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The History of Kalat Affairs 1666 to 1871

History

Pervez Ahmed¹, Shazia Jaffar² & Abdul Nasir³

Abstract

The eastward migration of Baloch tribes to southern Balochistan and to the highlands of Kalat went on for many centuries. In the 13th century, Kalat was occupied by a race of Hindus known as the Sewa. They were ousted either by conquering Arabs or by the Baloch who accompanied their armies. They established their capital at Kalat, where the ruins of an old fort still exist, and the tribe was generally known as Marwari around 1530, the over lordship was with the Mirwari Baloch when the feuding rinds and lasharis arrived and captured the sardari, left a deputy in Kala. In 1666 after the death of Mir Hassan, the Khan ship of Kalat transferred to Mir Ahmed Khan Ahmedzai: The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are most important in Baluch history. During this period the Baloch spread all over the Balochistan even Maries and Bugtis which were the tributary to Nasir Khan, Persia and the sea were its western and southern boundaries. Makran and Kharan had been added to Kalat by conquest, les bela by treaty. This paper, therefore presents the historical survey of Kalat affairs at the time of different Baloch rulers, the involvement of various empire builders in the power politics of Balochistan. In particular, those circumstances and factors have been examined that brought the British to Balochistan.

The first Afghan war was fought apparently to send a message to Moscow that the British would not tolerate any Russian advances towards their Indian empire. To what extent the political powers of Balochistan were transferred to British Government, which areas of Balochistan occupied by British, or for that matters, Robert Sandaman was successful in gaining political powers for British, is also covered in this paper.

Key words: Balochistan, Kalat, Khanship, State affairs, British Government.

¹ Lecturer, Pakistan study centre, university of Balochistan Quetta, Pakistan.

² Lecturer, Pakistan study centre, university of Balochistan Quetta, Pakistan.

³ Director, IER University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.

Introduction

The authentic history of Kalat begins with the reign of the Mir Ahmed 1. About 1666. Prior to this, what little is known has been roughly sketched in the article.

About the middle of the 17th century, the chief was a Mirwari Baloch by the name of Mir Hassan. Mir Hassan died issueless in 1666 A.D and the tribes elected one Mir Ahmed khan of the Qambrani tribes as their leader, thus the Khan ship of Kalat was transferred from the Mirwaris to the Ahmedzais, Mir Ahmed khan.

At that time Kalat was very small and uninfluential state. The Khans, therefore, gradually engaged the assistance of the chiefs of their kindred tribes in the neighborhood by giving them fiefs in Kalat. In certain specified cases and numbers, for the aid of the Khan.

This is highly significant, although entirely independent in their own territories, these chiefs became, doubtless, as regards these fiefs, quasi-feudal vassals of the Khan.

By means of the troops so raised, the territories of Khan were extended by conquest, such conquests began, on behalf of the Khan only, and not for the affiliated tribes.

Here it may be noted that until the reign of Nasir II no other force beyond this tribal one we at the disposal of the Khans. That prince first raised a standing army, with the money granted by the British government for the upkeep of tribal levies on the trade routes.

Thus bound together, and finding mutual cohesion essential against their powerful neighbors, Persia, Afghanistan and Sind. The petty state of Kalat, the independent Baloch and Barhui tribes, and their joint conquests gradually became amalgamate into one federal state under the authority of Khan. The conditions of this arrangement, however secured to the confederate chiefs practical self government in their own previously independent territory.

In the first half of the eighteen century the rule of Kalat was Mohabbat Khan. This ruler was the great aggrandizer of his line. Adroitly joining Nadir Shah in his Kach, Gondava, and other lowland districts formerly appertaining to Sind.

In these newly acquired districts Mohabbat Khan assigned fiefs to the tribal sardars, but established his own Naibs or lieutenants to govern them, their headquarters being at Gandava, a walled town of some importance, well situated on the Nari rever.

At the later period, however (1731) Muhabbat Khan incurred the displeasure of Ahmed Shah Durani, ruler at Kabul and was by him removed from the Khan ship in for Nasir Khan I. His brother Nasir Khan held the reins

of government during the greater part of the eighteen century. He was the great organizer of his race, and consolidated the power of his family.

To his laws reference is made today. tradition and the accounts of early travelers such as Pottinger and Masson attribute to Nasir Khan the regular systematizing of the various customs which immediate exigencies has, from time to time, called into existence during the reigns of his predecessors. To him were attributed rules regulating commerce, the administration of justice and treatment of Hindus and other foreigners and travellers. In the time of Nasir Khan 1 there were two great provinces, Sarawan and Jhalawan, meaning, highland, and lowland, over these sardar ships or supreme chief ships, had been established. These sardar ships were hereditary in the families of Raisani for the Sarawan and Zehri for the Jhalawan. These sardars possessed an important authority in affairs of state. Though apparently rather consultative than executive. They occupied chairs in durbar, the Sarwan on the right, the Jhalawan on the left, of the Khan. They were admitted to all deliberations generally affecting the state.

It appears that, controlled by the consultative functions of the two supreme chiefs and the Wazir, the power of the Khan as regard external matters was supreme and absolute. He could make peace or war on behalf of the state. As regard internal authority, the Khan had apparently power to a certain extant to make general laws for the whole state. The administration of those laws, however was not his affair, subjects to the reservation that a sentence of death required his confirmation. He was the final arbitration in disputes between chiefs, especially in regard to boundary questions. (Khan, pag 40-45.)

Within Kalat itself, and the conquered and annexed territories the Khan ruled directly through his Naibs, the chief were elected by the elders of the tribes, their election being subject to confirmation by the Khan. This confirmation once given, the chief were only bound to obey the Khan in external matters, to submit to his order when appeals were made to him, to require his confirmation to death sentences, and furnish their quota of troops when called upon on the other hand, the Khans were elected by the chiefs. The choice was made, however, from members of the Ahmedzai family.

From this it is attributed that it was a voluntary federation. There was but one federation, feudal element in the constriction namely tribal service of troops in return for fiefs granted to the certain of the chiefs by the Khan, out of their own personal estate. This matter is important as furnishing, subsequently, a bone of contention between the Sind and Punjab government and leading to different policies being adopted for many years by them towards certain Baluch tribes.

The proof of this "federal" idea came into prominence in 1869. In that year the grievances of the chief were enquired into by the Sind authorities,

whose principal demand was that all engagements with the British government should be made not by the Khan personal but by him as the head of the confederation. (Khan p. 30.)

We have many examples in the history of a similar condition of things in the early constitution of states which afterwards became absolute monarchies. This is generally due to the gradually increasing power and wealth of the sovereign, his ability to keep a standing army and in consequence to suppress rebellion. We shall find later that the British subsidy to the Khan of Kalat enabled him to pay a standing army by the aid of which his ambition led him into armed conflict with the greater number of his confederated chiefs.

In the time of Nasir Khan the territory of the Kalat state was bounded on the north by the Afghan provinces of Pishin and Sibi and the tribal territory of the Kakar and Tarin Pathans. Sind bounder it on the East, but the Kalat provinces of Harand Dajal reached north of Sind to the Indus through the Marri and Bugti countries which were tributary to Nasir Khan. Persia and the sea were its western and southern boundaries. Makran and Kharan had been added to Kalat by conquest, Lasbela by treaty.

Before the time of Nasir Khan 1 Lasbela was a state, inhabited, as now by a mongrel Sindi-Rajput race Nasir Khan determined to annex it, and made the Jam (local name for ruler-a corrupt form of Cham learnt from the tartar invaders of India) Mian Khan his tributary. Thus the state of Kalat was consolidated under the government of Nasir Khan "The great" who made himself not only the political head, but also the spiritual leader of the confederation. (Pottinger page 30-35.)

Nasir Khan "The great" was succeeded by his son Mehmood Khan, an indolent debauchee, who was in turn fallowed by Mehrab Khan his son.

During the reigns of these two chiefs the power and influence of the Khan rapidly declined. Tribute to Kalat was the exception, but military service against a common foe was still recognized. In the days of Mehrab Khan the feudal army of the Khanate, when called into the field, was composed of the two great families of Sarawan and Jhalawan.

The Marri, Bhugti and Gurchani clans were included in the Sarawans and in those days they not only rendered feudal service to the state, but paid tribute to the Khan.

The first official intercourse between the British government and Kalat was in 1838. In that year lieutenant Leech was deputed to the Khan to arrange terms for the passage of British troops through his territory on their way to Kandahar. His abortive mission, and the subsequent theft of the treaty from Sir Alexander Burnes, are episodes in the history of the first Afghan war.

During their march toward Kandhar, the British troops were much harassed by the tibemen in Keechi and the Bolan, and supplies were unobtainable throughout the British advance to Kandahar, General Will Shire, commanding the Bombay column, on its return to India, was ordered to proceed to Kalat from Quetta to depose Mehrab Khan. (kaye, p- 170-175.)

The troops marched from Quetta on 4th November 1839. A desperate resistance was made by the chief, Mahrab Khan. Who fell, sword in hand, with most of his principle nobles at the entrance to the citadel, desultory firing was kept up for some time from detached buildings which were difficult access, and it was not until late in the afternoon that those lives were spared.

Sir James Outram who was present says: "The soldiers displayed much greater forbearance than they usually do on such accessions, Quarter was never refused by them when craved by cries of Aman, Aman: and before nightfall nearly two thousand prisoners had been removed from the fort unharmed. (Yapp, p-145.)

Before the attack on Kalat, Mehrab Khan sent his son Mir Nasir Khan II in the charge of Darogah Gul Muhammad to Nushki. Lieutenant Loreday pursued him to that place, and the young prince proceeded to Panjgur, and thence to Kharan, where he was well-received by Azad Khan Naushirwani. Meanwhile the British authorities placed Shah Nawaz on the throne of Kalat, Shah Nawaz belong to another branch of the rulling family of Kalat, and had been a pretender to the throne in the time of Mehrab Khan by whom he had been imprisoned. He managed to escape and accompanied Shah Shuja on his march from India to Kandahar. Before his death, Mehrab Khan reproached Shah Shuja for befriending Shah Nawaz, reminding him of the hospitality he had received at Kalat when a fugitive in 1834.

Shah Nawaz asked General Willshire to leave a British officer at Kalat. Accordingly lieutenant Loveday was appointed British agent with the Khan. Unfortunately Shah Nawaz Khan was disliked by all classes in Balochistan, moreover, as by right of conquest, the British government disposed of a portion of the country, annexing parts of Sarawan, Kachi and Gandava to the Kabul power, under the administration of British officers. On completion of these arrangements general wills have marched towards Sind via the Mulla pass. (Frontier expedition –pag 45.)

Unrest among the tribesman became at once apparent on the departure of the British force, and the chiefs were enraged at the partition of their country. Early in 1840 Muhammad Khan Shawani headed the revolt and recalled Mehrab Khan's son from Kharan with intent to place him on the throne of Kalat.

After their defeat at Dadur, the rebels marched southwards and took up a position in the hills near kotra where they remained until the Battle of kotra. During this in teal Nasir Khan opened negotiations with Mr. Ross-Bell, the agent to the governer general in upper Sind. In future relation with the British authorities pending the final installment of Nasir Khan a year later, the Brahuis and Balochis showed the greatest distrust of British sincerity, and perpetually cited the affair of Kotra as a breach of faith. (Muree, p-50.)

In 1840, Colonel Stacy, commanding the 43rd Bengal native infantry, was appointed specially to proceed to Kalat to open up negotiations with the young Khan who was still in kachi, and endeavoured to induce him to disband his army, and wait upon Mr. Bell, the agent to the Governer- general in upper Sindh.

Mir Nasir Khan was installed as Khan of Kalat by Sir James Outram, in 1841. The provinces shorn from the Kalat state after the capture of the capital were restored, and the treaty was drawn up between the state and British India.

While these affairs were happening at Kalat the tribes on the east of the Bolan had also been dealt with. The Marris and Bugtis had been taught a lesson by the force under Major Billamore which passed successfully through their hills in 1839, defeating the Bugtis in two engagements, and paying a visit to Kahan, the Marri capital. The Marris and Bugtis acknowledged the supremacy of the Khan. (Khan, p. 52-55.)

In 1847, John Jacob arrived on the upper Sind frontier. His work and the doubtable deeds were in Sind than Balochistan. But as his expeditions were made against the Baloch tribes, his work being at the first pacification of the Baloch border, and later the establishment of the authority of the Khan of Kalat, a short resume may be of interest.

In 1848, John Jacob was appointed to sell political power on the upper Sind frontier, military commandant of the frontier force, and authorized to arrange with the Khan of Kalat all questions relating to matters between the two Government and to tribes, beyond the frontier, subject to the Khan. (Frontier and overseas expeditions from India p. 50.)

In 1851, having changed all Sind frontier matters, military and civil, Jacob turned his attention towards Kalat. Nasir Khan II at this time was almost at open fued with his chiefs. At this time 1851, the Khan was powers less and at the mercy of his chiefs. The northern tribes, particularly the Marris had thrown off all allegiance and raided everywhere, claims for redress against them on behalf of British subjects met with evasive answers from Kalat. (Lambrick p. 30.)

In 1854, in view of the possibility of war between Britain and Russia, it was determined to strengthen the power of the Kalat state. Accordingly a meeting took place at Jacobabad early in that year, at which the Khan's authority was recognized south of Kalat to the Arabian Sea, and west of Sind to Persia, including Lesbela. After the death of Nasir Khan, the chiefs elected Khudadad Khan, as their head, he was only 16 year of age.

In 1859, Sir Henry green induced the Khan to undertake a campaign against the Marris. The Khan was present in person, and the Marris submitted to him.

In 1860 the Khan undertook an armed progress through Makran, during which he received the submission of the Gichki chiefs. Two months sufficed to pacify the country, all forts were destroyed, and the chiefs of Kej and Panjgur tendered their allegiance.

At this time also the Jam of Las bela, who had been in revolt, came to terms with the Khan. (Yapp p. 153.)

In 1863, a general rebellion of chiefs took place. The Khan was attacked and wounded, by his cousin Sherdil. Sherdil Khan was elected Khan, but was murdered by the commander of his mercenary guard within a few months of his accession. Khudadad Khan was then replaced on the throne in 1864, the Jam of Lesbela alone dissenting.

Within a year of Khudadad Khan's recall to the throne, the standard of revolt was again raised by Taj Muhammad, the Jhalawan chief. He was defeated, however and imprisoned in Kalat, where he died two years later.

In the July of the same year the Jam of lesbela and Nur Din the Mengal chief, assisted by Azad Khan Naushirwani, raised a revolt. They were defeated by Wazir Wali Muhammad. The two former were kept for some time in arrest at Kalat. Azad Khan fled to Kandhar. Thing did not improve much, and in 1869 the political agent of the upper Sind frontier, colonel Phayre, gave an audience to representative of the chief at Jacobad. Their grievances may be summarized in the one fact that the Khan had exceeded his rights as the mere head of a confederacy.

Nothing came of this assembly, and a month late the Jam and Nur Din, the Mengal chiefs rose again in revolt. The wazir again defeated them, and the Jam fled to Sind to the protection of the British Government, he was shortly afterwards removed to the Deccan, Nur Din fled to kandhar. (Lambricks, p. 30.)

As this brings us to the arrival of Sir Robert Sandaman on the scene, it will be necessary to turn for a short time to the Punjab frontier and trace events up to the period of the occupation of Quetta.

In 1866 Sir Robert (then captain) Sandaman was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan.

In these days the state of affairs on the Dera Ghazi Khan Frontier was similar to that existing today on the border of most of the Punjab frontier districts.

A British officer's life was not safe a few miles inside the hills, no friendly relations were maintained with the hill tribes, and on the principle of "omneignotum pro magnifico" the fighting strength of the tribes was immensely exaggerated. The Marris and Bugtis were the terror of the country side, and were only kept in comparative order by the fear of our military strength, represented by the three regiments of Sind horse maintained at Jacobabad, with their numerous out posts along the foot of the Bughti hills, and the Punjab frontier force. (Yapp, p 162.)

It is clear, therefore that the two burning question of the time, when Sandaman arrived in Dera Ghazi Khan were, the best methods by which to control the Marris and Bugtis, and the policy most likely to introduce peace into Kalat.

On these questions the young Deputy Commissioner soon decided different opinions. He very shortly had an opportunity of dealing with the tribes on the occurrence of the Harrand Raid, described elsewhere.

After this raid, Sandaman applied to the Sind authorities to obtain redress from the Khan of Kalat for the loss sustained by the British subjects at the hands of his tribesmen.

Sandaman threw himself into the work with characteristic promptitude. He assembled a tribal conference at Mithan Kot which the Marri chief was obliged to attend, owing to the fact that Sandaman held several of his tribesmen prisoners captured at Harrand. The conference was thoroughly successful the frontier and Trans frontier chief laid their grievances before sandaman. Feuds were amicably settled, and a small long of the Trans border tribesman, principally Marris, was taken into our pay and service. The money for this was obtained by farming a salt tax on the Border. This was the commencement of Sir Robert Sandaman's system of tribal service. It proved completely successful, and thenceforward the peace of the southern Punjab frontier was secured. (Thorten pp 54-55.)

This is not by any means a new principle. Edwards advocated it very strongly after the Sikh wars. In his own words "A newly conquered population, to be pacified, must be employed." Lord Dalhousie threw open the ranks of the native army to all the people of the Punjab without distinction. Thus he prevented the disbanded Sikh army, some eighty thousand men, from returning to their homes, to which they had for years been remitting money, to be an additional burden on the land.

All the great conquerors of all times have recognized the necessity of employing the military population of their conquests. It is far easier than to destroy them, their fidelity is secured at the outset by severing them from their old associations. When Hannibal prepared to invade Italy, Carthage poured her Africans into Spain, and defended Africa with Spaniards. In India the British have often pacified countries by employing the indigenous tribes to hold them, for example, the Bhil corps in Khandesh, the Mair corps, the sylhet local infantry, and many other, burning a village will never pacify a tribe, but entertain some of their number, and the whole are satisfied, employer and employed gain respect (Pottinger p, 45)

One can readily imagine the hopelessness of, for example the Marris when suddenly deprived of the possibilities of plunder and given no other means of making a livelihood. Their country consists, for the most part, of rugged hills destitute of water or verdure an ideal robber strong hold, but impossible agricultural country. A strong tribe like the Marris could have chosen better land, and not permitted to start that peaceful existence by one final campaign to acquire a country suited to that form of life, hence the necessity of giving such tribes service, and endeavoring to improve their status generally.

The unsatisfactory state of affairs in Kalat at this time, and particularly with regard to the Marris, has been already referred to.

In September 1870, the Amir of Afghanistan brought to the notice of the British government the bad treatment of the Sarawan Chief, Mula Muhammad. This brought Kalat affairs generally into prominence, and the viceroy ordered a conference to be held of the Sindh and Punjab officials to discuss to means best suited to deal with the circumstances.

The conference took place at Mithankot in February 1871. At this conference it was decided that the dual control of the various tribes on the border should cease, and their affairs were placed in the hand of the political superintendent, upper Sindh Frontier, in subordination to whom, as regards the affairs of Kalat tribesmen, was the Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan.

Further, it was decided to give tribal service to Marris and Bugtis to the extent of Rs. 320000 per annum, to ensure the tranquility of Sindh, the Punjab and Kalat borders.

The tribal service, however was not immediately put in force by the commissioner in Sindh, intertribal frays ensued, and the Maris looted caravans in Bolan pass.

Frontier affaris went from bad to worse. Colonel Phayre and Sandeman looked upon the Marris and Bugtis as pracitcaly independent of the Khan of Kalat, and held that the Kalat Sardars in their rebellion against the Khan were "more sinned against than sinning". The commissioner in Sindh held in diametrically opposite views.

In 1873 the state of Kalat was such that the political agent, Major Harrison, was withdrawn, and the Khan's subsidy suspended. The state of affairs was so unsatisfactory that Sir William Merewether recommended armed intervention in the Marri country and the deposition of the ruler of Kalat. (Thornton, pp-60,61)

Conclusion

Conclusion can be drawn with the above line that Mir Ahmed Khan was the first Khan, at that time Kalat was very small and influential state, the territories of the Khan were extended by conquest.

In the first half of the eighteenth century the ruler of Kalat Mohabbat Khan, was the great aggrandizer of his line. He established his own Naibs and Lieutenants to govern them. After his removal from the Khanship, by Ahmed Shah Durrani, ruler at Kabul, his brother Nasir Khan 1 held the reins of govt. during the greater part of the latter half of eighteenth century. He was the great organizer of his race, and consolidated the power of his family. To his laws reference is made today. In his time the territory of the Kalat state was bounded on the north by the Afghan provinces of Pishin and Sibi and tribal territory of the Kakar and Tarin Pathans. Sindh bounded it on the east, but the Kalat province of Harrand Dajjal reached north of Sindh to the Indus through the Marris and Bugti countries, which were tributary to Nasir Khan. Persia and the sea were its Western and Southern boundaries. Makran and Kharan had been added to Kalat by conquest, Les Bela by treaty.

Thus the state of Kalat was consolidated under the government of Nasir Khan. "The Great", who made himself not only the political head, but also the spiritual leader of the confederation. He was succeeded by his Son Mehrab Khan.

The first official intercourse between the British Government and Kalat was in 1838. In that year Lieutenant Leech was deputed to the Khan to arrange terms for the passage of British troops through his territory on their way to Kandhar. His abortive mission, and the subsequent theft of the treaty from Sir Alexander Burnes, are episodes in the history of first Afghan war.

The Indus army faced problems when passing through the Bolan pass as they were attacked by the tribes of Kachhi and Bolan. The British held Mir Mehrab Khan, Khan of Kalat, responsible for this "violation" on return from Qandahar, proceeded towards Kalat and deposed the Khan, Mir Mehrab was killed fighting and the British occupied Kalat in 1839.

In 1851, having entire charge of all Sindh frontier matters, military and civil, Major John Jacob turned his attention towards Kalat. Nasir Khan II, at this time was almost at open feud with his chiefs. The Khan was powerless and at the mercy of his chiefs. The northern tribes, particularly, the Marris had thrown off all allegiance and raided everywhere.

In 1854, in view of the possibility of war between Britain and Russia, it was determined to strengthen the power of Kalat state. From this time to 1859 and 1860 the British Govt. allowed the Khan an extra Rs. 50,000 as an incentive to keep order in his state, and as a reward for the efforts he was then making. The history of the next few years is one of anarchy and rebellion.

The things did not improve much, and in 1869 the political agent of the upper Sindh frontier, colonel Phayre, gave an audience to representatives of the Chiefs at Jacobabad. Their grievances may be summarised in the one fact that the Khan had exceeded his rights as the mere head of a confederacy.

Nothing came of his assemblage, as this brings us to the arrival of Sir Robert Sandeman on the scene, he was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan.

The life of the British officer was not safe a few miles inside the hills no friendly relations were maintained with the hill tribes. The Marris and Bugtis were the terror of the country side, Trade through the passes had practically ceased.

It is clear, therefore, that the two burning questions of the times, when Sandeman arrived in Dera Ghazi Khan, were the best methods by which to control the Marris and Bugtis, and the policy most likely to introduce peace in Kalat.

Sandeman threw himself into the work with the characteristics promptitude. He assembled a tribal conference at Mithankot. The Conreference was thoroughly successful. This was the commencement of Sir Robert Sandeman's system of tribal service. It proved completely successful, and thenceforward the peace of the southern Punjab Frontier was secured.

He was further instructed, should those measures prove successful, to inform the Khan that the British Government would be willing to re-establish affairs on the old friendly footing with the Kalat state, provided he expressed regert for what had occurred, and guaranteed future good behavior, and the safety of trade through his country (Balochistan).

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