

## A Socio-Political View of Balochistan: An Overview

Political Science

Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan<sup>1</sup> & Dr. Adil Zaman Kasi<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*Balochistan is situated between 24, 54 and 32, 4 N and 60, 56 and 70, 15 E. Balochistan is bounded on the South by the Arabian Sea (Pottinger, 1980:50), on the North by Afghanistan and the North West Frontier Province, on the West by Iran and on the East by Sindh, the Punjab and the part of the Frontier Province (Hughes, 1977:2). The province covers a total area of 131855 S.M. the area which is almost wholly mountainous is blended with some very fertile valleys and plains. The mountainous area lies on the great belt of ranges connecting the Koh-e-Safed with hilly system of Southern Iran. It also forms a watershed, the drainage of which enters the Indus River on the East an Arabian Sea on the South while on the North and the West it makes its way to those inland lakes which form a general feature of Central Asia.*

**Key Words:** Balochistan, Pashtoons, Balochs, Quetta, Makran.

### Introduction

The name of Balochistan is derived from the Baloch (Pottinger, 1980:50) who have been living since ancient times. The Baloch according to Hughes gradually extended Eastwards from Southern Iran in about 7<sup>th</sup> century and till 15<sup>th</sup> century they settled themselves in these lands. (Hughes, 1977:26) But these generally quoted remarks of Hughes reflect the peculiar colonial outlook which was formed to protect the the British colonial interests. A Baloch nationalist and ever cherished historian Mir Gul Khan Naseer traces the arrival of the Balochs since 513 when Nausherwan Adil, the king of Persia on complaints attacked over Balochs and after a massacre of Balochs got shelter in Marap; Siah Dumb and Jhalawan by passing through Seetan, Chaghiand Kharan under the leadership of their chief Mir Qambar. (Naseer, 1993:1) Generally, it is reported that this name Balochistan was given by

---

<sup>1</sup> Chairperson, Department of Political Science, University of Balochistan, Quetta.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Balochistan, Quetta

Nadir Shah the great monarch, who as St John remarks after driving the Afghan invaders from Persia, made himself master and placed a native chief over the new province, formed out of the districts bounded on the north and south by Helmond valley and the sea, and stretching from Karman on the West to South on the East. Then newly formed province was called Balochistan or the country of Balochs. (Ahmed Zai, 1988:6) If we go through the pages of history we find that the Mughal emperor Zaheer ud Din Baber in Tuzk (Tuzk-e-Babery) also talks about Balochistan in these words, "I have recently received a letter of Mehdi Kokaltash from Balochistan where the Balochs are creating disturbances. On the receipt of this letter I have nominated Cheen Taimoor Sultan and have sent commandments to Adil Sultan, Mahmood Sultan Doldoi, Khusra Kokaltash, Mahmood Ali Jank, Dilawar Khan, Shah Mansoor Berlas and Hasan Ali to obey Cheen Taimoor Sultan in this assignments". (Baber, 1997:267) Allama Abul in "Aine-e-Akbery" while talking about River Indus says that this river also passed through Balochistan. (Abu Fazal, 1019) These and other historical references prove very successfully that this land was known as Balochistan much before Nadir Shah and this name is much older than it is believed to be. It also reflects that not only the name is older rather it had been the house of the Balochs even in the ancient times.

### **The land**

The traveler who enters the passes of Balochistan finds himself among surroundings which are essentially different. The general outlook resembles that of the Iranian Plateau, and takes as a whole, it is attractive and its peculiarities are not without a certain charm. (Pottinger, 1980:58) The mountainous series, the green belt of juniper, the plains, the valleys and the deserts are the novel features of the landscape of Balochistan. The deserts and the stony plains also have the beauty of their own. There are also level valleys of considerable size in which irrigation enables much of the cultivation to be carried on and rich crops of all kinds to be raised. (Hughes, 1977:4) The flatness of cycles due to scanty rainfall distinguishes Balochistan from the Eastern Himalayas. Within the mountains lie narrow glens whose rippling water courses are fringed in early summer by the brilliant green of carefully traced fields. Row of willows with interlacing festoons of views, border the clear water while groups of children and women in cotton shawls complete a peaceful picture of beauty and fertility. Some places are even more beautiful than Quetta on a bright frosty morning when all the lofty peaks are capped with glistening snow, while the date groves which encircle the Makran, are full of picturesque attraction. The frowning rifts and gorges

in the upper plateau make a contrast to the smile of valleys. From the loftier mountains peaks magnificent views are obtainable.

## **Population**

The census in Pakistan is held after about 17 years. Previously the census was held in 1981. Thereafter due to one reason or the other the governments did not manage the census and avoided it. But now due many factors the census was conducted. The preliminary census results were declared by the federal finance minister Sartaj Aziz on 8<sup>th</sup> July and were published in Press on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1998. These figures show that in 1981 population of Pakistan were 84.253 million which increased and is in 1998 130.578 million. It reflects annual growth rate 2.61% which was previously 3.06% in 1981. In 1981 the total population of Balochistan was 4.332 million which in 1998 is 6.51 million, while the growth rate is 2.42 % previously it had been 7.09%. It shows a very sharp reduction in the annual growth rate. The preliminary statistic shows that in 1998 the rural population is 76.7% and urban 23.3%. Further that the total increase in the population of Balochistan is 2.178 million. (*Dawn*, July 9, 1998)

It is also evident from the census report and figures that the process of urbanization in Balochistan is also gaining momentum, with the number of its people in cities rising from a mere 15.6% in 1981 to 23.3% in 1998. It also shows that almost a quarter of the total population of the province is urbanized, which is a good sign. (*Dawn*, July 9, 1998)

A part from the statistics of the census report it is also worth quoting that during the census process there had been some unrest in some sections and elements throughout the country. But it represented only a small voice, who had their own reservations. The critiques are also looking forwards for the effects of the figures of the census over the representation of the provinces in the national assembly and also about the size of the provincial assemblies. (*Daily Jang*, July 19, 1998)

According to the preliminary census report there are 23 cities having a population of 200,000 or above. The biggest city is Karachi with a population of 9.269 million followed by Lahore with 5.063 million, Faisalabad with 1.977. These three cities account for 38.4% of the country's urban population. The other big cities that have a population of over one million are Rawalpindi, Multan, Hyderabad and Gujranwala. Almost half of the urban population lives in these seven cities. (*Dawn*, July 9, 1998) It is worth quoting that the biggest city of Balochistan, Quetta is still not among the top seven cities of Pakistan.

## **People-Races and Tribes**

Balochs are the chief race and people of Balochistan and the Meds and Jats appear to have been in habitants of Balochistan at the time of Arab invasion. The Meds now, as then live on the coast. The Pashtoons still cluster around their homes at the back of Takht-e-Suleman. The Jats in spite of influx of Balochs to this day compose the cultivating classes of Lasbella and Kachhi and some of the Kurks whose insolence led to the final subjugation of Sindh by the Arabs are still to be found in Jan Valley in the Jhalawan. (Hughes, 1977:31)

## **The Baloch**

The indigenous races of Chief importance in Balochistan at the present day are Balochs and Pashtoons. The Jats, the cultivators now form only a small minority but many of them have been absorbed by the Balochs. Among religious and occupational groups may be mentioned by Sayyida, Dehwars and the indigenous Hindus, who live under the protection of tribesmen and carry on the trade and other businesses of day to day life. (Hughes, 1977:31)

The imperial Gazetteer of India has narrated the physical of Balochs in these words "his build is shorter, and he is more wiry. He has a broad bearing, frank manner, and he is fairly truthful, he looks on courage as a highest virtue, and on hospitality as a sacred duty..... His face is long and oval and the nose aquiline. (Imperial Gazetteer of India 'Balochistan', 1984:30) The physical strength of Baloch is discussed by Muhammad Sardar Khan Bloch in these words that..... the Baloch is the compound of Sanskrit BAL and OCHA which means most powerful. (Baloch, 1958:1)

The term Baloch has been explained in Burhani QaTI means in the Persian language as Cockscomb or Crest. (Baloch, 1958:1) But if we analyze the Crest borne by the Balochis as cited in Shah Nama Firdausi hardly explains the etymology of the name. Mir Gul Khan Naseer while discussing this Cock crest tale and dealing with Firdausi says that, "his (Kaikhasro) one army consisted upon Koch or Baloch Braves, they were fighters and marshals, they bore the cock crest and were never defeated. (Naseer, 1982:16) It shows the classical existence of this word Baloch but the history of the word Baloch is still to be traced. The verse of Firdausi mentioned in the above lines is also mentioned on the inner title page of Muhammad Sardar Khan Baloch's book History of Baloch race and Balochistan. Firdausi also narrated the bravery of the Baloch soldiers when he versifies the army of KUK KOHZAD, Firdausi says that each soldier was capable to fight against a lakh soldiers of the enemy. The tale told by the Firdausi depicts that Kaikhasro was the Iranian

monarch about five centuries BC and a very important section of his army consisted upon Baloch Soldiers. It also proves that the Balochs had occupied these lands long before and their house Balochistan had been the house of their ancestors in one way or the other thousands years ago. (Naseer, 1982:14-16) The provincial series of imperial gazetteer of India in Balochistan remarks about the Baloch and position in close proximity to Makran early in the seventh century and many of their tribal names bear the imprints of localities which they occupy in the Persian Balochistan. (Imperial Gazetteer of India 'Balochistan', 1984:28-29) These very often quoted remarks of the gazetteer evidently depicts the imperialistic approach wherein they wanted to prove if the Britisher's were Aryans in these lands then the Baloch were also not very old here, but the last part of the sentences shows that they also accept that the Balochs had been dwelling in these land long before.

While entering into intellectual discussion over the very originating point of the Balochs it is very interesting to note that the classical divine (as perceived) the theological concepts as prevailed thousands years back, while going through the history one observes that as the term BALOCH or BALOS is apparently a combination of Bal-UCH, or BEL and OS. The very name of race is probed deeply takes us back to a race or one may call a civilization which left indelible marks over the history. BEL is the Babylonian deity, quite a different form of Bal. The god Bel is first introduced from Babylon, quite interesting to mention, and is identified with the Greek god Zeus. It is also worth mentioning that "in Semitic religion the relation of gods to certain places which are special seats of their power is commonly expressed by the title B'al. As applied to men B'al came the Belus of the Greeks, who is confounded with the Zeus or Jupiter of the Greeks. The Kaldians and the Babylonians called it BEL' the Phoenician Ba'l, both from Hebrew B'al or Lord and also B'al has been transited into Bylos ..... The Phoenicians called him Beelsamin – Lord of Heaven. (Baloch, 1958:6)

While entering into epistemology of the 'Baloch' Dr. Fritz Hommel is quoted by remarking that many tribal names have been developed from the names of deities and the towns or rivers were also named alike e.g. God Belus on River Belus and Ba'loth tribe. Bible has mentioned in Hebrew Lexicon that Ba'lath or Ba'loth in Aloth'had been proper name of a town in the south of Judah towards the coast of Edom where the children of Judah were dwelling. (Bible, Joshua 14:24) Consequently it is evident that the people who used to worship the god Belus were named so. It is also worth mentioning that Baloch race is old that about 2000 BC the Mari Kingdom was established at Tell-Hariri near Euphrates.

Giving the originating meaning of Balochistan Forlong depicts that the very title Balochistan reflects that that it is the Bel-ak-istan, which is the composition of Bel and ak meaning the state of the god sun; it is also probable that sometime in the early ages this land may be known as Bel-kosh-istan the land of the people who worshipped sun and with the passage of time this, word was transformed into Belkochistan or Balochistan for Kosh, Koch and Baloch seem to have the same origin. (Naseer, 1982:18)

There has been another illustration of 'Baloch' that after the great martyr of Hazrat Imama Hussain a Chieftain Mir Ahmed migrated from Madina to Daman-e-Hulb and settled in a valley named as Barva, hence his family was known as Brohch and thus later transformed into Baloch. (Hatto, 1987:19) But this interpretation is owned by the Bravis on the basis of a convention produced by them that 'such Ahmed Khan had been their sardar and it is his name that Ahmed Zai family is known and form his settlement in Barva they are called Brahvi, Gul Khan Naseer refutes it by finding no historical proofs thereof. (39) (Naseer, 1982:20-21) However, it is evident that such tales have been developed to show a linkage to the Prophet's (PBUH) family due to love for him and do not occupy any historical significance but of much traditional and conventional importance. (Naseer, 1982:19)

After having this extensive discussion one may reach at a conclusion that the 'Baloch' may had been developed from Barkosh as it has already been discussed in detail. It is also proven from the dynastic discussion and chronology of Noah.

#### NOAH

Shem	Japhet	Ham
Canan	Kush	Phut

#### Nimrod or Belus

Nimrod being the son of Kush was known as Burkosh as Ber means son of Kosh, thus with the passage of time from Berkosh to Belus or Baloch. (Baloch, 1958:10-11)

The Baloch (Brahvis) as it is mentioned earlier had been settled in Seestan, Rodbar, Chaghi, Marap, Siah Kumb and Jhalawan and alos in Kalat. Since in these days Kalat and its suburbs were ruled by Seva dynasty (a Hindu family) and they used to speak 'Dravidian' language, while these newly settled Balochs were called 'Berz Koh' (those who belong to Koh-e-Alberz) and ultimately these 'Baloch' were known as 'Berz Kohi' and latter as Brahvi or Brohi.

The above detailed discussion also shows that the Baloch, the wanderers also known as they remained moving from one place to another, from one valley to another and of course for many centuries they remained wandering. (Hatto, 1987:9) Now although most of them have settled in plains, mountains and valleys for centuries yet in some cases the wandering can be witnessed.

## **Pashtoons**

The second major ethnic section of Balochistan consists upon Pashtoons (in Frontier known as Pakhtoons). The Pashtoons as they describe themselves appear to have been living not far from their present abode in the time of Herodotos if the identification of his Paktyake with Pashtoons be accepted. At the beginning of eleventh century they had already spread Southwards as far as Multan. (Bijarani, 1980:456) The origin of the Pashtoon as narrated by Olaf Caro, 'they seek to link obscure beginning in a manner half historical, half mythical, with great figures of Hebrews King David and Solomon. (Olaf, 1962:3) Entering more in detail he says, 'Afghan historiographer maintains that Saval had a son named Irmia (Peremiah), who again had a son named Afghana, neither of course known to the Hebrew Sripture'. (Olaf, 1962:6) The Pashtoons in a balled claimed themselves to be belonging to Bani Israel. (Bijarani, 1980:294) According to Census 1972 of Pakistan their population was about half million while the results of the Census 1998, the figures about ethnic group are yet to be declared. The important Pashtoon tribes are Kakar, Mando Khail, Kab Zai, Acha Zai, Kasi, Ghalzai, Tarins (spin and tor), Issa Khail, Mosa Khail and Kaka Zai. They live in Pishin, Quetta, Zhob and Loralai districts. The others who live in Sibi district are Jafar, Loni, Panazai, Shadezai, Zarkun, Barozai, Khjak and Marghzani. (Shah, 1992:9)

Since the main focus of study is the Baloch race in general hence in the forthcoming discussion we shall be concentrating on them in our study.

## **Religion**

The Baloch by religion are Muslims of course and the tale that shows their relation to Amir Hamza and Imam Hussain may support a a situation where the inferences can be drawn that they may be the followers of Hazrat Ali by sect (Hatto, 1987:25) but one should not label them as the puritans division as it is in the contemporary-Muslim society of Pakistan or Iran rather it had been a situation of following the basic principles of Islam.

If we connect them with the days of Babylon where there had been the worship of sun, it had been in the era well before the advent of Christianity,

the land was known as the land of sun and Nimrod was the god of sun. (Baloch, 1958:9) While giving the reference of Joshua.

The Bible where the name of a town is Ba'loth or Ba'lath also shows that the children of Judah used to live over there, it reflects the direction of their beliefs. (Bible, Joshua 15:24)

While linking with Kush and so to Noah may bring a line of faith and belief. (Baloch, 1958:10) But one thing interesting to note is that since the inception of Islam there have been a certain amount of evidences where they have been on a side of Islam.

The long history being either with Joshua's land and the citation of the children of Jesus and also the history of Belus or the god of sun and also of the Noah then the tale of Amir Hamza's relation and their well proven migration from Halb or BerzKoh established a long chain of conventions, traditions which in one way stem from the divine religion then on the other side of the prism give sufficient roots where the religion develops from certain traditions, conventions and customs.

It will not be out of place to mention here that Dr. Abdul Rehman Brahvi, Jan Muhammad, Hatto Ram, Mir Gul Khan Naseer and Agha Naseer have mentioned in detail the Baloch tribal customs and traditions which are in one way or the other under the influx of Islam. They are like

1. Bravery: Throughout their history they remained brave and the long chain of combats prove their bravery and well established courageous and moral basis of war and peace.
2. Hospitality: It is one of the novel features of Baloch Culture. The host may be poor or rich he will entertain his guest at his best.
3. Allegiance to treaty: Treaty may be war or combat, longer or shorter, if there is a treaty between the parties, the Baloch are quoted to be always in allegiance to the treaty or contract. It will be hard to quote any instance or desertion or treachery.
4. Religious Tolerance: The Baloch have old conventions of religious tolerance, and the people of other religions live in peace in their areas. They are more accommodative to the followers of different religions like Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Bihais and others. (Hatto, 1987:25-26)



Dr. Abdul Rehman has attached much significance to the cultural norms, social traditions, values in war and combat, exists in the Balochs, these are quoted here due to their practicalities and their impact over tribal interaction and mass mobilization. The conventions pertaining to blood and war and peace time are given below:

1. Not to attack over enemy without warning.
2. If the enemy escapes from the battle field, not to attack over him.
3. If the enemy surrenders and apologizes, to accept his apology.
4. To protect the person and property of those who take refuge and seek protection.
5. Allegiance to treaty at any cost.
6. Honour of the trust.
7. Custom of hospitality and entertainment of the alien guests.
8. To protect the sanctity and modesty of sister, wife and daughter at any cost.
9. Not to kill women and children in combat.
10. On the request of the ladies of the enemy tribe, the crime or guilt to be excused or at least to give clothes as a sign and token of sanctity if the guilt cannot be excused.
11. To protect life, honour and property of guests even at the cost of blood.
12. Not to kill anybody, even the worst enemy in the boundary of the shrine of any saint.
13. During the war time if any women or Sayyid intervenes or carries Holy Quran on the head or bears a bare sword and requests for peace, the parties to the combat will stop war and will refrain from bloodshed.

14. If the enemy composes and brings a Meirh' the party will prefer to excuse the guilt. (Brahvi, 1982:41-42)

The norms characterize them in a very high titanic way, though generally people know and abide by them as their tribal conventions yet one can find sufficient grounds pertaining to these traditions while coming out of the principles of Islam, for instance, Hatto Ram has presented a Balochi poem in which in Moharam the boys of the village followed a chameleon to kill him but he took refuge in a house whereupon the mistress forbade the body but they persisted and killed chameleon, whereupon the mistress asked her husband to take revenge of it because the poor creature had taken refuge in their house then there was a war and one and one hundred and ten people died in it. (56) This ballad may be insignificant to a casual reader but if one analyses it, one may find the element of Moharram and also the principle of refuge and shelter, which has deep root in Islam. Hence we can fearlessly say that these tribal conventions have stem from Islamic principles.

### **Conclusion**

Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan, thinly populated, occupies much significance not only in the geo-politics of Pakistan rather it enjoys much strategic importance in this part of the globe. The name Balochistan is derived from the Baloch, who have been living here from ancient times and their arrival is traced since the days when Nausherwan Adil, the King of Persia on complaints attacked over Balochs and after a massacre, Baloch got shelter in marap, Siah Dumb and Jhalawan by passing through Seestan, Chaghi and Kharan under the leadership of their chief Mir Qamber. The name Balochistan can be seen in Tuzk-e-Babery and Ain-e-Akbery which are older than the days of Nadir Shah, hence it is denied that Nadir Shah named it "Balochistan".

The land of Balochistan is beautiful and is of many characteristics and features which are of much utility. The population, historically nomadic, is transforming into settled rural and urban. The rate of urbanization is still not very high. The Baloch are the indigenous race and are of chief significance. Their history is traceable from Shahnama Firdausi. The Marri Kingdom was established even 2000 B.C. at Tel Hariri near Euphrates.

The 'Baloch' may have been developed from Barkosh and may be linked to Noah. The Balochs are not fanatic in general, and have much religious tolerance. They also believe in their tribal, social and cultural

conventions. Their traditions are more important than anything else. Every tribal man loves his traditions. The Balochs are traditionalist, generally speaking but the urbanization is cracking these traditions without giving a good and positive replacement. Thus a gap can be felt in this regard. The modern institutions are not proving to be much effective in this peculiar environment. Then how this gap can be filled is a question for the future.

### References

- Abul Fazal, Allma. "Aien-e-Akbery", Sange Meel Publications, Lahore.
- Ahmed zai, Mir Naseer Khan. (1988). "Tareekh-e-Balochistan aur Balochistan", Balochi Academy, Vol. 1, Quetta.
- Baber, Zaheer ud Din. (1997). "Tuzak-e-Babery", Sange Meel Publications, Lahore.
- Baloch, Muhammad Sardar Khan. (1958). "History of Baloch Race and Balochistan", Process Pakistan, Karachi.
- Bible, Joshua 14:24.
- Bible, Joshua 15:24.
- Bijarani, Justice Mir Khuda Bux. (1980). "Balochistan Tareekh Kay Aina Mein", Nisa Traders, Quetta.
- Brahvi, Dr. Abdul Rehman. (1982). "Brahvi Zuban Aur Adab Ki Mukhtasar Tareekh", Markzi Urdu Bazar, Lahore.
- Hatto Ram. (1987). "Tareekh-Balochistan", Balochi Academy, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Quetta.
- Hughes, A.W. (1977). "The Country of Balochistan," Indus Publications, Karachi, 1977.
- Imperial Gazetteer of India (Provincial Series). (1984). "Balochistan", New Quetta Book Stall, Quetta.

Naseer, Gul Khan, (1993), "Tareekh-e-Balochistan", Kalat Publishers, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Quetta.

Naseer, Mir Gul Khan. (1982). "Balochistan Qadeem aur Jadeed Tareekh Ki Roshni Mein", Nisa Traders, Quetta.

Olaf Caroe. (1962). "The Pathan", MacMillan & Co. London.

Pottinger, Lt. Henry. (1980). "Travels through Balochistan and Sindh", Nisa Traders, Quetta.

Shah, Mahmood Ali. (1992). "Sardari Jirga and Local Government System in Balochistan" Qasim Printers, Quetta.

The Daily Dawn, Karachi, July 9, 1998.

The Daily Jang (Urdu), Lahore, July 19, 1998.