rajanpur has continuously served as a strategic corridor connecting Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan. The district experienced successive political transformations under Arab, Baloch, Sikh, British, and Pakistani administrations, each contributing to its administrative and socio-cultural evolution.

Tribal institutions, customs, and traditional leadership structures have remained influential in shaping social relations and political participation. Likewise, the contributions of Sufi saints, literary personalities, and political leaders have significantly enriched the district's cultural and intellectual landscape. Despite persistent challenges, including poverty, flood vulnerability, and infrastructural limitations, Rajanpur possesses considerable potential for urban growth, cultural preservation, and tourism development. Therefore, understanding its historical trajectory is essential for addressing contemporary developmental issues and preserving its rich cultural heritage.

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