

Balishtan or Balochistan, Ancient name and history

History

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Abstract

Balochistan is the biggest province of Pakistan. It is known all over the world for its geo-political, geo-strategic importance and rich mineral resources. Its total area is 340,000 sq. miles. At present Balochistan is divided into three countries, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This region is confluence between east and west because of geographical importance but it is not visible still that when the word Balochistan was used for the first time by writers and historians? How this region was influenced by foreign interferences where Balochistan was standing when the Aryan attacks had changed the map of the world?

This article is important in the sense because it not only highlights the historical prospects of Balochistan but also focuses on the role of attackers and rulers who occupied this region at different times. This article is a small effort to find out the ancient name of this region, identification of people who lived here, their life style, culture etc. in light of work of famous historians of Balochistan. The objectives behind this study are to overview the ancient name and history of word Balochistan and as well as to find out the original natives of the said area. This study is descriptive in nature and the Primary and secondary, both kind of sources were consulted for the purpose.

Key words: Abbasid, Arabs, Aryan, Balishtan, Balochistan, Dashth, Hillocks, Ibn-e-Hokal, Mastunj, Mekran, Mineral Resources, Sibbi, Walishtan.

Introduction

Balochistan, which is at present divided between three different countries of the world, is a compact unit. Its total area according to historians is 340,000 sq. miles. (Baloch: 1987.P-19) But this area is divided in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan and each part is called Balochistan separately. The part of Balochistan which is incorporated with Pakistan, its total area is 1,34,002 sq. miles (Kausar: 1997. P-13) Sindh and Punjab are in the east Khyber Pakhtun Khua in north east, Afghanistan is in the north, Iran is in the west and in south the coast of Mekran, Arab Ocean's (Baloch Ocean) 600 miles long seashore is located in this part of Balochistan. It is mostly a mountaineous region where short and high mountain ranges are spread in different angles. The west region of Balochistan is deserted and consists of plane land. Kharan, Chaghi, Dalbandin, Taftan, Nokundi, and Noshki are located in this desert. Although they are located in central, southern and northern mountain ranges of Balochistan. Central Harboi range, Suleman range, Toba kakari hills (Imran range), Kirther range, Pub Mountain, central Mekran range and Sehan are included in famous mountains. Although forests are very rare in these mountains, but these forests are rich in various bushes, herbs, and precious minerals. Many types of minerals and mineral resources had been discovered from these mountains, and many of them have been used. There is no such a river in Balochistan which flows through the year continuously, but in rainy days water flows in drains and canals from mountains which ruins most of areas. These canals and drains which are called "Khaur or Jhal" in Balochi, flows in rainy days and ruins everything that comes in the way. Although water is available in few rivers throughout the year which used for agriculture and irrigation, Hangol, Rakhshan, Nari, Mula, Bolan, Zhob, Kech, Dasht, Nahang, Baddo, Porali, koshak, Hub and Pub Rivers are included in famous rivers of Balochistan.

Historical background of Balochistan

The political and national history of Balochistan is very old and immeasurable; land marks of ancient age are the witness that politically Balochistan was very important from ancient times till today. Literary the warm sea has increased the importance of Balochistan and its people. Expertises have declared it a confluence between the east and west because of its geographical importance. (Baloch, 2012. P-51) It is a fact that without crossing the huge and vast but difficult way of Balochistan, one cannot travel

from east to west or west to east, because huge and vast deserted regions, plane lands and difficult mountainous rivers are located from both angles. And this midway from Iran to Sindh is consists of hundreds of miles. The biggest problems are the unavailability of food and water which create troubles for travelers, but apart from these problems Balochistan had been an important region since ancient past. Most authentic sources have proved that Balochistan became a human living region since Neolithic and Agriculture era. The first biggest village system of the world was established in this region. Thousands of hillocks of clay are witness to a big population of people who were living here in village system in ancient agriculture era. This village system was ruined by Aryan attackers and earlier by Jhukar civilization of Sindh. These words of D.D Kosambi are absolutely true that the early population of Balochistan was destroyed by Aryans. He writes:

“There (Aryan’s) biggest achievement was cruel destruction of the boundaries of greater river cultures of before Christ. Aryan’s have adopted the local technique and moved ahead which was suitable for them. Destructions which they left back were tough for locals to recover”. (Kosambi: 2012. P-109)

Ancient civilization of Balochistan was located away from river regions, where instead of vast and grand city a united village system was established. Ancient human cultured life began there and technical work had started in shape of different industries. Ceramic, Pottery Industry, Carpanting, Farming and Agriculture were started from this part undoubtedly. This spread its net from east to west and became the cause of birth of civilization. Later it faded in front of uprising powers. A time came when this complete region influenced by foreign interference’s and ancient culture, civilization abolished when this region was completely influenced. Ancient people of Balochistan couldn’t develop due to Aryan attacks and always were the victims of attackers. The attacks and occupation of Aryans in east and west had changed the map of the world. Cruel attackers made huge states by force, many Aryan families established marvelous states in India and Iran when they came into power and became famous in the history. After Aryan attacks written history was established, different nations came into being and regions had been divided among various nations. The wheel of history moved on while grinding the land of Balochistan. Attackers continued to come one after another which resulted in the backwardness of this region from other dense populated areas in the process of social evolution. After Aryan attacks people of Balochistan gathered and became united under the rule of local tribes but powerful nations always kept attacking and ruined this region. In 550 B.C Aryan Achaemenians have destroyed the government of Med Baloch tribes and established a new kingdom. (Baloch, 2012. P-284) Med Baloch tribes

started their government in 837 or 550 BC most probably in present Iranian region. (Ibid. Pp-283-84) Because Assur (Assyrians) of Iraq were increasing and rushing towards Med region this danger united Meds to face the challenge. All the tribes of this part became united and Kaikubad Med was declared the first ruler. Badakhshani dictates it as Deveksas and he writes the year of death 655 BC. (Badkhishani: 1967. Pp-19-20) this region was given a name of Medistan (Media) where Kaikubad and his tribal people lived. This period is not so visible in the history but we can find details in pre-history and from the writings of Herodotus (Herodotus: 2001. P-73) Alberoni (Alberoni: 2002. P-148) Firdausi (Firdosi: Mascow. N.D. Pp-30-207) Mirza Maqbool Baig Badakhshani (Badkhishani: 1967. P-73). Med tribes were defeated in a battle by Achaemenians in command of Ibn e Kumbisas and occupied their state. (Herodotus: 2001. Pp-80-84) Achaemenians changed the name of this region and new name was Faras (Iran) as it was his forefather's name. This shows that he was an Aryan. Now Baloch region was occupied by Iranians and later this government was abolished by Alexander in 331 BC. (Badkhishani: 1967. Pp-144-66). He conquered this region till India, defeated Raja Pores and moved to Bayas River. He returned through Jahlawar (Region of Balochistan presently Khuzdar and surroundings) Lasbela and Mekran. Greek Historians have also mentioned the names of these regions. Alexander moved from Balochistan in 326 BC and died in 323 BC. (Ibid. Pp-179-84) His descendants fought for his states and General Salyokus Nectar succeeded and eastern occupations of Alexander including Balochistan came in his control. (Ibid. Pp-179-84) Salyokus Nectar attacked India where a brave young king Chandergupt Moria was ruling and his minister Chankia Acharia was a genius and clever person. Salyokus Nikotar (Nectar) was defeated badly when he attacked India in 305 BC. Chandar Gupta Moria demanded war losses and Nectar was left in disgrace. (Dehwar: 1990. Pp-190-91) This region was far away from them and resources were not enough that's why they left it and this region remained autonomous. At that time Baloch region was divided between Hindus, Bactria and Greeks, Ashkani tribes in south khurasan established their government with the support of local tribes in 249 BC. (Badkhishani: 1967. P-227). This united the Meds Region slowly. Ashkani is an important Baloch tribe and they are also called Askani or Ashkhani. Infact this period was known as disorder but important in the sense that Government was established by local tribes. (Ibid. P-225) They stopped Greek and Indian activities in the region and local people were freely allowed for their activities. Ashkani government was destroyed by a Persian tribe named Sassanid. The pioneer of the Government was Ardsher bin Papak. (Ibid. Pp-325-26) He defeated Ashkanies in 226 BC and Ex-Government of Iran was rehabilitated because Sassanids were saying they

were the real descendants of Achaemenians, but the Ashkanies do not belong from them. Sassanids spread the borders of Iran till India (Punjab) in the east, Balochistan region was occupied totally and Persian civilization reached its peak. (Ibid. P-325) Arab invaders have ruined the Sassanid state in period of ten years from 634.A.D, to 644.A.D, and great Persian civilization became a past. In 644 the last year of Caliph Umr-e-Farooq, Arab troops reached Mekran and in time of Hazrat Ali they moved in interior Balochistan, later in Umayyad period they occupied Sindh as well. From early history to Arab occupations different areas of Balochistan were known in different names. Local tribes of Balochistan governed here for two times up to the Arab invasion but the ancient name Madistan couldn't rehabilitate. Regions of Balochistan were divided with the passage of time and were known in different names for example: Mekran, Siestan, Khurasan, Kirman, Mazindran, Gilan, Tooran, Kekanan, Armabeel and Kandabeel, Mastunj, Sebi, Balishtan etc. this region was divided in various provinces during Arab period.

Balishtan or Balochistan

Now a Question arises when the word Balochistan was used in written shape first? And on what areas this region was included? Definitely this would have been a controversial question in past as well. Without any research historians have given it a name according to their opinion but they did not try to find out the answer with the help of research as they might be proved wrong? Most of historians think that the word Balochistan is not very old and used in near past for this region. According to Dr Inamul Haq Kausar first time this word was used by Nadir Shah Afshar, the king of Iran in eighteenth century. He named it Balochistan because Baloch tribes were living here. (Kausar: 1997. P-13) But people also connect this word with Noori Naseer Khan that he gave this region a name after treaty of Kalat 1758. (Baloch. 2012. P-16) Infact Western and Local historians are mute about the ancient name of Balochistan. They just have estimated opinions and few of them compare it to word Balkistan. (Naseer: 1999. P-92). They also interlink it to ancient Iraq Deity Baal and try to prove that Baloch are Semitic race, In short the historians could not make a final opinion about it. Ancient history of Balochistan has been very chaotic. After Aryan attacks political and geographical changes came in all over the world .This region was also not safe from impacts. Experts of archaeology have found out some reasons which highlight the invisibility of Balochistan's prehistory. Majority of western historians have done archaeological work in Balochistan, Iran and Oman. According to them when a government of Akkad was established in Iraq, they had huge trade relations through dry and dank ways to ancient

civilization of Sindh. According to them caravans of Iraq moved from Mekran (Balochistan) and reached to Sindh. They also used sea for trade. Caravans cruised through the coast of Oman and moved towards Sindh along Mekran coast. According to experts, the ancient name of Sindh was Melooha and used "Magan" for Mekran. Famous historian D. D Khosambi writes about it:

"The civilization of Sindh valley belongs to silver era, although long and thin pieces of biller are used for knives and other weapons. The utensils found in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa was made of silver. They were very useful and were not made of browns, they were the composition of Rang and pure silver and elements of some other iron were used. Raw material was bought from Balochistan, where it was available in large quantity and used to export to west. This result can be found in documents of babul and early history. The trade centre between Sindh and Iraq was in Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. According to tradition of Iraq its name was Talmoon where spiritual personality "Noha" has spent time to save himself from great disaster and Ghalghamesh (Gull Gamesh) find it out in search of mortality. In ancient Persian words of clay in Pekani letter tells an especially community used to trade from the way of Bahrain called "Talmoon" and recent excavation had proved these words. Although still a pile of one lake graves are unsearched. Some round stamps were found from cities of Sindh and Mesopotamia which were invented in Bahrain. Later traders had got lots of benefits in presence and security of the king of Syria but he would be their biggest customer as well. People of Mesopotamia called the Sindh region as "Melooha". The discussion of Melooha ends in 1750 B.C; it means attackers have blocked trade ways. There was another trade Centre named Magan or Makan which could not located yet might be it was somewhere between the coast of India (Sindh) and Bahrain. (Kosambi: 2012. P-85-86)

Statement of Kosambi verifies that if not Balochistan but the name of Mekran was same since pre-history and its civilization used to play the role of a bridge between civilizations of East and West. Caravans of both sides used this way to move. We can make a statement in the light of the opinions of experts and from archaeological discoveries that human being were living in Balochistan in huge numbers in past. They also had trade and cultural relations with the world. Now it is the need of time that ancient names of these regions must be searched through research on the pages of history.

Study of ancient and Pre-history is needed strongly for aim and achievement of this work. Trade relations of Mekran were existing with other parts of the world of course population of Balochistan would not be exempt of it where many archaeological sites of ancient period are present in shape of hillocks.

Discussion of different areas of Balochistan is found since beginning of written history. When the modern name of Iran did not exist other kingdoms of that period of history like Madistan of Meds, Tooran of Tooranies, India, China, (Khatan) Central Asia and the states of semi nations of east in Iran, its capital was Babul, Egyptian kingdom in Africa. Governments of Baloch tribes were established in Madistan (Media) and Tooran (Central Balochistan including Siestan and southern Khurasan). Although the ruling family of Iran was Turkish but total population of South Tooran were tribes of Koch and Baloch. South Tooran was included on South Khurasaan, some parts of Siestan and Central Balochistan. Med tribes were Baloch and their total estate was called Madistan or Media. This state was included from north to Russia, south to Iran, some parts of Central Asia, presently west Balochistan and Siestan. It was a great kingdom and elites of *Meds* call them Kiyani means “*Naiki*”. (Badkhisani: 1967. P-19-20) In the history of that period names of various cities are visible, but word Balochistan could not be found in ancient era. After Arab attacks total areas of Balochistan was occupied by them and they ruled almost four hundred years. In that period Balochistan became a passageway for Turks and also some areas were occupied by local tribes. Periods of Arab and Turks were known as periods of anarchy because they made it a battle field where chaos and indiscipline ruled for a long time. Siestan, Mekran, Khurasan, and central Balochistan all the areas were volatile. Although Arab period also included battles and anarchy but their writers, tourists and historians collected and wrote very important information which highlighted the invisible history of these regions.

Arab historians and tourists visited different areas of Balochistan and gathered entire collection of information, then gave them a written shape. Today history followers have got precious information and became aware of ancient history of this region. Historians and tourists have visited throughout Balochistan for years and then they wrote about Baloch tribes and history. Many famous historians were found in Arab period, their books on history are of highest class and today scholars get help from those old books for research. Ibn e Hokal, Allama Ibn e Khuldoon, Al-Muqaddisi, Al-Masoodi, Al-Blazari, Ibn e Rusta, Al-Yaqoobi, Ibn-e-Maskavia and Ibn-e-Khirdazba are famous geographers and historians of Arab period. These historians give detail information about Baloch tribes and their living areas in their precious books on History and Geography. History of Balochistan during Arab period and afterwards is complete and clear because of great work of these writers. With the help of these writings today we know that word Balochistan in written was used. After the study of these resources this information comes to knowledge that Balochistan was divided in different regions by Arab rulers

for administrative needs and each region was given a different name, like Kandabeel to Gandava, Armabeel to Lasbela, Kaikanan to Kalat, Tooran to Khuzdar, Mashki to Mashkay, Makran to Mekran, Sajistan to Siestan, etc. In same way for a particular region Balishtan, Walishtan or Beloshtan was used. These words were used for a region which is known today as east and west Balochistan. Names of famous cities of Balishtan were written by Arab historians as well. According to them Balishtan was spread from Kandahar (Region of Afghanistan) to Sibbi. Mastung was also a famous city of Balishtan. A famous historian and geographer Ibn-e-Hokal used the word "Balesh and Balishtan (Walishtan)" first time in his very famous book Soorat-ul-Arz. (Ibn-e-Hoqal: N.D. P-352,55)

G. Lee Strange writes that:

"Arab geographers have discussed about two regions in north east of Mekran near the borders of India, "Tooran" its capital was Kassdar and "Budha" north of Tooran, its capital was Kandabeel. Kassdar was discussed earlier by a conquest Sultan Mehmood Ghaznavi. According to Ibn-e-Hokal this city was situated on the corner of a River, there was a trench in centre of city and land around city was very fertile, Grapes, Pomegranate and fruits related to cold areas were produced here. Muqaddisi says, this city is situated on both sides of waterless river. First part of castle was for Sultan and second part was used by traders to live called, Bodain or Bodin. People of Khurasan used to purchase things from shops of these traders. Muqaddisi also writes that houses were made of clay and canals were made for water but they were waterless and infected. Northern areas were always considered part of Tooran but these areas were also called part of Buddha. Biggest city of this region was Kandabeel now called Gandava. This city is located on the south of Sibbi and in the east of Kalat. Ibn-e-Hokal writes that Kandabeel was a big city, it was same Kaikaan city but trees of date were not grown here. According to books of tourists structure of the city can be imagined as like Kalat. Names of other cities of Tooran were also written but the search of them is not possible. There are differences about names. On north of Tooran and Buddha, Balis or Walishthan and its city sibbi was situated" (Strange: 1986. Pp-499-500)

Now if we accept Arabic word Balis, Walish or Balish which means Baloch then undoubtedly the word that was written by Ibn-e-Hokal in 950.A.D. was Balochistan. According to Arab historians, this region spread from Kandahar to Sibi. Collectively this area was called Balish, Balis, Beloos, Walish, Walishtan or Balishthan. He also mentions names of some cities like Sibbi, Mastunj and Asfanjae. Location of Sibbi and Mastanj had been mentioned by historians and researchers but they could not locate Asfanjae. G. Lee Strange also writes the location of this city unknown. (Ibid.

P-524) The researcher has disclosed the location of this village in the valley of Dasht near Quetta and this town or village now called (Aspalanj). G. lee. Strange further writes about Balishtan:

“The Arab geographers have mentioned names of areas around Sibbi as Balis, Balish (Balosh or Baloch in Arabic) or Walishtan. According to Istakhari capital of this region was Sibbi. Ruler of this region used to live in trench which was located on some distance from Asfanjae. Exact location of this place is unknown, only information we have it was located in north of Sibbi near road to Zarnaj. Istakhari and Firdosi have discussed Mastung or Mastunj city and they have also mentioned two thousand two hundred villages of it.” (Ibid. Pp-524-25)

From above statements it is clear that during Arab period the word Balishtan was used for Quetta, Sibbi, Mastung and Kandahar etc. If we thoroughly observe the comparison of words then Balish is the wrong form of Balosh, somewhere it is written beloos. Writer of book “Tabqat-e-Nasiri” says that belos was old name of Kandahar. (Siraj: 1995. P-1018) This statement makes it further clear that word Balishtan, Walishtan, or Beloshtan used for above mentioned areas in Arab and Abbasid period importantly. Persian and Arab historians who came later used word Balish, Walishtan or Balishtan in their books and write names of various cities considering it a province. The writer of this research article has published an article in Balochistan review and proved it in light of many historical facts that word Balochistan was used in Abbasid period. (Baloch, 2010. Pp-22-27)

Major. H.G Reverti who was a famous British army officer, writer and translator of many important books also mentioned name of Qandahar as Balyos many times in his book “Notes on Afghanistan and Balochistan”. (Raverty: 1999. Pp-801-02) He discuss the Arab province Balishtan in his same book too. (Raverty: 1999. P-802)

The detail of statement is not possible in this short essay but proof about the province Balishtan, Walishtan or Beloshtan of Arab period can be found in books which have been given in references.

Conclusion

In light of the statements of historians it is visible that word Balochistan was first time used by Arabs. Ibn-e-Hokal was the first historian who used this word in his book Soorat-ul-Arz and declared it an important province of Abbasid Calipheth; he also mentioned various cities like, Sibbi, Mastanj and Isfanjay etc. Researchers and scholars received help from books of Ibn-e-Hokal about Balochistan and different cities then included them in their publications. These statements makes it clear that word Balochistan was used in Abbasid period and it might be that this word had been used in Persian era

as well and later Arabs have continued the same name. It is also possible that words Belosh and Balish came out of word Baloch which later called Walishtan or Balishtan. Remember that neighbors of Baloch, Afghan or Pashtoon tribes use words Belos or Balos for Baloch people and same problem is with Arabs that they cannot pronounce “ch”, so it is also possible that this word was used for this region before Islam. Surely Baloch populations were living in south Afghanistan from pre-history and references are found in ancient books in detail. This area used to call south Khurasan and Siestan where the majority of population was Baloch and they were the ancient and real inhabitants of this region. References of Baloch settlers are found in historical books and more research on this topic can be helpful in finding facts and bringing the ancient name of Balochistan in the spotlight.

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