

## An Overview of the Status of Poonch Region in Historical Perspective

Dr. Shabnum Gull

Research Associate/ Junior Lecturer, Institute of Kashmir Studies UAJ&K  
Muzaffarabad.

Email: [shabnumkhanzadi@gmail.com](mailto:shabnumkhanzadi@gmail.com)

Amar Jahangir

Research Associate/ Junior Lecturer, Institute of Kashmir Studies UAJ&K  
Muzaffarabad.

Email: [amirjahangir82@gmail.com](mailto:amirjahangir82@gmail.com)

Dr. Anbreen Khawaja

Assistant Professor Institute of Kashmir Studies UAJ&K Muzaffarabad.

Received on: 02-07-2024

Accepted on: 04-08-2024

### Abstract

Historical literature is replete with accounts of the life, thoughts, and actions of the central leadership of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, but there is a considerable lack of literature on the historical status of Poonch. However, few English writers have written about of Poonch. To fill the existing gap this paper is an attempt to throw light on the historical status of Poonch with references. There are a number of factors that point to the fact that the Poonch region had a special place among all the Muslim-majority regions at the time of the partition of India. The Poonch was also divided into two parts. Poonch is a beautiful hilly region with trees, streams and small rivers, situated one hundred and seventeen miles south-west of Kashmir. Ancient historians and tourists have described that the people of Poonch are simple-hearted, beautiful and hard-living who cultivate crops here in a particular season. This study depends on secondary sources.

**Keywords:** Status of Poonch Region, Historical Perspective, Literature

### Introduction

Allah Almighty has blessed the region of Poonch with numerous blessings and also the qualities of courage and bravery to the inhabitants of this region. This region has always maintained its uniqueness in every era of history. Poonch is also known as the land of Jayals and it is the name of a lush green area along with Pir Panjal which is also an example of its beauty. Its high mountains and small valleys in these mountains have a talismanic style. "In its general aspect the district is throughout very mountainous, the ranges to the north and east being of considerable elevation". (Knite, 1991) Poonch is also the district headquarters

---

and a historic riverside town. It has always had the distinction of being the destination of the Jayalas. It borders Pakistan on one side and extends to the Pir Panjal glaciers on the other. (Naz, 2003) Poonch has its own historical status where it has seen a glorious past and writers could not refrain from writing about the scattered colors of nature. Its beauty is described as Poonch is a collection of many beautiful and charming valleys. Tahi Valley, Digwar Valley, Rawalkot Valley, Bagh Valley, Sawir Valley, Mahinder Valley, Sadharu Valley, Tat Valley, Hajira Valley, Baral Valley are famous among them. The Tahi Valley is 25 miles long and stretches from Mahandla to Suwar. The beauty of the valley is from the river Poonch which flows in the middle. Digwar Valley is a destination in itself. And there are small valleys around it." (Naz, 2003) Hien Tsang who was a Chinese traveler has also mentioned Poonch and said that, this region is situated one hundred and seventeen miles south-west of Kashmir. It has numerous streams. The region is surrounded by mountains and crops are cultivated here in a certain season. (Naz, 2003) No one could stay without writing about the beauty of the Poonch region. Poonch is a beautiful region consisting of hilly areas with trees, streams and small rivers. Inspired by lakes, waterfalls and the same streams, Krishna Chandra named his novel about Poonch as "Talab Ki Haseena" or gave this name to Poonch and Jhelum rivers in the foothills of Poonch. Ancient historians and travelers wrote well about Poonch. The people here are simple-hearted, beautiful, good-looking, gorgeous and stunning. (Sudozai, 2006) "Punch state is ancient times, was situated in the valleys of the Punch, Tohi and its tributaries. It was bounded on the north by the Pir Panjal Range, on the west by the Jhelum, on the south probably by the plains and on the east by Raja Puri. The original name of the state was Parnotsa, of which Punch is a derivation and the original capital was at Lohara the present Lohrin to the north east of the town of Punch." (Ram, 1977)

### **Methodology**

The research study primarily is done through the historical approach. The whole data of this research study was collected from secondary sources which include articles, books, journals, websites, other documents existing as published and unpublished work and other relevant texts which are widely available are helpful in completing this research work.

### **Result and Discussion**

#### **The meaning of the word 'Pooch'**

Pandit Kalhan writes 'Prunus', 'Puns', 'Pernotus' for Poonch in Raj Tarangani. These are all synonyms. The meaning of which in Sanskrit is the outer part of a kingdom. Pooch means "external or extra part". In Kashmiri language the Poonch is called 'Prunthas'. History of the Tang Dynasty of China written during the reign of Emperor Shui Qingshu (880-946) and in the mention of the five states of Kashmir, the name of Poonch is written as 'Punnotsha', 'Panuch', 'Prunch' and 'Panocha'. (Khan, 2001) It should be remembered that in the Kashmiri language this region is still called 'Pruns' or 'Prunjh'. In Sanskrit, the 'frontier region' of a kingdom is called Poonch. (Mir, 2011) Hien Tsang named it 'Pun Noto'. We can say that whatever the names were, they changed over time. "Poonch" was written by Hiuen Tsang as 'Po-Nu-Tso', which is the Chinese transliteration of Poonch. (Gardizi, 2007)

---

**Reasoning of the word 'Pooch'**

Regarding the name of Poonch, there are many traditions and anecdotes about who built this city in the name of when and by whom. It is said that years ago there was a village of 'Gudris' in which there was a girl named 'Poonch' who was very gorgeous and good-looking. Once a king of Kashmir passed through here, he fell in love with this girl, expressed his desire for marriage, the Gudris gave a conditional yes, in which one condition was that a city should be built. So this king built a city in the name of Poonch. Raja married a beautiful girl from the family of Gudriyas, whose name was Poonch. This city was built in her name, so the area around it was also called Poonch. (Mir, 2011)

**Difference between Poonch and Lohar Kot**

Before the city of Poonch, the city of Lohar Kot was inhabited and the city of Poonch is located at a distance of about 42 miles from this place. Some people used to call Lohar Kot as Poonch but the evidence is against it as there are two separate cities. Lohar Kot is situated about 42 miles north-east of the present capital of Poonch. The ruins of Lohar Kot indicate that there was a magnificent city in the past. Its buildings were built of hewn stones when the present city of Poonch was built. It was described as an additional or external part of Lohara or Lohar Kot. This is also supported and confirmed by the fact that Poonch was annexed to Lohar Kot for a period of time. (Naz, 2003) Poonch and Lohara were two separate cities. Lohara was the center of the kingdom and the fort built to protect it is also called Lohar Kot, which was so strong that even Mahmood Ghaznavi could not conquer it. Poonch was not an unknown geographical region in the Indian sub-continent, east of the present Poonch city, at the present Mandi location, was the capital of this kingdom and the Rajgans of Kashmir were rivals and opponents of the Lohara Empire. The fort of Lohar Kot near the Mandi was so strong, even a brave general like Mahmood Ghaznavi could not defeat him. (Khan, 1986) So there is no doubt that Lohar Kot and Poonch are two separate places which have their own historical status. Syed Mahmood Azad also declared the city of Poonch which is situated on the banks of the river as an additional and external part of Lohara. Pandit Kalhan also mentions the city of Lohara and declares it as the headquarters of Rajagan Lohara.

**When and who established the city of Poonch?**

There are different opinions regarding the settlement of Poonch city, according to some it was built by Raja Bik and according to others it was built by Raja Lalitaditya. The city of Poonch was built by Raja Bik in BC and if its traces have been lost due to the change of time, it must have been built again by Lalitaditya. Raja Bik, who was the son of Mehra Kul, settled the city of Poonch. (Hasan, 1934) Raja Bik built a big city called Poonch in the passes of South Kohistan, which till today shows the great courage of this Raja through his words and deeds. (Fauq, 1910) Apart from this, the location of the city of Poonch in the middle of the valley has been told in the histories that the present Poonch (Kashmiri called Pronth) which is in the Jammu province was founded by Raja Lalitaditya of Kashmir who ascended the throne in the year 754 Bikrimi. (Shamsuddin, 2001) But at the same time, there is no denying that Raja Bik built it. It is far-fetched to consider the present day Poonch as the city inhabited by Raja Bik. But the route to Poonch (which lies in the west of Kashmir) is only 80 miles from Baramulla and only forty miles from Tosha Maidan, so the attribution of the population of Poonch to

---

---

Raja Bik cannot be completely ignored. While there is no settlement or city or village named Poonch in Kashmir Valley recorded in the history of Kashmir. (Shamsuddin, 2001)

In this regard, Professor Nazir also calls Lalitadat the founder of Poonch city. Lohar kot was destroyed in an earthquake and Poonch became the center of attention. Poonch was settled by King Lalitaditya (750-725) of Kashmir and was called Poonch after being a border town in the Kashmir valley. (Tishna, 2008) But when we study the history carefully, Poonch is mentioned during the reign of Raja Bik and then during the reign of Lalitaditya has rebuilt it. According to Syed Mahmood Azad, Raja Bik had settled a city named Poonch in the southern pass from Kashmir. This also proves that the old capital of the hill region was Lohara or Lohrin and the present city of Poonch was laid by Raja Bik.

### **History of Poonch in Different Periods**

Poonch is mentioned in history in the following way.

1. Poonch is mentioned in history from the time of Raja Bak who belonged to the Malwa dynasty. Raja Bak was the twelfth ruler of the Malwa dynasty who lived in Mehra Kal. Poonch appears for the first time in the history books during the mention of the Mehra Kal era. (Khan, 2001)
2. Raja Lalitaditya who was the fifth ruler of Karkot Bansi dynasty (872-617) Poonch city on the bank of Nala Behitar was settled during his reign.
3. There is a mention of Poonch during the period of Khamar dynasty because Mahmud Ghaznavi besieged Loharkot fort of Poonch in 1015 during the reign of Dida Rani but failed.
4. The region from Rajouri to Poonch was called Lohara state. Its capital was Lohar kot.
5. When Zulchu/Zulqadar attacked during the reign of Raja Sahdev of Opiyadev family, many people ran away and took shelter in Poonch. After looting in Kashmir, Zulqadar's army reached near Aliabad when it returned due to heavy snowfall. A few hundred of the 70,000 children who settled there died.
6. During the rule of the Muslim Sultans, where the entire Kashmir became enlightened with Islam, Poonch also became enlightened with Islam. It was a part of Kashmir till the time of Zain-ul-Abidin, but during the reign of Hasan Shah and Fateh Shah, only a part of it remained independent. When Mirza Haider attacked Kashmir, the independent chiefs of Poonch supported him.
7. During the rule of the Chak dynasty, where there were riots in the entire Kashmir, not even a trace of it was spared. Wherever there was communalism.

Poonch was once again become independent and different tribes of Poonch established their own governments in their respective areas. This period can be called a dark period in the history of Poonch. In 1556, when the Mughals occupied Kashmir, Poonch also went under their control. During the reign of Jahangir, "Sirajuddin" was appointed as the Raja of Poonch. "The Mughal Emperor Jahangir made Raja Sirag-ud-Din Rathore the descendant of Rao Jodha and Rao Suraj Singh the new Rular of Punch Siraj-ud-Din and his descendants Shahbaz Khan Rathore, Raja Abdul Razak Rathore, Raja Rustam Rathore and Raja Bahdur Rathore ruled this area."(<http://poonch.gov>) During the reign of Jahangir, the Mughals appointed Chaudhry Sirajuddin of Pulangi as Raja of Poonch, later his son ruled Poonch. The kings of Palangi were natives of Poonch, but the tribes of Poonch did not accept the rule of the kings of Palangi. (Khan, 1986) After that, Raja Fateh Mehmood Khan was the ruler of Poonch from 1646 to

---

1700. Thus, Poonch was under the influence of Mughals and Afghans before the Sikh era."From 1752 to 1819, Poonch was under Durrani rule. In 1810, Bhimber and Rajauri were reduced by Ranjit Singh's generals. In 1814 Ranjit himself advanced to Poonch, but on the conquest of Kashmir by Sikhs in 1819, Poonch along with other hill states came under Ranjit's Suzerainty. Raja Ruhallah Khan had sided with Afghans in 1814 so he was expelled from the state. Soon after Poonch was granted in lief to Dhyhan Singh, and later in 1827, he was created Raja of Poonch (Chibhal) and Bhimber." (Ram, 1977) The Rathor dynasty continued to rule in Poonch under the Afghans, but was later restricted to the rule of the Sadhars. During the rule of the Sikhs from 1819 to 1839 there was a period of "Aap Raji" in Poonch, the chiefs had established small governments in their respective areas.

### **Poonch as a State**

In 1822, Dhyhan Singh's son Hira Singh was given a fief as a reward for his loyalty. But in practice the rule remained with the chiefs of Poonch. In 1832, Gulab Singh attacked Poonch and killed brave figures like Sabz Ali and Milli Khan. Gulab Singh skinned at least 13 Muslim leaders alive and hung them on trees to spread terror across the straw. (Samad, N. A.) The region of Poonch was given to Gulab's younger brother Dhyhan Singh, Dhyhan Singh continued to serve as minister of Ranjit Singh in the Sikh court of Lahore and practically the region of Poonch remained under the influence of Gulab Singh. (Baloch, 2012) This hill state extending from the river Jhelum to the peaks of Pir Panjal has been an independent or semi-independent state in all ages. (Gardizi, 2007) Raja Dhyhan Singh was given the area of Chappal as a jagir after the capture of Raja Sultan Khan, later the area of Poonch was also given. Raja Dhyhan Singh appointed Dewan Kishan Gopal from Raja Gulab Singh as the ruler of Poonch. During this time, a person named Shams raised a rebellion in Poonch and gradually the whole region joined him. But Mian Basha kept Raja Dhyhan Singh's flag flying over the fort of Poonch. (Laknowi, 1991)

In 1832, Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the Jagir of Poonch to the descendants of Dhyhan Singh. About the year 1832, Gulab Singh, who had already acquired the Chakla of Jammu as Jagir from Maharaja Ranjit Singh, made many attempts at the conquest of the district Poonch, which was inhabited by martial tribes like the "Sudhans", "Maldayals" and others. Gulab Singh prevailed upon Ranjit Singh, mainly through the influence of his brothers Dhyhan Singh and Suchet Singh, to attack Poonch. (Saraf, 1977)

In 1832, Raja Gulab Singh's son Odham Singh Dogra came with a detachment of the Dogra army to the place of Baral near Pallandri via Kotli and captured a fort here. (Azad, 1975) Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the Jagars of Jammu to the three Dogra brothers, Gulab Singh of Jammu, Suchat Singh of Ram Nagar and Dhyhan Singh of Poonch. In the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846, Gulab Singh traded the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the British for 75 lakh Nanak Shahi. Gulab Singh allowed his brother Dhyhan Singh to be the Raja of Poonch. Dhyhan Singh died in 1844 and Gulab Singh recognized Dhyhan Singh's son Moti Singh as the Raja of Poonch. After Moti Singh's death in 1888, his son Baldave Singh succeeded him. On Baldev Singh's death in 1918, Sukhdev Singh ascended the throne. After the death of Sukhdev Singh in 1927, his brother Jagatdev Singh became the Raja of Poonch, then in the same year, Maharaja Hari Singh deposed Jagatdev Singh and started working to bring Poonch under Jammu and Kashmir. (Tishna, 2008) "The territory of Poonch, which is held by Raja Moti Singh a cousin of

---

---

Maharaja Ranbir Singh, was wrested by the Dogra brothers under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, from Raja Mir Baz Khan, Gujjar, its hereditary ruler, about forty years ago. It formed part of the possessions of Raja Dhyan Singh, which descended to his sons, Jowahir Singh and Moti Singh. The intrigues of Jowahir Singh against his uncle and cousin at length led to his banishment to the Punjab, on a cash pension of one lakh per annum, and to the absorption of his patrimonial estate in the Jammu territory, Moti Singh gained the good graces of Gulab Singh by submission, and received from him the grant of Poonch on condition of fidelity and allegiance." (Knite, 1991)

During this long period of Dogra Shahi, Raja Baladev Singh was the only ruler who in 1899 borrowed British officers from the Government of India, appointed them as His Highnesses, and re-surveyed the territory. These British officers were moved by all the sufferings and cries of the subjects and with the consent of Raja Baldev Singh, Poonch was associated with British India and it was named Poonch State. Additionally, an English Resident was appointed to supervise. Captain R.E. Hamilton, the last honorable governor of Poonch, gave separate offices to the departments to appease the subjects and organized the administrative structure of these departments in proportion to the population, but misfortune did not leave the Muslims behind because some fanatical limits. In the kingdoms of bigoted Hindu Maharajas, when a Muslim occupied an important position, the Raja made a minister or an official who was not a scholar of the four Vedas, they were not ready to accept that thanks to the British Indian Residency in Poonch State. Internal and external power of Muslims increased. So he persuaded Raja Sukhdev Singh, who was still young, to secede from the Residency and Poonch once again came under the patronage of Jammu and Kashmir. After that, atrocities on Muslims were brought to an end and the jobs of Muslim officers were not only terminated but their life span was also shortened. "Poonch is the capital of Raja Jaggat Dev Singh, son of the late Raja Buldeo Singh, cousin of the Maharaja of Kashmir. The Palace, Gardens, fort and managerie are interesting. The height is under 3,000 feet, so the climate is hot in Summer." (Neve, 1979)

### **Geography of Poonch**

Poonch is a very important destination of Kashmir. Muzaffarabad in the north and of the Kashmir Valley in the north-east, Pothwar region of Pakistan i.e. Rawalpindi, Islamabad in the west and Jammu in the south of Poonch. This area spread over one thousand six hundred square miles is a state. The region has had a distinct political, social and historical status. It is also the headquarters of Poonch district and a historical city situated on the banks of the river. Its borders are bordered by Pakistan on one side and extend to the glaciers of Per Panjal on the other side.

### **Population**

From 1947, its population consisted of more than 4 lakh people, which has now reached close to one million. 98% of it is Muslim.

### **Administrative divisions of Poonch**

The political division of Poonch has changed in almost every era. When the Dogra empire gained control over Kashmir, Poonch was declared a separate state consisting of four tehsils and the capital of which remained Poonch. The four tehsils of Poonch, Haveli, Mahender,

---

Sudhnuti and Bagh, consisted of vast areas. The upper parts of this state are snowy and the lower parts have a temperate climate. (Azad, 1975) In 1947, the area of the mansion was divided into two parts. One part became the tehsil of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the other part is now the tehsil of Azad Kashmir. (Tishna, 2008) The areas of these tehsils are included in Azad Kashmir. Roads, schools, hospitals and bridges have been built there. Most of Poonch is the part of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The entire area of Mahender, except Thakyalala, has been under the control of the Indian Army and the entire road to Poonch on this side is closed. The Indian Army has taken out the road from its occupied territories to Rajouri. Areas from Madarpur to Chiri Kot are also occupied by India and Mujahideen from Kotli to Hajira are occupied by Azad Kashmir.

In 1947, the three tehsils of Poonch district (occupied) were Haveli, Sarnakot, Mendhar and the remaining two tehsils of independent Poonch were Bagh and Sudhnuti. Tehsil Bagh was given district status in 1988 and the current population of Bagh is 434,000 as of 2013. (<http://ajkgov.com>) Tehsil Sudhanoti was given district status in 1996. (Tishna, 2008) In 2009, Haveli was given the status of a district. (<http://ajkgov.com>) Azad Kashmir district Poonch is located at 33.45 latitude and 74.09 longitude and at an altitude of 3300 meters. Bagh to the north of Poonch, Haveli to the north-east, Occupied Poonch to the east, Mendhar and Kotli to the south-east, Tarar Khal to the south, Mang, to the south-west, Murree to the west and Dhirkot to the north-west.

## References

1. Azad, S. M. (1975). *Tarikh-e-Kashmir*. Muzaffarabad: Sadat Publishers
2. Baloch, S. R. H. (2012). *Ghazni say Kashmir tak, Dastan-e-Mardan Hur*. Rawalpindi: Department of Broadcasting and Encyclopedia.
3. Fauq, D. M. (1910). *Tarikh-e-Kashmir*. Mirpur: Veri Nag Publishers.
4. Gardazi, S. (2007). *Seihat-e-Kashmir*. Muzaffarabad: Himala Publications.
5. Hasan, Q. M. (1934) *Nigaristan-e-Kashmar*. India: Behli Maran Publishers Delhi.
6. <http://poonch.gov.in> basic details about Poonch.
7. Khan, M. S. (1986). *Yegana-e-Kashmir*. Lahore: Yunus Printer Urdu Bazar.
8. Khan, M. S. (2001). *Poonch ki Tehzeeb wa Seqafat*. Muzaffarabad: Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy.
9. Knite, E. F. (1991). *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak: together with routes in the territories of the Maharaja of Jam[m]u and Kashmir*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.
10. Lucknowi, A. M. H. K. (1991). *Tarikh-e-Jammu*. Mirpur: Veri Nag Publishers.
11. Mir, G. M. (2011). *Geographical rights of Jammu and Kashmir ki Gurafiyai Haltain*. Mirpur: Maktaba Rizwan Allama Iqbal Road.
12. Naz, S. M. (2003). *Tasveer-e-Kashmir*. Lahore: Popular Academy Urdu Bazar.
13. Neve, M. A. (1979). *The Legacy of Kashmir Ladakh & Skardu*. Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette.
14. Ram, D. K. (1977). *Gulabnama*. Srinagar: Gulshan Book Residency Road.
15. Saduzai, B. (2006). *Mujahideen of Kashmir*. Karachi: Welcome Book port Manj Urdu Bazaar.
16. Samad, K. A. (N.A). *Pak Kashmir*. Rawalpindi: Maktaba Mukhtar MA Gulistan Colony.
17. Saraf, M. Y. (1977). *Kashmiries Fight for Freedom*. (Vol-1). Lahore: Ferozesons Ltd.
18. Shamsuddin. (2001). *Waqiat-e- Kashmir*. Lahore: Mushtaq Book Corner Al Kareem Market Urdu Bazaar.
19. Tishna, N. A. (2008). *Awraq-e- Jammu and Kashmir*. Lahore: Al Faisal Publishers Urdu Bazar.
20. [www.ajkgov.com.pk](http://www.ajkgov.com.pk).