



JABBĀR KĒL

JABBĀR KĒL (or Jabar Kēl or Khan Kēl), the leading lineage of the Solaymān Kēl Paxtun tribe of the *Ġalzi/Gilzi* tribal confederation of eastern and southeastern Afghanistan. *Kēl* in Pashtu generally means a small (minimal lineage, 3-4 generations) or large (maximal lineage, 5 or more generations) segment of a tribe that may occasionally refer to a whole tribe and its constituent lineages, as in the Solaymān Kēl (cf. *zay* “lit. descendant” in Aḥmadzay, tribe, and Bārakzay, lineage).

During the past three centuries the Jabbār Kēl maximal lineage has provided political and military leadership for the eastern Paxtuns, especially eastern and southeastern *Ġalzi* tribes. This leadership role was triggered by increased contacts between the tribal Paxtuns of Afghanistan and the expanding Persian and Mughal empires during the first quarter of the 17th century, corresponding roughly to the reigns of Shah ‘Abbās I (1588-1629) in Persia and Emperor Jahāngir (1605-27) in India.

The Jabbār Kēl lineage has played military and political roles in opposition to and, occasionally, in collaboration with the state structures centered within and outside Afghanistan. On occasion, they have participated in joint resistance and organized military operations with Western *Ġalzi*, Hōtak, and Tōki Paxtuns against Persians, Mughals, and, during the first and second [Anglo-Afghan wars](#), British encroachments into Paxtun tribal territories.

The tribal Paxtuns of Afghanistan have been engaged with centralized polities at least as far back as the rule of Sultan Maḥmud Ghaznavi (998-1030) and his



Ghaznavid successors (1030-87; see 'Otbi, pp. 467-71). During these early periods and, continuing throughout the 16th century, Paxtun tribes generally remained marginal to state structures, but, by virtue of proximity to trade routs and/or other state-controlled strategic locations, some tribal segments, especially in the aftermath of European colonialism and global capitalism during the past three centuries, experienced regular close political and economic contacts with these structures. These relations induced segmentation (and occasionally fusion) and political and economic rankings in the otherwise egalitarian and cohesive organization of tribal societies. An important outcome of this process of transformation has been tribal access to state power structure and resources, triggering the emergence of dominant tribal segments and individuals.

Among western Ġalzis of Afghanistan, Khan KĒl lineages emerged among the Hōtak and Tōki tribes during the late 17th and early 18th centuries leading to the conquest of Isfahan in 1722 by Shah Maḥmud and his cousin Shah Ašraf (q.v.) of the Shah 'Alam KĒl (Khan KĒl) lineage of the Hōtak tribe. The prominence of Hōtak and Toki Ġalzis in western Afghanistan began to decline with the rise of Nāder Shah Afšār (q.v.) and his invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent emergence of the Dor-rāni (q.v.) consortium of lineages (mainly Sadozay and Bārakzay) among the Popalzay tribal Paxtuns of southwestern Afghanistan. These Dorrāni lineages have had a long-standing collaborative relationship with the Persian and Mughal empires as far back as the early 16th century. As the Dorrāni state structure in Afghanistan was gradually being consolidated during the 19th and 20th centuries, the Ġalzi opposition to this structure, led by their Khan KĒl segments, assumed increased intensity and frequency.

The emergence of the Jabbār KĒl as a dominant lineage among the eastern Ġalzi was an outcome of tribal contacts with the Persian, Mughal, British imperial structures, and the Dorrāni state in Afghanistan. After the decline of the Hōtak Ġalzis in western Afghanistan during the 1730s and the ascendance of the Dorrānis a decade later, the leadership of Ġalzi Paxtuns passed on to the eastern Ġalzis, among whom the Jabbār KĒl evolved as the leading lineage. During the reign of Aḥmad Shah Dorrāni (1747-73), Moḥammad-'Ali Khan Jabbār KĒl was appointed the head of the Ġalzi tribes. Timur, Aḥmad Shah's son (r. 1773-93), appointed Şafā Khan Jabbār KĒl and later his son, Aḥmad Khan, to the leadership of the Ġalzis. Aḥmad Khan died near Herat in a battle against the Persian forces. His son, 'Abd-al-'Aziz Khan, became chief of the



Ġalzis during the 1790s and early 1800s.

The Ġalzis, led by the Hōtaks and Jabbār Kēls, posed regular opposition to the Dorrāni rule in Afghanistan. In 1801, a western Ġalzi force, led by ‘Abd-al-Raḥim Khan Hōtak, captured Kandahar and then, joined by eastern Ġalzi contingents led by the Jabbār Kēl, defeated the governor of Ġazni (October 1801). Then the combined army advanced through Lōgar to within ten miles of Kabul but was defeated by the Dorrāni’s Qezelbāš force. (Malleison, p. 317; Elphinstone, II, p. 329; Ġobār, p. 392)

Jabbār Khan, the eponym of the Jabbār Kēl, lived during the first quarter of the 17th century and died at an unknown date in a military operation against the Safavid. He is buried in the village of Kāk-e Jabbār, about 30 miles southeast of Kabul. The village is the center of the *‘alāqadāri*, the smallest unit of a provincial government in Afghanistan, of the same name in Kabul Province. The locality is mentioned in non-Paxtun Kabuli and Fārsiwān lore for its harsh winters, robbery, and molestation of strangers by local Paxtuns (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan VI*, p. 315).

Most available written Paxtun tribal genealogies were originally produced by outsiders in Persian. British authors, while making modifications of their own and adding augmentations from local sources, have reproduced these genealogies in available English versions. In these genealogies, Jabbār Khan is usually linked through five ascending generations to the putative Ġalzi ancestor: Jabbār Khan, nested in the Aḥmadzi tribe, nested in the Solaymān Kēl tribe, descendants of Izab, descendant of Ebrāhim, son (or descendant) of Ġalzi, eponym of Ġalzi tribal confederation. Three minimal lineages are nested in the Jabbār Kēl section: Aḥmad Kēl (descendants of Aḥmad Khan, Jabbār Khan’s eldest son), Maryam Kēl (descendants of Maryam, Jabbār Khan’s daughter; unusual for the patrilineal Ġalzi, and hence their claim to Jabbār Kēl identity is considered dubious), and Kōgiāni Kēl. Aḥmad Kēl, the senior lineage of the Jabbār Kēl, has in turn branched into three sections, each headed by one of the three great grandsons of Aḥmad Khan: Šafā Khan, Langar Khan, and Moḥammad Khan whose descendants have been prominent in the modern political history of Afghanistan. A descendant of these individuals who lived through the first half of the 20th century would be usually linked in eight ascending verifiable generations to Jabbār Khan. For example, Moḥammad Jān Khan (d. 1956, a high ranking government official in Kabul), son of Mehrdel Khan, son of Moḥammad Hanif Khan, son of Moḥammad-‘Ali Khan, son of Moḥammad Khan, son of Sarmast Khan, son of Eshāq Khan, son of



Ahmad Khan, son of Jabbār Khan.

The Jabbār KĒl are mostly engaged in growing wheat and other cash crops. They live in an area stretching from Kāk-e Jabbār eastward along the Sorḳrōd River, roughly paralleling the northern foothills of Spin Ghar mountain, to the western vicinity of Jalālābād, and from there northward throughout the southern part of Laḡmān Province. Leading families live in the villages of ‘Aziz Khan Kats, Ka Kats, Moḡammad-‘Ali Khan Kats (all in southern Laḡmān), and the districts of Ḥesārak and Sorḳrōd, all along major historical trade routs in this part of Afghanistan.

The Jabbār KĒl led the armed opposition during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42, q.v.) to the installation of Shah Šojā‘ by the British as the ruler of Kabul. During winter 1842 the Jabbār KĒl were prominent in (save for a few women and a medical doctor) the total destruction of the retreating British force consisting of about 700 Europeans, over 3,800 Indian infantry and cavalry, and over 12000 camp followers between Kāk-e Jabbār and Gandamak, a distance of about 45 miles. During his second reign (1843-63), Amir Dōst Moḡammad and his sons fought several battles against the Ġalzis, led, in the east, by the Jabbār KĒl. To cope with the Ġalzi opposition, the Dorrāni rulers made marital alliances with the Jabbār KĒl (e.g., Amir Dōst Moḡammad married a sister of ‘Abd-al-‘Aziz Khan, grandson of Šafā Khan) and encouraged intermarriages between the latter and the Qezelbāš community in Kabul, a major base of Dorrāni support in Afghanistan (e.g., ‘Abd-al-‘Aziz Khan Jabbār KĒl married a daughter of Esmā‘il Khan Bayāt, a leading member of the Qezelbāš community in Kabul). During the reign of Amir Šēr ‘Ali (1868-79), several leading Jabbār KĒl were appointed to high positions at his court in Kabul. They included ‘Eṣmat-Allāh Khan, son of ‘Abd-al-‘Aziz Khan, as a member of the state council and Arsala Khan, son of Langar Khan, as vizier and governor of Zormat. Three grandsons of Arsala Khan, Amin-Allāh Khan, ‘Abd-al-Jabbār Khan, and Fāteḡ Moḡammad Khan were high-ranking officials in the Afghan government during the middle years of the 20th century. Virtually all their descendents have now migrated to the United States. Wazir Tāj Moḡammad, a khan of Jabbār KĒl, commanded Afghan troops at the battle of Maywand in 1879 (Adamec, pp. 253-54).

‘Eṣmat-Allāh Khan, the chief of the Jabbār KĒl during early 1880s, rose several times against the government of Kabul and attacked government communication lines. He and his eldest son, Moḡammad-Hāšem Khan, were executed by Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḡmān (r. 1880-1901), while other sons were exiled



to India. The Ġalzi rebellion of 1886-87 against Amir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was also led by the Jabbār K̄ēl. Prominent in the leadership of the rebellion were four Jabbār Khel brothers: Mehrdel Khan, Purdel Khan, Sherdel Khan, and General Najm al-Din Khan commanded Sardār Moḥammad Es-ḥāq Khan’s army against his cousin, Amir ‘Abd al-Raḥman in 1888. After the rebellion was crushed, thousands of Jabbār K̄ēl families were forced to move to Afghan Turkestan, seeding the ethnic tensions that to date beset Afghanistan.

During the destabilization of Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s, large numbers, including many leading families of the Jabbār K̄ēl, migrated to Pakistan, some of whom joined the groups fighting the then government of Kabul.

See also [AFGHANISTAN](#) iv, vi, x; [GHILZI](#).

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