

BAALIS (BELOS): THE ANCIENT NAME OF QUETTA CUM QANDAHAR

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ABSTRACT:

The objectives behind this study are to search the ancient name of Quetta in the historical books and find out the similarity of its ancient name with the word Baloch. The study was descriptive in nature and the secondary sources were consulted for the purpose. The valley of Quetta has always remained source of inspiration for the researchers, scholars, tourists and historians, because this city is still a junction for Afghanistan and Central Asia in the north for Iran and Middle East in the west, for coast of Bela and Mekran in the south and for Sindh and Punjab in the East, since ancient times. Another significance of this study is the ancient places scattered around Quetta valley. Prominent among these places are called Mound of Killi Gul Muhammad, Mound of Pir Syed Balo, Mound of Ahmad Khan Zai, Mound of Kechi Baig, Mound of Sadaat, and new found Mound of Kooze Bagh near Kirani Bridge. These places belong to 7000 years ancient culture. (Jarriage & Jarriage: 1985-86) But the thing which is the source of further inspiration then other causes, is the ancient name of the area. Till now every one understand and believe that the Shaal or Shaal Kot is the ancient or old name of Quetta valley.

Quetta is a new name, which used in British regime, but the name of Shaal or Shaal Kot was in use before the use of Quetta.

It was that time when the area of Balochistan was under the rule of Baloch Khanates. Afghanistan was not unified and there was Anarchy; some times it was with Turks and some time with Mangols and etc. The Khanate of Kalat first time established in 1410 A.D, and the Afghan government came in

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power in 1747 A.D, under the command of Ahmed Khan Sadozai, which is very famous in history as Ahmad Shah Durrani or Abdali. (Tate: (1973)

The name Shaal or Shaal Kot is not a matter of satisfaction for the researchers who think that the Shaal Kot cannot be the real and ancient name of the valley of Quetta. Researches are being conducted for a long time for more ancient name of Quetta before Shaal. And, a researcher one day astonished when he saw 1000 year's old name of Quetta on the pages of history. Not only was a word for a dynasty but it is a big argument for an ethnic theory. This new word (name) is Baali (Balos) which is the topic of this article.

INTRODUCTION:

Quetta is the provincial headquarter of Balochistan. Its total area is 2.65 sq km² (1,024.3 sq miles) with a population (2008) of 1,140,000. This is the biggest city of Balochistan and still is junction among North, South, East and West. In the North it is connected with Pishin District, in the South with Mastung District, in the West with Noshki District and in the East with Bolan District. Ziarat District is situated in the North-east of the Quetta District. Quetta is a big trade market of Asia. The markets, stores and shops are full of every kind of useful commodities of foreign countries.

The area of Quetta has a big historical background. From early time up to date, every ruler who occupied the area, gave it Economic and Military importance, especially it was important for military purpose and as a gate way for North, South, East and West. When British Government of India did a agreement with the Khan of Kalat Mir Khudaidad Khan in 1883, (Khan: 2007) then Quetta went into the hands of British rulers of India. The British rulers develop the area; constructed many buildings, offices, schools, Colleges, Libraries, Hospitals and other kind buildings. When British Government established the province of British Balochistan, Quetta entered in history with a new name of Quetta.

QUETTA IN THE PAST:

During Arab period (Abbasid Caliphs) many Arabs historians and tourists visited various areas of Balochistan. All of them have big name in history. They are well known and authentic history writers of the past, but still they are certified. These are Ibn-e-Hauqal, Astakhri, Al-Masoodi and Al-Muquddisi and many others. They discussed the area of Quetta in their books, but not in detail. According to them Quetta was in the north of Tooran (Khuzdar) and its name was Balish or Walishtan. The Manstunj (Mastung) and Sebi (Sibi) were its cities. (Strange: 1986)

"تغزیر خلافت مشرق" translated by Mohammad Jameel-ur-Rehman and published by Muqtadirah Qaumi Zaban., Islamabad in 1986. Many times the Arab Historians and Geographers include it in Siestan and say; Sebi and Mastung were its main cities. **(Strange: 1986)** The Arab historians and tourists traveled in many areas of Balochistan during 9th and 10th century A.D., which means the name of area, was Belos, Balis, Balish, Belosh or Walistan at that time, means 1000 years ago. It is thought that Balis or Balish is the changed version of Balos or Belosh. Some historians write that the Belos or Balyus was the ancient name of Qandahar. They further say that the Balyus was a province and Qandahar was its headquarters. **(Usman & Siraj: 1995)**

No doubt this word Balyus is the changed shape of Belos, which is commonly used for Baloch tribes (Nation) in Afghan and Pashtoon tribes (Nations).

Raverty says, "the Belos was the ancient name of Qandahar". According to him, the Mangols attacked Multan in 1224 A.D., but Nasir-uddin Qubacha successfully defended Multan. When Mangols conquered a huge area of Ghaznavid dynasty and Belos or Qandahar, then Malik Khan Khilj migrated to Sindh with a regiment of Turk soldiers. He includes it in Khurasan and says; during Argun invasion the dynasty of Belos or Qandahar had also destroyed and perished like other cities of Khurasan. **(Raverty: 1999)** G.P Tate also follows it, and copy the same name of said territory in his book Siestan. **(Tate: 1979)** A book named Siestan (in Persian) corrected by Malik-ush-Shora Bahar, says, that Qandahar and surrounding areas was called Balis (Belos) in past. **(Bahar, Malik-ush-Shora: 1366)**

Another author dedicate this name (Shaal) to an un-known Kurd tribal chief Zirab Shalian, whose period according to author had the 9th century B.C. **(Baloch: 2007)** but it is believed untrue and has no any historical support. Dur Muhammad Kasi says that it was Shaal from beginning, which is Pashto language word. According to Kasi the meaning of Shaal is green area, orchards and gardens. **(Kasi: 2006)** This opinion has no historical support too because it is still unknown that when it became Shaal, but it is in our knowledge that 1000 years before it was Belis, Balish, Walishtan or Belyus.

CONCLUSION:

What was the name of Quetta valley before Arab invasion in the area? But this is true that it was the part of Khurasan. May be it was Belos territory before the advent of Islam in the area. In the beginning, the Islamic troops were Arabs, so they pronounced it in their own dialect, or may be this name was given by the Arabs to the area.

History proves it that when Arab troops conquered Iran, Central Asia, Siestan, Khurasan, Balochistan (Mekran, Khuzdar, Kalat, Mastung and other parts of the province); Afghanistan and Sindh, then they changed names of many areas, like Sagistan (Siestan) into Sajistan, because the Arabs could not pronounce alphabet گ (Gaf) of Persian and Urdu. As an alternative they used alphabet ج (Jeem) J or ک (Kaf) K for Gaf so Siestan or Sagistan became Sajistan.

Quetta was actually the part of Province Belos before Arab invasion and it was the part of Khurasan. It is thought that in Iranic period before Islam this dynasty was called Baloch, which is in Arabic changed into Belos,

because of no "ch" چ pronunciation in Arabic language and they use J or Sh ش for "Ch" چ so, this word became Belosh or Balyush in Arabic. But when the Central Asian families and ancestors of Afghan tribes came into power in Central Asia and Afghanistan they called the area Belos in their own pronunciation. In Persian era the area was also called "Nimroze".

According to Shah Nama Firdosi by Abu-ul-Qasim Firdosi, the inhabitants of Mekran, Siestan, Kirman, Mazindran, and Khurasan were Baloch. These tribes also participated in the Battles of Central Asia between the Sasanid ruler Anusherwan and white Huns. (Marri: 1985) But there is no proof in favour of it then the area called Baloch in Iranic Period.

During 9th and 10th century A.D when Arabs defeated the Persian Empire and occupied all Persian dynasty including Khurasan up to Sindh. Arab rulers established many provinces for their political interest so they gave the new names to the areas and changed many names in their own language. It is possible the area of Southern Afghanistan up to Quetta had been called Belosh, because of its Baloch inhabitants. During Turk period the area was also called dynasty of Belos, or Balis.

Still, we know the Pashtoon tribes use word Belos for Baloch tribes and as well as Arabs call them Balosh.

So, it proves that the inhabitants of this area of Khurasan were Baloch and still we know the majority of the people of Southern Afghanistan, including Quetta and Qandahar are Baloch.

It is also believed that during Mangol invasion the name of Balish or Walish had more reduced and changed in to Shaal, but it is our bad luck that in medieval period, history is silent about this name and region. But there is no doubt that in the beginning of Khanate of Kalat era during 15th century A.D. it was Shaal and was in the hands of Mangols. When Mangol rule ended in the beginning of 15th Century A.D., the Qambarani Baloch tribes became the ruler with the help of other Baloch tribes of the area of Kalat, Soorab, and Mastung. These all areas came under the Khanate of Kalat including Shaal. During the era of Khan Abdullah Khan Qahar, Mir Feroz Khan Raisani was the Governor of it. (Naseer: 2000)

After the birth of British Empire the Shaal went in to their control and got the name of Quetta.

This topic needs more work and more research. It is hoped that the above opinion might be right. For more research the Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Afghan literature of early and medieval period can help the researchers.

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