

HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT BALOCH

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www.balochiacademy.org

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ISBN: 978-969-680-168-9

Price: Rs. 800

Publisher: Balochi Academy Quetta

Address: Adalat Road Quetta

E-mail: balochiacademy@gmail.com

Balochi Academy printed this book from Meeras Printing Press Karachi

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memories of persecutions and sufferings faced by the Baloch in ancient time

Key to Balochi words in Roman Script

Alphabets

B-b– bey

C-c – chey

D-d – dāl

ᵉ- ɔ - dhaal

F-f– fey

G-g– gaap

Ǧ - ğ - gaein

H-h– hey

J-j- jimm

K- k – kaap

L-l – laam

M-m – mimm

N-n – nunn

P-p – pey

Q-q – qaaf

R-r – rey

S-s – sinn

Ś- ś – shinn

T-t- tey

Ṭ-ṭ – Thay

W-w – waa

X-x – xey

Y-y – yaa

Z-z – zaal

Ž-ž –zey

Short Vowels

A-a – bar / par / gar

E-a – ger / per / mer

U-u – pur / sur / cur

Long Vowels

Ā- ā – baar / caar / waar ā

I-i – mir / sir / dir

O-o – kor / sor / tor

Ó- ó – Zoom

Diphthongs

Ai – dain / gair

Au – kaur

Ei – mein / zein / cein

Helping Verb

Ay –ay

Ey- ey

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Foreword

This work is a thorough review of relevant aspects of historical accounts to find answers to some of the pertinent questions regarding Baloch history in ancient times. This is an effort to correlate various events of the past to find logical answers to questions concerning the tortuous historical journey of the ancient Baloch from the beginning to the 11th century. These questions include, first, who are the Baloch? Second, where was the original location of the Baloch in the Iranian Plateau? Third, what was the relationship between the Baloch and the ancient Iranian empires? Fourth, what happened to the Baloch after the Arab invasion of Iran in the seventh century AD? Fifth, how the Baloch were persecuted by regional powers after the collapse of Arab rule in Iran in premediaeval times?

Research materials were obtained from the British Library, the London Library, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the library of the University College London, and from the various publications of the Balochi Academy Quetta. This work on the history of a nation, about which the ancient accounts are rare, cannot be termed, altogether, satisfactory. The mention of the Baloch can be found in documents written by Armenians, Turks, and Arabs in medieval times but the absence of skills in Armenian, Turkish, and Arabic languages was among the main problems for me in retrieving original data from the historical narratives in these languages. Nevertheless, from the translations, the available and relevant accounts mentioned in these documents are fundamental in locating the Baloch in the period when they were living in the north-western Caspian region. But depending

only on translations sometimes causes many misunderstandings and the explanations of certain terminologies become difficult.

Due to the unavailability of documented evidence, which could have been used to fit the Baloch in the larger schema of ancient national entities and languages in the Iranian Plateau, it has not been an easy task to present a clear picture of the Baloch origin. It was a daunting task to go through the pages of ancient history, find passing references to the history of a people whose footprints have been lost in the dust of history. In this context, the only tools left for establishing the Baloch origin were their linguistic and cultural connections with other national entities of the region.

Ancient and medieval Persian and Arab writers like Firdausi, Maqaddesi, Tabari, Baladhuri, Masudi, Meskawiah, and Istakhri dealt sketchily with the ancient and medieval history of the Baloch. These were biased and mostly one-sided historical accounts but were excellent sources for critical reading and finding conclusions between the lines. On language and cultural aspects of the Baloch, the works of MacKenzie, Gershevitch, and Jahani are of fundamental importance. On ascertaining the religious and cultural traditions of the ancient Baloch, works of Wājā Jān Mahmaṯ Ḍaśṭ'i were of much help in ascertaining the origin of the Baloch.

I hope that researchers on Baloch history will find the description and analysis of some aspects of this work as sources for drawing comparison and contrasts. As it will be established in the work that the Baloch are the ancient *Balāścik* and their ancient homeland was *Balāśagān* or *Balāškān*, it will help determine the exact locations of the wandering Baloch tribes after their descent from *Balāśagān*. It will also be helpful in the

analysis of the extraordinary resilience of the Baloch in preserving their national and linguistic identity against tremendous odds.

Naseer Dashti

London: 12/11/2021

Prologue

Nearly three thousand years ago, a multitude of tribes left their abodes in Central Asia and moved toward west, south, and southeast directions. These people spoke a variety of Indo-European languages and were called Aryans. A section among them became known as Indo-Iranian tribes. Some of the Indo-Iranian tribes settled in the north-western Iranian region of *Balāškān/Balāsagān* and became known as the *Balāścik*. Their language was called *Balāściki* or *Balāścuki*. However, after a few centuries, circumstances forced these pastoralist nomadic tribes to migrate en masse and abandon their abodes in *Balāškān*. This was the beginning of many centuries of wandering and sufferings before they ultimately settled in the south and eastern fringes of the Iranian Plateau. Here they changed from being the *Balāścik* to becoming the Baloch, and the name of the region they finally settled in became known as Balochistan “the country of the Baloch.” Their language *Balāściki* transformed to become Balochi. This book is about the history of these people from the beginning to the 11th century AD.

Historical chronicles have never been impartial as they were written mostly from the perspective of dominant or victorious powers. The Baloch in ancient times were involved in conflicts of various kinds with Persian empires and Islamic rulers in Iran. In this context, the accounts about them written by the Persian and Arab writers may have been infected by the Persian-centric, and Islam-centric “viruses.” The descriptions of the ancient Baloch in these historical accounts display many discrepancies. In their accounts, written during the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, on many occasions, the Baloch have been termed as barbarians; while in ancient Persian historical accounts, the

Baloch had been described as warriors in the armies of Median, Achaemenid, and Sassanid emperors. On many other occasions, they were branded as brigands and unruly tribes. In their accounts, one can also hear the loud claims of some emperors of annihilating the Baloch. It can be deduced that as mostly the writers of these powers were preoccupied with writing about the glorious deeds of their own ethnic or national entities, they did not care much about the actual happenings regarding their “barbarian” neighbors like the Baloch, whom they considered beyond the pale.

The ancient Baloch were pastoralists, herding sheep and goats, like other nomadic pastoralists of the region. They were highly mobile and lived in tribal communities. The powerful empires of that era, dominated by settled populations, considered pastoralists and nomadic people as political non-entities. This perception caused a definite gulf between them and the settled communities, sometimes misgivings were inevitable where the nomadic people were blamed for their harassment of settled entities. The relationship between nomadic, seminomadic, and sedentary peoples within different Persian empires has always been characterized by shifting hegemony, rivalry, wars, and alliances on various pretexts. These changing relationships played important roles in the sufferings of the Baloch tribes, but they also helped in the shaping of the Baloch cultural and religious traditions. In a way, the efforts of the superior forces augmented the endeavors of the Baloch for identity formation as a distinct ethnic entity.

Persian authors of medieval times in their historical accounts proudly mentioned the genocide and massacre of the Baloch by various emperors of ancient Iran. However, the claims of their

emperors of wiping out the Baloch from the face of the earth during the last decades of the Sassanid era were exaggerations as the Baloch regrouped as a distinct national entity and showed their presence and political importance in different regions of the Sassanid Empire such as Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, and Sistan before the Arab invasion of Iran in the 7th century.

The miseries of the Baloch did not end with the fall of Sassanid power in Iran. Beginning from the invasion of Iran by the Arab tribes in the seventh century, the history of the Baloch is a history of persecution, deportation, and migration. Although some of the Baloch tribes defected from the Sassanid side and initially sided with the Arabs; however, soon, the Arabs began to persecute them on various pretexts. Even the weakening of Arab power in Iran did not provide any relief for the Baloch. With the collapse of Arab power, Iran was ruled by powerful local dynasties for many centuries. The Baloch also faced some of the worst treatments during this period. Saffarids, Buyids, Samanids, and Ghaznavids dynasties were among the major political powers of the ancient era that have committed their share of atrocities on the Baloch. These atrocities included extreme genocidal acts that finally pushed the Baloch from Kerman and northern regions of Sistan toward further east and south into southern Sistan, Makuran, and Turan.

With the paucity of authentic historical documents and the deliberate blackout of any description of the Baloch by the ancient historians, it is not easy to trace their history. It is this scarcity of detailed accounts that makes guesswork the ethnic origin of the Baloch and the exact location of their original homeland in the Iranian Plateau. However, with some passing references in some of the ancient accounts of Iranian history

and the rock inscriptions of Sassanid times one can visualize a murky picture of the ancient Baloch. We can find a place *Balāškān* or *Balāśagān* and a description of an ethnic group *Balāścik* from some ancient Greek and Armenian historical accounts. It appears that *Balāśagān* was the original homeland of the ancient Baloch, and the term Baloch is the transformation of *Balāścik* of *Balāśagān*.

While determining the racial kinship of a people, an objective study on scientific lines is required of the physical traits or biological growth; structure of their languages; folklore and literature; religion and mythologies; social and political institutions and cultural affinity with other peoples, keeping in view the general characteristics of all tribal and feudal societies of a given period in the past. Several other points including geography and environmental changes have also to be considered. While judging the racial kinship, the inseparable elements of language and culture, save certain genuine exceptions, must always be kept in view. Culture is always depicted through language which is one of the guiding factors in classifying human groups. During the colonial era, an unscientific approach has been followed by European writers on Baloch history (these writers were mostly British military intelligence officers of British India), perhaps purposely. A judicious and scientific study of Balochi language and culture, religion, and mythologies which are the pre-requisites were never attempted; nor the Baloch political and socio-economic institutions were analyzed to find out any similarities or dissimilarities with any culture of regions and neighboring people.

Chapter one is an exploration into the origin of the ancient Baloch. It was imperative to discuss the descent of the Indo-Iranian tribes from Central Asia into the Iranian Plateau that is known as the Aryan phenomenon. Due to the unavailability of documented evidence, which could have been used in tracing the footprints of ancient Baloch; linguistic and cultural connections of the Baloch with other national entities of the period remain the only tools. The chapter is a logical discussion on the history of the region to find the origin of the Baloch among the linguistically and culturally closely affiliated or related ethnic groups in the Iranian Plateau. On the origin of the Baloch in ancient times, it was established that the thread running through is the migrations of a group of tribes speaking Indo-European languages from Central Asia that included the *Balāścik* or the Baloch of later ages. After they migrated from Central Asia, these people initially settled in the *Balāśagān* region in northwest Iran near the Caspian Sea (This was the region where other speakers of northwestern Iranian languages were also living) and represented *Balāściki* (Balochi) speakers which was a branch of Indo-Iranian languages. Their presence has been noted in some of the chronicles and rock inscriptions of Persian emperors of the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties (From the rock inscriptions of Emperor Darius and Shahpur, it was established that an ethnic group called *Balāścik* was living in a region called *Balāśagān* which was somewhere between the Caspian Sea and Lake Van). Their linguistic and cultural affinity with Persians and Kurds gives much credibility to the theory that they belong to those Indo-Iranian groups of tribes who migrated from central Asia some three thousand years ago. Balochi which was the continuation of the *Balāścuki/ Balāściki* became the symbol of the Baloch national entity belongs to the

family of north-western Iranian languages closely related to Kurdish and Persian.

It can be observed that ancient Baloch were pastoralist nomads, herding sheep, and goats and living in tribal communities. As the footprints of these ancient agro-pastoralists have been lost in the dust of history, it can only be postulated that the migrating Balāsciks tribes among the Indo-Iranian tribes originally settled in the *Balāškān/Balāśagān* region of the Sassanid Empire. Chapter two is an effort to locate the original homeland of the Balāscik people in the Iranian Plateau.

The stay of the Baloch or Balāscik was not smooth in *Balāškān/Balāśagān*. The region of their original abode was the meeting point of great powers of that era. The people living there were facing the consequences of a protracted war of attrition between the Greek, Romans, and the Persian empires. The thirst for expansion and domination by these powers caused turmoil in the region and the people faced the consequences of long-drawn conflicts. The mention of *Balāscik* as an ethnic group in the north-western Caspian region and *Balāśagān* itself seized to exist in ancient historical chronicles during the 7th century. What happened to the people called Balāscik and what happened to the region named *Balāśagān*? It appears that historical events or climatic situations caused the ouster of the *Balāscik* from the region and that might become a factor in the renaming of the region as Mugan during the Arab period. One can deduct from the accounts of Persian writers that the powerful empires of the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties were in a hate and love relationship with the Baloch. Sometimes the Baloch faced their genocide acts while on many occasions they were reported to

be participating in the war efforts of these empires. Chapter three is a discussion to find out logical answers to the question of the disappearance of the whole Balāścik community from Balāśagān during the last decades of Sassanid power in Iran. The chapter also briefly describes various powers in that time and their relations with the Balāścik other than the Persian empires. These powers included the Greeks, Romans, Hephthalites, Sakas, and others.

The collapse of the mighty Sassanid Empire was one of the most important but unexpected events in the history of the Iranian Plateau. Armed with the new religious doctrine of Islam, presented by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the 7th century in the township of Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula, the divided Arab tribes united for the conquer of the world to convert humanity into Islam. Within a short period of twenty-five years, the complete occupation of Iran by a little-known group of tribes was one of the fascinating events in world history. The Arab conquest of Iran affected not only the Iranian world but also the whole of Central Asia. The collapse of the Persian Empire, the eventual decline of the Zoroastrian religion, and the replacement of Almighty Ahura Mazda with Almighty Allah as the all-powerful god in the Iranian Plateau changed the dynamics of politics and religion in the whole region. From the very beginning, the Baloch became a part of the conflict between the Sassanid and the invading Arab forces. The protracted conflict between these powers caused divisions among various Baloch tribes. Some of them defected to the Arabs while many others remained with the Sassanid forces defending Iran against the invasion. During the Ummayyad period, the Baloch tribes who defected to the Arabs in the initial phase of the Arab invasion came into bloody conflict with the

forces of the powerful Arab Empire. They faced massacre and genocide and were exiled to Syria where they remained in the Aleppo region until the fall of the Ummayyad dynasty. During the Arab rule in Iran, the Baloch living in the Iranian Plateau became also involved in various civil wars among the Arab tribes which started soon after their occupation of Iran. Although few Baloch tribes that penetrated Makuran and Turan at that time were not in a position of any significant political and social existence, nevertheless, in the long campaigns of the Arabs to occupy regions of present-day Balochistan and Sindh, they also suffered along with the indigenous people. Chapter four is a detailed description of the Arab advent in Iran and the relationship between the Arabs and the Baloch.

The effective Arab rule in Iran lasted for nearly 150 years. Being inexperienced in the matters of state administration and diplomacy, the Arabs rulers were soon forced to rely on the experience of former Sassanid chieftains and the ruling elite. The physical and administrative control of a vast region like the Iranian Plateau was not possible for the small numbers of Arab forces and a few learned persons among them. They never controlled completely or permanently some regions, such as Gilan, Sistan, Tabaristan, Gur, Zabolestan, and regions comprising the present-day Balochistan. After the collapse of the Persian empire, most of the Sassanid commanders and local notables defected to Arabs and converted to Islam. These were given different administrative positions by various Arab regimes. Some of these notables were allowed to rule locally on the condition that they pay the agreed tribute. With the weakening of Arab grip on power during the last decades of Abbasid Caliphs, some of the local elite increased their power and prestige remarkably and Iran was practically ruled by

different dynasties of Iranian and Turkish origin enjoying various forms of autonomy. Many local families such as Saffarids, Buyids, Samanid, and Ghaznavids became the factual rulers of many regions in the Islamic Empire nominally headed by puppet caliphs in Baghdad.

During the period when Persian and Turkish dynasties ruled Iranian Plateau, the major concentration of the Baloch was in Kerman, *Ḍaśt*, and Sistan but they were also present in Deylam and Gilan. Some of them also being reported to be present in the Raxśān, Makuran, and Turan regions of present-day Balochistan. They came into conflict with regional powers perhaps due to political and religious reasons. The encounters with these powers and the subsequent miseries forced the Baloch tribes to move further east and to settle in the far-flung and inaccessible regions of the Iranian Plateau. The bloody conflicts with Buyids were instrumental in waves of migration by the Baloch tribes from Kerman to Makuran and Turan. Almost total evacuation of the Brahui (Barezui) group of Baloch tribes occurred from eastern Kerman and their settlement in Turan began. Chapter five is an exploration into the Baloch conflicts with the regional powers in the Iranian Plateau after the collapse of Arab power.

The agro-pastoralist ancient Baloch as part of the Indo-Iranian people observed the social and cultural norms of the migrating Aryans. In the migrations beginning from Central Asia, their wandering in the Iranian Plateau and their encounters with powerful forces of history made their culture oriented around warfare, and they were believed to be good warriors. Although, the literature, religion, and modes of the social organization of the migrating Indo-European tribes and ethnic groups

subsequently shaped the course of the culture and religious traditions of regions where they settled but it is also a fact that in the later stages of their stay in the Iranian Plateau, the people that came into contact with them or those who were assimilated into their national identity had undoubtedly influenced the socio-cultural norms of the ancient Baloch. Nevertheless, these influences were not significant as it can be observed that little changes have occurred in their original socio-cultural behavior. Strangely, in essence, the social and cultural codes of contemporary Baloch are not much different from the cultural practices of the ancient Baloch. Chapter six is a detailed account of the social, cultural, and political life of the ancient Baloch.

Like other migrating Indo-Iranian people, the Baloch, in the beginning, were the worshipers of Aryan gods like Mithra and Anahita or natural phenomena. As myths and tales are shaped by social, political, and geographical factors, after they migrated from Central Asia, changes must have occurred in the original Baloch religious and mythological outlook. Throughout these years of migrations, they were influenced by many mythological and religious beliefs of the indigenous peoples with which they interacted. In this context, indigenous religious and mythological beliefs must invariably have had a great impact on the Baloch religious outlook. It is most probable that in a later stage of their settlement in the Iranian Plateau, beginning from the Achaemenid period, like other ethnic groups, the Baloch also became the followers of the Zoroastrian religion. For centuries, Ahura Mazda remained the supreme god of Iran and surrounding regions in Central Asia, and Zoroastrianism was the state religion of the powerful Persian empires. However, political, and religious accounts

favor the theory of Baloch being the followers of the Mazdakian sect of Zoroastrianism. With the fall of the Sassanid Empire, the new religion of Islam became dominant in the region, and the Baloch conversion into Islam was part of political events occurring in the region during the 7th century. To get a clearer picture of the religious beliefs of the ancient Baloch, chapter seven deals to a great extent with the main religions being practiced in the Iranian Plateau and surrounding regions and analyze the possibilities of the affiliation of the ancient Baloch with any of these religions.

Chapter One:

The Baloch origin

Introduction

As there have been confusing and contradictory opinions on the historical origin of the Baloch; one of the solutions to the problem of finding the origin of the Baloch is to find ethnic groups that are linguistically and culturally closely affiliated with them as their history is intertwined with the history of these ethnic groups in ancient times. For a logical opinion on the Baloch origin, it is imperative to discuss in detail relevant events in the history of the Iranian Plateau. In the discussion on the Baloch origin, it is also pertinent to analyze the phenomenon of the migration of Aryan tribes in detail.

Race and kinship in context

The term “race” connotes some shared distinctive and inheritable qualities in a people. It must not be confused with the term nation which has only certain characteristics in common, while race has some collective heritable physical and cultural traits. Distinctly manifested psychic and spiritual characteristics are also considered the main attributes of a race; the formation of which mostly depends on the inbreeding and outbreeding of a human group.

A great many factors are to be considered in establishing racial affiliation as the human races always drift genetically. They are in a continual state of transformation. Through centuries, numerous migrations and cultural mingling of various people have served as a dynamic process of change in human

biological history. Migrations and the social-cultural and geographic environment would have a considerable impact on racial characteristics. In an analysis of the racial origin, three important factors are to be kept in view: Firstly, similarities of customs and traditions of the ancient peoples living under tribal set-up should be viewed scientifically and should not be the basis of theories linking the racial origin of a particular people, because cultural homogeneity always exists among all such cultures in a tribal and feudal setting. Secondly, foreign influences on a certain culture throughout a given period form an important factor and must be given serious thought; and thirdly, the geopolitical history of a people should be traced from the earliest times without any prejudice or reservation.

Races are constituted hypothetically to justify the distribution of genetic characteristics. Race formation apart from depending upon inbreeding or outbreeding is mostly determined by geographical isolation and change. The human organism has shown itself to be capable of adapting physical changes to varied climatic conditions, diets, and requirements of cultural adjustment. These factors have made it difficult to assert the ethnic purity of any people beyond certain exceptions. Nevertheless, the human population has been arbitrarily divided into many groups: Mongoloid, Caucasoid, Negroid, with numerous divisions or sub-races. Such divisions are mostly based on skin color, i.e., black man, white man, yellow man, and the red man. Sometimes, races have also been inferred from archaeological discoveries.

The term 'Semite' was conceived more appropriately as an extension of Biblical thinking. The adjective, 'Semite', is an eighteenth-century term coined by a German historian,

Schlozer in 1781 to denote a group of closely related languages. The Semite referred subsequently to peoples who might have spoken those languages. They are classified as the Semites, not because they possessed any unique physiological features in common but chiefly because they all appear to have migrated from Central Arabian Peninsula. The Semites have supposed to have descended from the biblical character of Shem, the eldest son of Nuh. They are represented mainly by the Jews and the Arabs, and by ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, Amorites, Armenians, Canaanites, and the Phoenicians. Among the Semitic languages, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Hebrew are still spoken. Most of the languages of the group, such as Akkadian and Canaanite, are dead, while Aramaic survived in a much-altered form.

Similarly, Aryan is a linguistic concept denoting the closely related Indo-Aryan languages spoken by a multitude of nomadic, semi-nomadic agropastoralist people of Central Asia in ancient times. In waves of migration, these people left their original homeland, spread into Europe, India, and the Iranian Plateau before the Christian era. Carrying their language and way of life with them, they brought drastic changes in the language, culture, and sociology in the regions of their final settlement. According to their linguistic divisions and their migratory patterns, they were also called Indo-Europeans and Indo-Iranian people by scholars and researchers. Their languages which evolved from a common proto-language spoken millennia ago were further subdivided into Indo-European and Indo-Iranian. These linguistic groups later became the present nations and nationalities in Europe, Iran, and India (Morris, 1888).

Aryan phenomenon

The first appearance of Aryans in history is about the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. in the Hurrian empire of Mittani (in northern Mesopotamia). It seems that a group of Indo-Aryans instead of going eastward to India came via Iran to the Fertile Crescent together with the Hurrians, to whom they soon became assimilated as to language and culture.

Different writers presented various theories regarding the original abode of the Aryan tribes and respectively had advocated Southern Russia, Southeast Europe, Central Asia, and the lands adjacent to the Caspian Sea as the original homeland for the Aryans (Muller, 1888; Childe, 1926; Frawley, 1994; Kochhar, 1999; Kuz'mina, 2007). Most plausible of the geographical locations of ancient Aryan land, as postulated by Morris (1888), before their en masse migration is believed to be the region between the Black and Caspian Seas, stretching northward up to Russian steppes and southwards up to Caucasian mountains. However, any scholars of Old Persian and Avestan texts had identified Airiianem Vaejah as the "mythical homeland" of the Aryans and had placed it anywhere from Choresmia on the Aral Lake in Uzbekistan to Azerbaijan, or southern or northwestern Afghanistan. Many considered Central Asia, i.e., roughly the Eastern Iranian steppes of ancient Sogdiana, Chorasmia, and Bactria and the adjacent area to the north of them (between the lower Volga and Kazakhstan) as the original habitat of the nomadic Proto-Aryans.

According to Bongard-Levin (1980), the region of ancient Bactria was the point of common residence for Indo-Iranian groups of tribes which later divided into Iranian and Indian

groups before their final migration into Iran and India. They moved eastward to the region of the southern Ural steppes and the Volga, then further onto Central Asia. At that stage, they appear to have already formed two groups: the Proto-Iranians in the north, and the Proto-Indo-Aryans in the south. Around 2000 BC, the Indo-Aryans moved southeast via Afghanistan into the Indian subcontinent, as well as southwest via the Iranian Plateau into northern Mesopotamia (Ghirshman, 1954). Recent research correlates archaeological pieces of evidence with later linguistically identifiable groups sharing similar cultural traits, suggesting that the Proto-Indo-Iranians originated in the eastern European steppes in the third millennium BC (Kuz'mina, 2007).

Several scenarios for the migration of Indo-Iranian tribes have been proposed along with corroborating archaeological evidence. It has been postulated that the migration of the Indo-Iranian group of tribes into the Iranian Plateau took place through a succession of numerous groups of tribes, each tribe speaking its variety of the Iranian language. The earliest groups contained the “Western” Iranians (Medes and Persians), whose migration is generally placed at the end of the second millennium BC.

According to Matthew (1999), the Iranian immigration onto the Plateau, probably, proceeded in several “waves” and along different routes, and Iranian tribes may have been established throughout the Plateau by the beginning of the first millennium, except, perhaps, the southernmost parts.

Many theories have also been put forward regarding the exact manner of the migration of the Ino-Iranian tribes. There are two

possibilities of their exact route of migration as observed by Morris (1888):

- They went north of the Caspian Sea, crossed the Caucasus and the Armenian Highlands, and then went southeast.
- They came directly from the steppes in the north or northeast and crossed the Daś' ay Kavir only to be brought to a halt by the Zagros Mountains.

According to Morris (1888), the last to come were those Indo-Iranian tribes who settled in the region extending from Margiana and Bactria to Arachosia and (Present-day) Balochistan. Morris (1888) listed some of these migratory groups as Ossetes, Armenians, the Kurds, the people of ancient Media and Persia, the Afghans, the Baloch, and Hindus of the Indus and Ganges.

The migrating Indo-Iranian group of tribes comprised the following culturally quite diverse groups:

- North Iranians who are called Scythians or Sakas
- West Iranians who included the ancient Medes and the modern Kurds, Baloch, and Persians
- East Iranians who were the speakers of Avestan and Bactrian languages

Before migrating to India and Iran and dividing into two distinct groups of people, Indo-Iranian tribes spoke a similar language. They cherished similar myths and legends and offered worship to the same gods and goddesses. They believed in a variety of gods and supernatural phenomena. They believed in the sun, moon, water, fire, wind, etc., having powers

over humans and nature. Mithra, Anahita, and Indra were the most powerful of the ancient Aryan gods.

Ghirshman (1954), observed that little is known about the speakers of the non-Iranian languages whom they encountered on their way into Iran. In the east, in the present-day Balochistan and further east in the Gandhara (Kabul) region and Arachosia (Kandahar), the Iranians were most likely still in contact with speakers of Indo-Aryan as well as speakers of Dravidian languages during the second half of the second millennium BC. This assumption is based on the close resemblance of Indic names and customs, particularly in Rigveda with those in Old Iranian texts, which points to the Kandahar region and the present-day Balochistan and is dated to the middle Rigvedic period between 1500 and 1350 BC (Ghirshman, 1954).

The exact reasons for the mass migrations of Aryan tribes from their original abode are still being argued. However, it is widely believed that scarcity of food and pastureland caused by climatic conditions and the pressure applied by the neighboring tribes from the north were among the main factors that forced them to move away in different directions. Whatever had been the causes, Aryan movements have been persistent instead of being occasional or transitory, their effects were permanent on the regions and peoples they came into contact with.

Broadly speaking, during their migration, the tribes speaking Indo-European languages split into two main groups. The Western group rounded the Black Sea, crossed into Balkans and the Bosphorus, penetrated Asia Minor, and later on formed a Hittite Confederation. Some of them also appeared in Syria

and Egypt. The Eastern group moved eastwards and rounded the Caspian Sea. One group among them crossed the Caucasus and pushed as far as the great bend of the Euphrates where they settled among the indigenous Hurrians and later formed the Kingdom of Mitanni in 1450 B.C. They established their suzerainty over northern Mesopotamia and Zagros. Then the bulk of the Aryans pressed eastwards, crossed the Oxus, and entered Bactrian plains. They scaled the passes of the Hindu Kush along the Panjsher and Kabul rivers. Quite a few tribes might have thrust towards the West and probably southwest to the present Afghan, Pakistani and Iranian parts of Balochistan.

The penetration of Indo-Iranian tribes into the Iranian Plateau came into effect with several waves of immigrants, speaking slightly different dialects. After several centuries, they finally established themselves as masters in the region. Their cavalry greatly contributed to their success over the indigenous population. These nomadic and agropastoral people were comprised of groups or confederacies of various tribes. Later, they became three distinct national entities known as Medes, Persians, and Parthians. Probably they were named after the regions they finally settled in Madai, Persua, and Parthva. For a while, their movements were contained in a region comprising Elam and Mesopotamia in the north and south, and Lake van and Zagros in the east and west. For a time, expanding to centuries, they absorbed the indigenous population and established their civilization. They also absorbed some of the political, cultural, and religious traditions of the people and the civilizations they were absorbing. Dominating the indigenous population, in the beginning, they established small primitive states in the Iranian Plateau. After the final settlement of Indo-Iranian tribes in the Iranian Plateau and their complete socio-

cultural and political domination over the indigenous population, the whole region was called Iran, the land of the Aryans.

Determining the Baloch racial affiliations

In a case where history is lost in the maze of time; linguistic, cultural, social, and religious characteristics of a people are prerequisites in the determination of its racial origin. To ascertain the origin of the Baloch, it is imperative to discuss the salient features of the social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics of the Aryan people.

On languages, it is, however, not clear that the Aryan who became distinguished as Indo-Iranian spoke one language and like the peoples themselves, languages must invariably be numerous, nevertheless, the main languages of these people were Sanskrit and Avesta from the family of Indo-Iranian languages.

It appears that after their settlement in the Iranian Plateau, the original religious beliefs of the Iranian people diluted, and they began to worship Ahura Mazda along with their gods and goddesses. The worship of Ahura Mazda-Mithra-Anahita during the Achaemenid period has been reported by many. However, it was also during the Achaemenid period that finally established the supremacy of the god Ahura Mazda over the other gods of Indo-Iranian tribes in the Iranian Plateau.

Many mythological beliefs and socio-cultural traditions of the Aryan people who finally settled in the Iranian Plateau lived on into historical times. Many beliefs practiced by them became

integral parts of the languages of people who later distinguished themselves as different national entities in Iran. The early Aryans were polytheists. They worshipped a variety of deities, many religious terminologies, and names of deities in the present languages were inherited from the original languages of the Aryan people. Their mode of worship was based mostly on sacrifices. Their main concern was nature. This can be deduced from the fact that most of the Vedic gods were forces of nature, like the sun, the moon, fire, storm, and so on. Their fundamental religious ideas were those of primitive animism where the force which could not be controlled or understood was invested with divinity and personified as male or female gods.

The Aryan political, social, and economic system was based on primitive tribalism. Their administrative system, though rudimentary at the beginning, accorded the tribal chief, afterward the King, a pivotal position. The tribal confederacy or kingdom, *Rashtra*, contained tribes (*Jana*), tribal units (*Vish*), and villages (*Gram*). The nucleus was the family (*Kula*), with the eldest male member as its head (*kulapa*). The chief was assisted by the tribal units and the village headmen. Many *Kula* or families combined to form a tribe that was organized as a patriarchal group. The tribal chief enjoyed tremendous powers. The chief, with the help of section heads of the tribe, decided the disputes and important issues. Agriculture and pastoralism were the principal sources of livelihood. The horse plays a crucial role in the life of the early Aryans. Chariots with spoked wheels were part of their war machine. Socially, polygamy was practiced among them. Re-marriage of an Aryan widow, generally with the husband's brother was also a social norm.

The ancient Baloch as part of Aryan tribes

For research on various stages and aspects of human biological growth studies on stature, head shape or cephalic index, the size, and structure of the brain, eye color, skin color, the texture of hair, the epicanthic fold, constitutional structure of the body, body odor and blood groups were considered as the determining factors in finding the racial origin of a person. However, in modern times, it has become difficult to arrive at some sound conclusions regarding race homogeneity on the theories based on classical comparison of races. The classical comparison is based on merely physical observation and measurement or upon differences or similarities in genetics or both. In this context, the only tool left for establishing the origin of a people can be the language, culture, and social traditions.

The Baloch were illogically declared by some of the writers as being Semitic, to have come from Arabian Peninsula. This is perhaps the direct result of great upheavals and deep controversies in Baloch society, its economic dependence, and inevitable value re-orientation brought in by foreign domination after many centuries of semi-independence and tribal sway. The author of *Tohfah el Kiram* traced their origin to Muhammad bin Harun, a descendant of Amir Hamza (an uncle of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)), by a fairy. Some of the Baloch writers had perhaps similar considerations in tracing their racial origin, history, and faith. There might still be some cogent reasons for pursuing such historically erroneous presumptions like the Semitic or Arabic origin of the Baloch. This may be due to the desire to find some reactionary consolation by interpreting Baloch history in a particular way, linking it to some distinct people and digging out sketchy

historical evidence of a golden era, and glorifying some father figures. Some less scrupulous writers visualized every great figure in history as essentially Baloch. Mesopotamia and its adjoining regions from time immemorable were the most fertile lands and the seat of a great civilization that attracted other peoples to these areas. There are virtually very few instances in history that there had been any migrations on a large scale from Mesopotamia or Chaldea to the east. If the Baloch were Semites inhabiting Mesopotamia or Chaldea, there must have been some vestige of these people in the Middle East. There is hardly any trace of them in the remote ages in those areas, save the Kurds who came from the Caspian region towards the west a few centuries earlier than the Baloch. The theory of Chaldean origin for the Baloch is implausible as civilized people like the Chaldeans, if migrated from the land, could not reverse to nomadism, agropastoralism, and tribalism soon after they migrated from their original country.

In any ultimate analysis of racial affinity, language is the first and foremost factor. It is the most important instrument of socialization in all human cultures. Language passes its myths, laws, customs, and beliefs to the next generation. It is only through language that one could appreciate the essence of any social structure. Culture and language go together. If language is transmitted as a part of the culture, it is no less true that culture is transmitted through language. Therefore, the language and literature of a particular people furnish a lot of facts regarding the general character of those people. The process of linguistic change makes it very difficult, however, to establish the language kinship or the fact that any existing speech represents the original or any ancient tongue except that of a possible affiliation which may be inferred only through an

objective study of existing differences or similarities of present dialects which are no less than 2700 in the present world. Although the races cannot be determined based on language alone, it is perhaps the strongest element in such a study.

Balochi has the least influence whatsoever of any Semitic language except for a few Arabic words which have come after the 7th century A.D. through political and religious hegemony of the Arabs in Iran and Central Asia. Balochi also has quite a few loan words from Turkish and Dravidian languages. Turkish words might have come through Persian. Some of the Dravidian and Turkish words became part of the Balochi vocabulary after some of the migrating Baloch tribes settled in the central regions of Balochistan (Turan). This is logical as the migrating Baloch tribes after their final settlement in Turan have certainly absorbed many Turkish and Dravidian words into their speech. But any opinion based on a few loanwords about language kinship is superfluous.

Authentic works on the Balochi language have established beyond doubt that it is a member of the northwestern group of Iranian languages, along with Zazaki, Kurdish, Gilaki, Mazandarani, and Talyshi (Jahani, 2003; Axenov, 2006). Korn (2003) places Balochi among the transitional Western Iranian languages, categorizing it as a group in the sense of being a third member in-between north- and southwestern Iranian languages. Of ancient languages, Balochi bears affinities to both Middle Persian and Parthian (Pahlavi). However, it has also been identified that Balochi has a marked individuality of its own and differs from both of these languages in important aspects. Tedesco (1921) and MacKenzie (1961) developed the hypothesis which has not been contested by other researchers

on Iran and Iranian languages that Persian, Balochi, and Kurdish share common phonetic isoglosses. MacKenzie (1961) observed that the speakers of these three languages might once have been in closer contact geographically and ethnically. Tedesco (1921) and Windfuhr (1975) saw various connections between Persian, Kurdish, and Balochi and in their works corroborated the close relationship between these languages. Balochi being in the family of Indo-Iranian languages is strong evidence of the Baloch belonging to that group of migrating Aryan tribes.

The folk literature, oral in nature, which includes folk tales and lore, provides support for the institutions and behavior patterns of a deep-rooted culture. Folk stories though generally considered as pure fiction have great appeal to the people of all ages in the community who generally never challenge the essence of all that is narrated. The folklore, especially the proverbs and fables, serve to instruct and remind the members of the society of a wise code of conduct and social behavior. The similarity of the Baloch folk stories with that of other Indo-Iranian people like Kurds and Persians strongly suggests the Baloch Aryan origin.

The Baloch culture which should be the main criteria in closely examining not only its character but also the lost relationship of its language and people with other groups has its roots in socio-political and religious systems inherited from its Aryan ancestors. Like other Aryan people, the Baloch society was based on tribalism and had a clan system that is still intact in many parts of Balochistan. The tribal Chief (*Sarwār*) was revered. He enjoyed great prestige. He had a pivotal position in all walks of tribal life. The tribes were organized as patriarchal

groups. The Chief enjoyed tremendous powers. There is no trace of any permanent legal institutions at early ages. However, the *Sarṁār*, with the help of clan chiefs decided the disputes. Aryan social norms like polygamy, the re-marriage of a widow, generally with the husband's brother was being practiced by the ancient Baloch.

According to Dashti (2020), the Balochi word '*Wājā*' etymologically is 'dwija' in Sanskrit, connoting a superior status and place of respect. In Balochi, *Wājā* means noble, respected, and has the same etymological origin as that of Sanskrit, Dwija. It is however not clear whether the earlier Baloch connoted the word in the same philosophical sense as dwija or not.

Baloch mythologies have a great resemblance to those of the Aryans. Dashti (2020) observed that *Kālān Kambaru*, that is painting a boy to have an ugly look, carrying him to every house, repeating *kālān kambaru*, getting some articles from each house to be finally cooked in an isolated place; or the girls *śīśalān śālu ṛampok ey āp ṁay* exercises are clearly of the Aryan origin and widely practiced among the Baloch.

A range of mythological beliefs and cultural practices were common among the various Indo-European tribes including the Baloch. The Baloch associated certain species of animals with sorcerers and witches. They believed that an animal that is overpowered or whose soul is bound up to that of the sorcerer may be ordered to serve his evil master. The Baloch considered the fox as clever and mischievous while the owl was ominously evil. Like the beliefs of Aryan tribes, there is a lot of mention about marvelous creatures in Balochi folktales. Circumstantial

meeting of these amorphous beings with humans was believed to result in pleasant omens or distressing fortunes. In some stories such creatures marry and consort with human beings. They reward human services and punish misdeeds.

The verbal element is considered a fundamental constituent of magical power. While narrating folk stories or legends, the storyteller most often interrupted their narration by uttering meaningless words and phrases which apart from inciting inattentive listeners must have invariably been aimed to have some magical effect. If anybody from among the listeners would say, ‘*ay wallā*’ the storyteller stopped the narrative and uttered some meaningless words like the following: *Kock majoal ey, cantān sohr ey, ustīri neis ey jangalā kap’ag: cistān cistān panāh ey regetān*. Almost all the storytellers used similar words with slight variations or additions of their own. Dashti (2020), observed that this practice of the Baloch essentially is of Aryan origin.

It appears that as the early Aryans, among the Baloch, there were neither any rules for worship nor the presence of any priest during ceremonies was essential. The Baloch preserved this approach for centuries but subsequently while assimilating beliefs of other peoples, ritualistic ceremonies were more formalized among them.

The Balochi epics knit together a great mass of ancient traditions, customs, legends, prudential maxims, and spiritual discourses. As observed by Dashti (2020), there are great reminiscences to the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata or with Homeric Greek epics with Balochi war songs, which mostly depict a pastoral and nomadic way of living. The Indian

sacred books or the Greek Homeric poems, the Iliad, and the Odyssey provide a rational background for many myths, social practices, and traditional outlook in a customary way. The Balochi epics while describing the heroes and their achievements contain the very essence of Baloch society and system. If properly analyzed, the fundamental pattern appears to be the same with Indian epics. Balochi ballads of the earliest period date back only to the fifteenth century in their present form, while the Indian epics were composed in nearly 1000 B.C. Surprisingly, minus the stories of gods and goddesses, both epics have the same lucidity, forceful expression, and style.

Dashti in his book 'The Baloch cultural heritage' has discussed the similarities of Balochi classical music and the musical traditions of the Aryans. He observed that the Aryan touch in music has not been lost until today. Indian music developed as a beautiful melange of Aryan and indigenous music, while Baloch classical pattern appears to be preserved with very few changes and has a great resemblance to Indian Ragas. Balochi raga *Baśkarā* which is an extension of Kurdi raga is very close in its structural form to Hindi Raga Darbari. Ragas, classified as Balochi, including *miči*, have a similar relationship in form and forcefulness with various Hindi ragas. Similarly, Balochi *zahirag* and *nal o sor* are undoubted of Aryan origin in essence, meaning, and structure. Some musical instruments, like *nal* and *ʔamburag*, are undisputedly Central Asian instruments still used by the Baloch.

From ancient times, the Baloch has been preserving a dress suitable for colder areas- a long shirt, big trousers, and a large *pāg* (turban). Many among the Baloch still have their houses

open to the east. It may be because they perhaps unconsciously are keeping the tradition of respect towards the sun, which was revered by them in the ancient past, or due to their habits of the cold Caspian region. When they first started moving and settled in the hot regions of the Iranian Plateau and later in areas adjacent to the subcontinent, their cultural pattern in matters of dress and tastes must have undergone considerable changes. But it can be observed that the dress code of the ancient Baloch had striking similarities with other Indo-Iranian tribes of ancient times.

The deep sense of pride and being highly egoistic are traits among the Baloch which were common among the Aryans. Like the early Aryans, the Baloch is a proud people with a great sense of self-esteem. A Baloch usually swore by his head or by the head of his father. Although the caste system among the Baloch had not that strictness as created and maintained by other Aryan groups who settled in the subcontinent, nevertheless, the non-Baloch tribes and the natives were never accorded equal status in the ancient Baloch tribal set-up.

Like the Aryan *kula*, the Baloch *kahoal* was the elementary cell of the culture, providing the norms of conduct, and training its members from birth to death on all aspects of the Baloch traditional values (Dashti, 2020). It inspired the love and pride of parentage. It was the perennial source of stability, vitality, and continuity of the Baloch culture. In its essence, the Baloch family is undoubtedly the prototype of the *kula* of the Aryans. The Aryan *sabha* and *semiti*, the tribal assemblies, have their reminiscences among the Baloch. The *sabha* may have been a council of tribal elders deciding important matters, whereas the *semiti* may have been a general assembly of the entire tribe

convened only in cases of grave emergency. In the Baloch tribal set-up, these assemblies, however, were called less frequently.

Like the Aryans, the educational and entertainment center of the Baloch was the house of the Chief or elder where history, legends, ballads, and dramas were told and sung. Lyrics and tales of romance were recited. The posing of riddles in such gatherings was also common. In a later stage, perhaps due to the different conditions there were permanent storytellers or bards. This became a sort of institution, and the bards did invariably add or delete some of the folktales and folklores to suit the changing mythological, religious, and social requirements. The ancient Baloch most probably were not accustomed to writing until medieval epochs and memories of the bards were the only living literature passing from generation to generation. They have their legendary history, folk, and poetry crystallized in bardic recitations, epics, and war ballads.

The Baloch culture, its religion, mythologies, and language have no similarity or resemblance with the Semites. If there is any minor similarity, it should be viewed from a wider perspective of general external influences, mainly Mesopotamian and Assyrian. On the other hand, as regards Medes, Parthians, and Persians, their cultural influence on the Baloch is fairly visible.

It is a fact that the present Baloch cultural values are not devoid of Middle Eastern imprints. But this does not provide any base for the suggestion that the Baloch were Semites. Arab domination of the region for a long time and the religion of Islam are the factors that resulted in leaving a mark on Baloch

traditions. Nevertheless, great dissimilarities and fundamental differences in social and cultural outlook are visible between the ancient Semites and the Baloch. Baloch culture is overwhelmingly Central Asian in its essence and Aryan by racial or linguistic affiliation.

Similarly, one must not disregard the fact that there was a long line of Semitic prophets and religious reformers throughout the ages which must have resulted in a general religious tendency among the Semites and a refined approach towards God and the universe. This is evident from the Old Testament. The Aryans, or for that matter Central Asian peoples, had fewer reformers or religious preachers. Most of the Aryan people including the Baloch have still preserved their primitive cults in most respects. The Baloch still adopt names of animals, plants, colors, and even parts of the body, which was not in vogue among the Semites perhaps due to their religious outlook. As a continuation of Aryan traditions, Baloch still prefers to have one-word names for their children. Until a few hundred years ago, there were absolutely no traces of any Semitic names among the Baloch.

Language; folklore and literature; religion and mythologies; social and political institutions; cultural affinity; geography and history are important factors in determining a people's racial or ethnic origin. With the analyses of these factors, it is now a consensus opinion among the researchers that the Baloch belongs to the family of those Indo-European tribes who migrated from Central Asia and settled in the Iranian Plateau some three thousand years ago. Taking into consideration, linguistic, cultural, and geographical factors, it can be postulated that the ancient Baloch were either part of or

associated with the Parthians, Medes, and Persian groups of tribes who settled in ancient Iran. However, this assumption only indicates the relationship of the Baloch with other ethnic entities of the ancient period. As will be discussed in the following section, the Baloch was a well-established ethnic entity, having their territorial region while living in alliance with other ethnic groups on regional or linguistic and cultural grounds and, most probably, sharing some of the cultural and linguistic features with their neighbors and allies. In the same way, it would not be wrong to say that because of the historical happenings of the last 15 hundred years and because of the imposition of a particular religion in the region, the Baloch have absorbed some of the social and cultural practices of the Middle East.

Balāscik as the Baloch

As mentioned earlier, reference to the Baloch in ancient historical accounts is very rare. Only some passing references can be found in classical Persian descriptions of ancient times. More detailed accounts are available from the biased, and sometimes confusing remarks about the Baloch from the Arab writers. Some of the British intelligence officers while collecting strategic and social information about the Baloch before their invasion of Balochistan produced valuable collections of Balochi ballads and historical accounts. However, they based their assumptions on the Baloch origin from the interpretation of some of the Baloch folklores (which had been manipulated by bards and minstrels throughout centuries) and the writings of the Arab historians of medieval times.

On linguistic, cultural, and geographical grounds, it has been strongly established by the works of imminent Iranologists that the Baloch origin can be traced within the northwest Iranian group of tribes. Based on these inquiries, it is believed that the original homeland of the Baloch must have been in the area where other speakers of northwestern Iranian languages were living. MacKenzie (1961) believed that the people who later became Persians occupied the province of Fars in southwest Iran, whereas the ancestors of the Baloch inhabited the central areas of western Iran, and the people who later became known as Kurds lived either in northwestern Luristan or in the province of Isfahan. However, from the rock inscriptions of Emperor Darius and Shahpur, one can deduce that an ethnic group called *Balāścik* was living in a region called *Balāśagān* which was somewhere between the Caspian Sea and Lake Van situated in present-day Turkey and Azerbaijan. It appears that the Baloch is the later transformation of *Balāścik* after their expulsion or migration from *Balāśagān*. For various reasons, this most important aspect that could have been important in finding the origin of the word Baloch had, strangely, been missed by all scholars and researchers. The word Baloch is most probably a rather small modification of the term *Balāścik*. There is not much difference in the pronunciation of *Balāścik*, *Baloacik*, or Baloch. Even today, in different parts of Balochistan, many people call the Baloch *Balocuk* and Balochi *Balocuki*. It is most probable that the group of the tribe who were living in *Balāškān* was named after the region, or the region itself was named after its inhabitants, the *Balāścik*.

Balāścik, as a group of Indo-Iranian tribes after they migrated from Central Asia, settled in the northwestern Caspian region. The region of their abode (*Balāškān* or *Balāśagān*) later

vanished from the geographical and historical accounts; however, the ethnic entity mentioned in the rock inscriptions of the Sassanid emperors as *Balāścik* survived. The *Balāściks* of *Balāśagān* reemerged as Baloch of premediaeval times in various regions of Iranian Plateau including Kerman, Gilan, Deylam, and Sistan. During the same period, the presence of some of the pastoral Baloch tribes was also mentioned in the eastern and southern regions of the dismantled Sassanid Empire like Raxsān, Makuran, and Turan.

The *Balāścik* were not alone in *Balāśagān* but were with other tribes in the area between the Caspian Sea and Lake Van and the Alborz Mountain. The *Balāścik*, like other peoples of that region, must have been influenced by the events occurring in the region. It is also probable that *Balāścik* also absorbed some of the cultural and linguistic influences from the surrounding people. As a member of northwestern Iranian languages, Balochi which is the modified form of *Balāściki*-the language of the *Balāścik*-included many elements of other northwestern Iranian languages.

Koch as Brahui

During the Buyids and Seljuqs periods, some of the Baloch tribes from the Barez Mountains of Kerman were forced to migrate and were identified first as Barezui. Later, with their settlement in Turan, the Barezui tribes became Brahui, and with the formation of a powerful tribal confederacy, they created the Baloch state of Kalat in later medieval times. These Baloch tribes from Barez Mountain in Kerman had been mentioned by Arab historians as Kufici (mountaineers), distinguishing them from other Baloch tribes who were dwelling mostly in the

deserts of Kerman and Sistan. *Hudud-al-Alam* describes *Jebel Barez* (Kuh-e-Kufij) as a chain of seven mountains running from *Jiruft* to the sea, with seven tribes, each with its chief and being “professional looters” (Bosworth, 1976). Later, the term *Koch o Baloch* was used for the Baloch tribes as a whole in historical accounts of some of the Arab writers including *Ibn Haukal* and *Istakhri*.

From various historical narrations, it appeared that there was not much difference between the language of *Koch* and the *Baloch* at that time; however, the *Brahui* tribes may have their dialect that is not much different from *Balochi*. European linguists of the colonial era had investigated the origin of the *Brahui* group of the *Baloch* tribes from a particular angle. However, from the investigations of *Dr. Gershevitch*, it can be deduced that the *Brahui* were among the tribal confederacy of the *Baloch* tribes in *Kerman*. *Gershevitch* (1962a, b) traced the origin of *Başkarçi* dialects to the *Bradazhui* tribe of central *Persia* during the *Achaemenid* period. *Dr. Gershevitch*, investigating the *Başkarçi* dialect, observed that apart from having absorbed some *Brahui* and *Arabic*, the *Başkarçi* dialects are pure *Iranian*. According to medieval Arab writers, *Başkarç* was surrounded by the *Balochi*-speaking tribes. If we assume the original country of the *Brahui* tribes in *Turan*, how can one explain the loan *Brahui* words in the *Başkarçi* dialects, keeping in mind the distance of *Turan* and *Kerman* or *Başkarç*?

Minorsky (1958) believed that the *Brahui* are the *Koch*. There is a possibility that the people of *Barez Mountain*, who became known as the *Koch* in the writings of Arab scholars, were from that tribe of *Bradazhui* who were deported by *Cyrus the Great* into the hills of *Kerman*. There is also mention of a people from

Barez Mountain along with the Baloch as part of the Xerxes Army when he marched against the Greeks.

Koch o Baloch also entered in the accounts of Arab writers of medieval Iran in respect of their encounters with Buyids. Many authorities on medieval Iranian history, including Bosworth, observed that Koch was a separate ethnic entity that later merged with the Baloch entity; however, they failed to prove this on the authentic ground. Some of the Baloch writers, including Mari (1974) and Dashti (2020) believed that the Koch were the Baloch tribes living in Barez Mountain (the Kuh-e-Kufij of the Arab writers), who were among the early migrating Baloch tribes that finally settled in Turan.

There are references in early Persian cuneiform inscriptions of Akaufaciya, a people who could be identified with Kufich, Kufijor, or Kuj. Kuj or Kufij were also mentioned by Muslim historians including the anonymous author of *Hudud al Alam*, a geographic treatise from the late 10th century A.D. This may also refer to Koch o Baloch of earlier times living in Kerman. The author maintained that Kufij lived on the eastern fringes of Kerman and were divided into seven tribes, every tribe speaking its variety of languages. Other Muslim chroniclers, prominent among them Istakhri and the author of *Burhan-e-Katih*, also localize the Koch or Kufij to Kerman and its eastern regions during the early Islamic period.

If we consider Koch or Bradzhui as original inhabitants of Kerman, then it can safely be deduced that it was after the arrival of a great number of the Baloch tribes in Kerman in the later Sassanid period that was responsible for the merging of the Koch into the greater Baloch ethnic entity. Arabic writer

Ibn Haukal, writing in the tenth century in his “Belad-al-Islam” quoted by Mari (1974), mentioned the Bradazhui tribe living around the Fars country with Koch o Baloch. Maqaddesi (1906) observed that by the tenth century, the Baloch had spread as far as Turan, and, obviously, these Baloch most probably were from the Bradazhui Baloch tribes of Barez Mountain who, later, became Brahui of modern-day Balochistan.

It is not improbable that some of the Brahui tribes might have been part of the larger Baloch migrating tribes toward the east into their present abode in central Balochistan during the Sassanid era. However, it appeared that Brahuīs formed the bulk of Baloch tribes who in the beginning fled en masse from Kerman after the Buyids incursions, taking the eastward routes, traversing the Great desert, and resting in Sistan for a while before settling in present-day central Balochistan in Pakistan. This assumption makes sense as from the time of the Buyids genocide of the Baloch in Kerman, the mention of the Koch along with the Baloch as a significant political factor vanished altogether from the official narratives of Persian chroniclers. From the works of Dr. Gershevitch, it became apparent that the present Brahui language is an admixture of Balochi, *Baškarçi*, and some of the Dravidian languages. This is most plausible as there is evidence of the presence of Jats among the Baloch tribes in Kerman speaking a Dravidian language. At the time of the Baloch migration into Turan, there was a significant presence of Hephthalites Turks in the region. The influence of the Dravidian and Turkic dialects must have influenced the language after the Baloch tribes, who finally settled and intermarried with the indigenous Dravidian and Turkic population of Turan of that time.

The journey of the Balochi language

The presence of the Baloch in Balāśagān is the period of history to which the original development of the Balochi language can be assigned. *Balāściki* or *Balāścuki* was the language of the *Balāścik* people living in *Balāśagān*. Balochi is the modified term for *Balāścuki*. Most probably, this transformation occurred while the *Balāścik* in Kerman and Sistan became the Baloch and their language was known as the Balochi during their expulsion or migration from *Balāśagān*.

Languages can change in dramatic ways via the incorporation of linguistic elements from other languages. There are, however, loan-words in Balochi from other Indo-European languages. But these inflections are not fundamental and could not have changed their basic character. Balochi is closely linked with Sanskrit. Most of the pure Balochi words were generally used in Sanskrit with almost the same meanings. However, while tracing the language kinship instead of comparing mere words the best criteria should be comparing words and phrases which have deep cultural or religious touch or which may indicate that such relations existed between the two languages. Balochi appears to be more archaic than Persian. It has admirably resisted the phonetic changes throughout centuries which is amply evident from the pure Balochi words preserved mainly in Balochi heroic poems and ballads. Balochi is, however, far from being homogeneous. But with all its dialectical heterogeneity it has a separate character of its own nevertheless closely linked with Sanskrit and the old Persian. It resembles many other Iranian languages in showing a nearer relationship to ancient Avesta than to the old Persian,

the Court language of the Achaemenids, from which modern Persian is distinctly descended.

The intimate ties between the language of the Avesta, especially in its earliest form recorded in the Gathas, and the language of the Vedic hymns, furnish ample evidence that ancient Iranian dialects were widely spoken among the peoples living in Gedrosia, southern slopes of Hindu Kush, northern parts of Bactria and Aria. Their ties seem to date from the beginning of the first millennium B.C and verify the close contact of the Aryans with the speakers of the Avesta. The most probable zone of this contact is the area adjacent to the basin of the Helmand River.

Balochi is among the Iranian branch of Indo-Iranian languages. As mentioned in the earlier sections of this chapter, it has been established beyond doubt that it is a member of the north-western group of Iranian languages, having many similarities with Zazaki Kurdish, Gilaki, Mazandarani, and Talyshi, Ossetic, etc, It has also been categorized as being a language in-between north and southwestern Iranian languages bearing significant affinities to both Middle Persian and Parthian.

Tedesco (1921) and Windfuhr (1975) in their works while corroborating various connections between Persian, Kurdish, and Balochi, established the close relationship between these languages. However, it has also been identified that Balochi has a marked individuality of its own and differs from these languages in important respects. Balochi's affinity with Persian and Kurdish is understandable because of the close links between the two people for centuries. Persian has been the official language of powerful empires. It was but natural that

Balochi should have been influenced by that language. It can also be observed that Balochi originated neither from Parthian nor Middle Persian. It might, however, share some features with both languages as well as of Median speech.

Although Balochi has no written record in the earlier era, it became the most obvious symbol of the Baloch national identity in the coming centuries. The poetry which can be traced from the fifteenth century A.D. is found in a highly developed form. It leaves little doubt that such a developed shape in literature must have been the result of centuries of development, but little traces of its development are available, and therefore, least could be deduced without authentic evidence.

Conclusion

Among the Baloch, it is generally believed that the word "Baloch," if applied in the sense of cultural implications, manifests something magnificent, magnanimous, and powerful. Different opinions and theories about the origin of the Baloch have been put forward by various writers and researchers. However, there is no logical ground to believe theories that Baloch are the indigenous inhabitants of present-day Balochistan, or the Baloch are Semitic. On linguistic, cultural, and geographical grounds, it has been strongly established that the Baloch origin can be traced within the northwest Iranian group of Indo-Iranian tribes. The Baloch cultural traditions have their strong roots in socio-political and religious systems inherited from their Aryan ancestors. On the origin of the Baloch in ancient times, the thread running through is the migrations of a group of Indo-European tribes

from Central Asia that included the *Balāścik* or the Baloch of later ages. These people originated in the *Balāśagān* region and represented speakers of a branch of Indo-Iranian languages in northwest Iran near the Caspian Sea.

Cultural, linguistic and social traditions are important while we inquire into the racial kinship of the Baloch. After an objective study on scientific lines of languages, their structure, and possible changes; folklore and literature; religion and mythologies; social and political institutions and cultural affinity with other peoples, keeping in view the general characteristics of the Aryan societies and other relevant factors, it can be said that the Baloch were among those tribes who spoke Indo-Iranian languages that migrated from Central Asia to settle in the Iranian Plateau before the Christian Era. Based on the inquiries on language, culture, and geography, the original homeland of the Baloch must have been in the area where other speakers of northwestern Iranian languages were living. Their linguistic and cultural affinity with Persians and Kurdish gives much credibility to the theory that during the migratory phase, they were very close to Persians and Kurds. With the comparison of linguistic and cultural traits of those ethnic groups that are closely affiliated with the Baloch, the arguments in this regard can further be augmented.

Due to scanty evidence of their migrations to the north-western Caspian region, and their settlements in *Balāśakān* it is hard to visualize a clear picture of the Baloch sociocultural life at that time; however, keeping into account the general milieu of the era, it can be suggested that they were pastoralist nomads, herding sheep, and goats and living in tribal communities. As part of Indo-Iranian tribes, *Balāścik* shared similar myths and

legends, practiced the same mythological beliefs, and offered worship to the same Aryan gods and goddesses at that time. It appears that the Baloch is the transformation of *Balāścik*. Balochi is the transformed form of *Balāściki* which in medieval times became the symbol of the Baloch national entity belonging to the family of north-western Iranian languages closely related to Kurdish and Persian.

Figure 1: A model of Aryan Migration

Source: <http://iranpoliticsclub.net/maps/maps01/index.htm>



Chapter Two: Original abode of the ancient Baloch

Introduction

The footprints of ancient Baloch had been lost in the dust of history due to various reasons. Due to the unavailability of documented evidence, which could have been used to fit the Baloch with other national entities or to locate their original abode in the Iranian Plateau, we have left with the passing references about the Baloch made in the ancient historical accounts. The existence of a region in the northwest of Iranian Plateau called *Balāśagān* and an ethnic group called *Balāścik* inhabiting there furnished some clues in locating the original homeland of the ancient Baloch. The presence of other ethnic groups in the same region that are linguistically and culturally closely affiliated with the Baloch in the Iranian Plateau provided further evidence in locating the ancient Baloch.

Balāśagān as the homeland of the ancient Baloch

Various rock inscriptions by different Achaemenid emperors mentioned a region called *Balāśagān* or *Balāškān* under their rule. There is also mention of an ethnic group called *Balāścik* living in that region. These emperors claimed on the rock inscriptions the subjugation of the people of *Balāśagān* by their forces alongside the account of victories over many other peoples.

Balāśagān was a region located in the area of the Kura and Aras rivers, adjacent to the Caspian Sea. To the south, it bordered Atropatene (Azerbaijan) and Gilan. Its people

corresponded to the Armenian province of Paytakaran during the Sassanid era. Under the Sassanid rule, the region extended as far as the stronghold of Derband. During the late Sasanian era, for a while, *Balāśagān* was also included in the northern quadrant of Adurbadagan.

The geographical boundaries of *Balāśagān* have been mentioned by different historians differently such as the “land of the Caspians,” Caspiana, or part of the territory of Armenia situated south of the Kor. However, the heart of this country was the *Dašt ay Balāškān* “*Balāśagān plain*,” which is virtually identical to the present-day Mugan steppe. According to Chaumont (2006), *Balāśagān* corresponds to the part of the territory of the Caspiana that was situated south of Kor, and *Balāścik* were among the seven listed people living in Eastern Caucasus. According to Adontz (1970), quoting references of Ebn Kordabeh, this plain was located on the road from Barzand to Vartan (Vartanakert). According to Baladhuri (1924), in the period of early Arab conquests, *Balāśagān* spanned the plain extending across the lower course of the Aras River, from Barda‘a through Baylaqan to Vartan, Bajarvan, and Barzand. It included the provinces of Arran and Mugan, though, as Minorsky (1958) noted, the name is common in Armenian sources but rare in Islamic ones.

The Achaemenid Emperors Cyrus and Darius I (Xerxes I 550–486 BC) in their rock inscriptions proclaimed that they are “king of lands holding many or all peoples” (Von Voigtlander, 1978). For naming the lands, they used the word Dahyus, and *Balāśagān* was one of the Dahyus. During the Parthian supremacy of the Iranian Plateau beginning around 238 BC after their seizure of the Seleucid province of Parthia, *Balāśagān*

might also have become a dependency of the *Āškāni* (Arsacid) Dynasty, though there is no documentary evidence of that. In the Sassanid period, *Balāśagān* extended as far as the Caucasus range and the Darband pass. According to Encyclopaedia Iranica that quoted different ancient Greek sources, *Balāśagān* or *Balāśkān* was a satrapy of the Persian empire (<http://www.Iranianaonline.org>). From the description of the Sassanid and Roman frontiers, it is obvious that *Balāśkān* was in the same mountainous region where Greeks and Roman writers had listed several predatory mountainous ethnic groups (as will be briefly described in the following sections).

The region was attested as a Sassanid province separately from Caucasian Albania, in the rock inscription of Shahpur 1 (240–270 AD) which indicates that it had its political entity even if it was virtually subject to Albania (Frye, 1963). In the inscription, Shahpur I considered *Balāśagān* and the rest of the Caucasus as part of Iran, and only regards the Roman territories of Anatolia and Syria as part of Aneran meaning regions outside Iran. According to the medieval Persian geographer Ibn Khordadbeh, the ruler of *Balāśagān* was among the leaders who was acknowledged with the title of king by the first Sassanid monarch Ardsheer 1 (224–242 AD), which suggests that *Balāśagān* was a direct vassal of Iran. According to Hewsen (2001), the Sasanians took *Balāśagān* from their Albanian vassals in the 5th century (or possibly as early as 387). No detail is available about the administrative structure of the Kingdom of *Balāśagān*; however, its main hub might have been at the fortress of Kursan. The Sassanids had amalgamated many districts in the region such as Spandaran-Peroz, Hormizd-Peroz, At'sibagawan, and (probably) Alewan to consolidate the area under a more centralized administration.

During the reign of Yazdgerd II (438–457 AD), the king of *Balāsagān*, Heran, took part in the Sassanid efforts to crush the 450–451 Armenian rebellion of Vardan Mamikonian. However, Heran, called Hun by Elise as quoted by Thomson (1982), soon rebelled against the Sassanid emperor and, later, massacred a Persian Army in Albania. The rebellion of the king of *Balāsagān* was crushed and he was killed on the orders of Emperor Yazdgerd II.

Balāsagān was conquered in 653 A.D by an Arab army led by Salman ibn Rabi'a, who forced some Kurds of the region to pay Jizya that was the poll tax imposed on infidels in the Arab Empire. Furthermore, one of the accords of the peace treaty concluded between the Arab commander Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman and the Sassanid marzban or governor of Adurbadagan was that the Arabs were to protect the locals against the Kurds of *Balāsagān* and the Sabalan mountains. Later, the name of *Balāsagān* rarely appears in classical Arabic chronicles and appears to be replaced with Mugan. *Balāsagān* notably appears in the work of the 10th century Arab traveler Abu Dulaf al-Yanbu'i, who in his *al-Risala al-thania*, reported his journey in the region.

Strabo in Book II of his geography quoted by MacKenzie (1998) gave one of the earliest accounts of the region and mentioned the kingdom of Atropatene that incorporated *Balāškān*. Adontz (1970), quoting the Arab historian Ebn Kordabeh, mentioned that the king of *Balāsagān* (*Balāsājān Šāh*) among the dynasts received the title of king from Emperor Ardashir. This would indicate that the king of *Balāsagān* had made an act of submission and allegiance to Emperor Ardashir (or to Emperor Shahpur), of whom he became, by the same act,

a vassal. According to Shahpur's rock inscription, most of Transcaucasia was included in his empire, and in the revised inscription made by Kerdir at the same site, it is also proudly mentioned that—

“the land of Armenia, Georgia, Albania, and Balāśagān, up to the Gate of the Albanians, Shahpur, the king of kings, with his horses and men pillaged, burned, and devastated” (Frye, 1963).

As recorded by Wiesehofer ((2006) and Schmitt (2000), Shahpur listed the provinces in the inscription of Ka'ba-ay Zardusht as follows:

“And I [Shahpur I] possess the lands [provinces: Greek ethne]: Fars [Persis], Pahlav [Parthia], Huzestan [Khuzistan], Meshan [Maishan, Mesene], Asorestan [Mesopotamia], Nod-Ardakhshiragan [Adiabene], Arbayestan [Arabia], Adurbadagan [Atropatene], Armen [Armenia], Virozan [Iberia], Segan [Machelonia], Arran [Albania], Balāśagān up to the Caucasus and the ‘gate of the Alans’ and all of Padishkwar[gar] the entire Elburz chain = Tabaristan and Gelan, Mad [Media], Gurgan [Hyrcania], Marv [Margiana], Harey [Aria], and all of Abarshahr [all the upper (=eastern, Parthian) provinces], Kerman [Kerman], Sakastan, Turgistan, Makuran, Pardan [Paradene], Hind [Sind] and Kushanshahr, all the way to Pashkibur [Peshavar?] and the borders of Kashgaria, Sogdia and Chach [Tashken] and the sea-coast Mazonshahr [Oman].”

MacKenzie (1998) observed that Kerdir, the high priest of Emperor Shahpur I, at Naqsh-e Rostam added an edited list of

the countries ruled by the king of kings. These editions by Kerdir are preserved in the Greek and Parthian versions among the trilingual inscriptions. This list comprised of Pars (Persis), Pahlav (Parthia), Xuzestan (Susiane), Mesan (Mesene), Asrestan (Assyria), Nodsiragan (Adiabene), Adurbayagan (Atropatene), Spahan (Isfahan), Ray (Rhages), Kerman (Karmania), Sagestan (Sakastane), Gurgan (Hyrkania), Marw (Margiane), Harew (Areia), Abarsahr (Khurasan), Turestan (Turene), Makuran (Makuran), and Kusansahr ta Fraz o Paskabur (the Kushans country up to Peshawar), May (Media), Hind (India), and “on that side of the sea” Mazunsahr (Oman), and others, namely Arman (Armenia), Wiruzan Iberia (Georgia), Alan (Albania), and Balāśagān ta Fraz o Kaf Kof ud Alanan dar (Balāśagān up to the Caucasus and the Gate of the Alans). According to Frye (1963), in this inscription, the country of *Balāśagān* (*Balāśkān*) is mentioned independently of Albania in the listed provinces of the Sassanid Empire, could mean that at the time of its conquest by Emperor Shahpur I, it formed a sort of political entity, even if it was more or less subjected to the Kingdom of Albania.

There is also the mention of a kingdom of Sanesanan, whose king during the reign of Armenian king Khusrau II according to Thomas de Marga (1893), also ruled over other peoples, among whom figured the *Balāścik*. Having invaded Armenia, the army of this king was cut to pieces by the Armenians, and the survivors fell back toward the country of the *Balāścik*.

During AD 335–336, the Massagete King Sanesan occupied a part of *Balāśagān*, where he recruited troops, all the while recognizing, at least nominally, the suzerainty of the king of kings of Iran. At the beginning of the following century, a

Catholic missionary, Saint Mesrob, in the course of his evangelistic mission, preached in *Balāśagān* and mentioned that the country belonged to Albania. Movses (1961), deliberating on the subject, observed that this situation could be explained by a kind of dependence (vassalage) of *Balāśagān* with Albania.

Elise, a fifth-century author of the history of Vardan and the Armenian War, furnished a detailed account of the Armenian rebellion against Sassanid Emperor Yazdgerd II in AD 450. This rebellion was prompted by his persecution of people of the Christian faith. *Balāśagān* is also mentioned in connection with the revolt of the Armenians against the Persians (Thomson, 1982). Thus, in a battle that took place near the Lop‘nas River, some Armenian lords attacked the king of *Balāśagān* and his troops. The context leaves no doubt that the forces of *Balāśagān* were, at that time, fighting on the side of the Persians.

According to Thomas de Marga (1893), in the year AD 800, the bishop Eliya, appointed to preach the gospel in that country, which was no longer called *Balāśagān*, found there a population given to the worship of a god by the name of Yazd who resided in an oak tree called “king of the forest”; the bushes that surrounded this tree were called “children of Yazd.” The local population claimed to have received this god from their ancestors. In Pahlavi, Yazd is the ordinary term denoting God. Thomas de Marga (1893) observed that the cult that Bishop Eliya had to combat was manifestly a borrowing from Zoroastrianism and amalgamated with a very different indigenous cult of the sacred trees.

From the ancient Persian narratives, the presence of the Baloch in the region, which was known as *Balāsagān*, can be observed from the accounts of the protracted conflict between Kai Khusrau and Afrasiab. It has been established from the *Shahnama* that the Baloch were under the command of General *Aśkāś* during this period. General *Aśkāś*, according to various accounts from *Shahnama* and from other historical accounts of Iran at that time, was deputed to make war on the Turanian territory of Khwarezm. Khwarezm is adjacent to the region, which was known, at that time, as *Balāsagān*. While listing the warriors of Kai Khusrau, Firdausi mentioned the Baloch under the command of General *Aśkāś* as follows:

“Next, after Gustaham, came the shrewd Aśkāś, endowed with prudent heart and ready brain. His troop was from the wanderers of the Koch and Baloch with exalted cockscomb crests and very rams to fight. No one had seen their backs in battle or one of their fingers bare of armor. Their banner was a Pard with claws projecting. Aśkāś felicitated Kai Khusrau at large upon the happy turn of fortune (Shahnama-e-Firdausi, 1908, pp. 33–34).”

The neighboring people of the Baloch in Balāsagān

Were the Baloch only inhabitants of the region known as *Balāsagān*, or were there others? It is most probable that the Baloch were not the only people living in *Balāsagān* taking into account the continuous migration and alliance formations of different tribes in that period of history. According to historical accounts of the time, the Baloch had been living in *Balāsagān* with other tribes including Cyrtii (Kurds), Cadusii, Caspians, and Mardis.

Descriptions of predatory tribes in the region can be found in the works of writers dealing with the ancient history of Iran. Arrian (1958) mentioned many mountain-dwelling and predatory tribes living in the region in or around *Balāśagān*. Strabo (1985), mentioned the Cossaei and the Paraetaceni, who bordered on Assyria and Media, respectively. The Cossaei was possibly the remains of the ancient Kassites. The Paraetaceni occupied the mountains of northern Persia. Strabo (1895) mentioned the four predatory peoples who were not the subject of the Persian Empire and received “tributes” from the king, in consideration for road passage. This may be tantamount to modern-day “protection money.” These were semi-independent or “not subject” nations, meaning, they were not in direct control of the empires of the day. Arrian (1958) pointed out that the two sides, that is, the emperor and the tribes of that region, presumably, tried to maintain a standing agreement on this. They lived their independent life, provided they protected the trade routes running through Persia and Armenia or Greece. In return, they received a pledge of non-interference and some kind of subsidy from the emperor. Arrian explicitly mentioned that the Cossaei people received “gifts” from the emperor for the protection of Assyria–Ecbatana road in 317 BC. Accordingly, the Greek General Antigonus had been quoted regretting not consenting to gift-giving to these tribes on his way from Susa to Ecbatana and suffered unwarranted difficulties while passing through their land.

Strabo (1958) described Cadusii as an Iranian tribe settled between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea on the southwestern shores of the Caspian Sea and south of the Araxes River (Aras)) between the Albani in the north and the Mardi in the east, that

is, in the mountainous northern part of Media around the Parachoatras Range. It is mentioned, together with the Gelae, Amardi, Vitii, Anariacae, and others. Strabo characterized Cardusii as numerous, migratory, and predatory people. Strabo and Arrian both agree on Cardusii being excellent javelin throwers and foot soldiers, and most warlike.

Caspians were ancient people, dwelling along the southwestern shore of the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea, the Caspian Mountain, and the Caspian Gates were all named after these people. The Caspians have even been identified by some scholars with the Kassites (Herzfeld, 1968). Herodotus, Strabo, and other classical authors mentioned the Caspian and grouped them with other inhabitants of the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, like the Amardi, Anariacae, Cadusii, Albani, and Vitii, and their land is said to be a part of Albania. Whether they belonged to the Median Empire or not is unclear. But according to Herodotus (Cook, 1983), they were included in the eleventh Satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire under Darius I. The Mardi nomads were another group of tribes named among the four predatory mountain peoples of the region where the *Balāścik* were living.

Kurds and the Baloch

The Cyrtii or Cyrtians, ancestors of the Kurds and Lurs, were also mentioned as the inhabitants of *Balāśagān* or living around *Balāśagān*. They may already have been well distributed in the Zagros range and spreading from Persia into Media, though not yet as far as Gordyene above the upper Tigris or Azerbaijan (Media Atropatene). Strabo (1958) mentioned Cyrtians as a

tribe dwelling mainly in the mountains of Atropatenian Media together with the Cadusii, Amardi (Mardi), Tapyri, and others.

The Kurds have been living in the Kurdish region and Zagros area since the Semitic conquest of Assyria. They are said to have created a permanent nuisance for the weak rulers of Assyria by organizing raids on the Tigris mainland. The period of their migration from the Caspian region maybe a few centuries earlier than the Baloch who followed at a later period; but instead of going to their people in Zagros mountainous region, outskirts of Mesopotamia, some of them headed towards the east while the majority remained in the western Caspian region.

In a Sumerian inscription dated 2000 B.C, a country known as Kardala is mentioned; and later the Assyrian King, Tiglath Pileser, (circa 745-724 B.C.) appears to have fought a tribe referred to as Kur-ti-e. Xenophon (circa 434-355 B.C.) also speaks of Kardukai; a mountain-folk who harassed his march towards the sea. Some archaeological evidence tends to show a Kurdish kingdom that flourished in the second millennium B.C on the borders of the Semitic empire in Babylonia. In a later period, the Kurd's cavalry served as the vanguard of Cyrus' army in capturing Babylonia in 539 B.C.

Kurds and the Baloch were living in *Balāsagān* in ancient times. The Baloch and Kurds must have been from the same stock as they shared linguistic, cultural, and mythological traditions. It has been established that Kurdish and Balochi belonged to the same northwestern group of Iranian languages. It has been postulated that in ancient times, there was a Proto-

Indo-Iranian language that could have been the mother tongue of those two peoples.

Conclusion

From the deciphering of rock inscriptions of ancient Persian rulers, it is now possible to locate the original homeland of the Baloch. After they migrated from Central Asia, the ancient Baloch settled in *Balāśagān* as *Balāścik* during the Achaemenid and Sassanid eras. It is still debatable whether *Balāśagān* got its name after the settlement of the *Balāścik* tribes there or the *Balāścik* people got their name after the region of *Balāśagān*. However, it has been established that *Balāścik* were living in *Balāśagān* with other tribes like *Cyrtii* (Kurds), *Cadusii*, *Caspian*, and *Mardis* until the last decades of the Sassanid power in Iran.

Figure 2: Map of Sassanid Empire locating Balāsagān

Source:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=map+of+sassanid+empire>



Chapter Three: **Dispersion of the ancient Baloch from** **Balāškān/Balāśagān**

Introduction

Balāśagān/Balāškān- the original abode of the ancient Baloch was a region that was the meeting point of the great powers of that era. The people living there were facing the consequences of a protracted war of attrition between the Greek, Romans, and the Persian superpowers. The region was continuously facing turmoil and was a battleground for Greek and Roman armies in their quest for gaining dominance in the Iranian Plateau and the Persian armies that were engaged in countering their incursions. The mention of *Balāścik* as an ethnic group in the northwestern Caspian region and *Balāśagān* itself seized to exist in ancient historical chronicles during the 7th century. What happened to the people called *Balāścik* and what happened to the region named *Balāśagān*? It appears that historical events caused the ouster of the *Balāścik* from the region and that might cause the renaming of the region. Before discussing the impacts of the superpower rivalry on the Baloch or *Balāścik*, it is imperative to describe various powers in that time.

The Persians

The term Persian relates to the people of Persis, an ancient region bounded on the west by Tigris and the south by the

Persian Gulf; on the north, it was separated from the Caspian Sea by the Alborz Mountains and in the east, from Sistan by the great deserts of *Dasht ay Kavir* and *Dasht ay Lut*. Originally nomadic pastoralist Persians were called Parsa, and their country was named after them as Parsua (Herodotus, 1996). Herodotus listed ten groups of Persian tribes, both settled and unsettled. Persians were Indo-Iranians, and their language was Persian (Farsi) a member of the greater Indo-European linguistic family. According to Rawlinson (1901), the first known written record of the term Persian is from Assyrian inscriptions of the ninth century BC, which mentioned both Parsuash and Parsua. Parsuash was first located to the south and west of Lake Uremia. Under the Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III, the Parsuash region was in the central Zagros, and under Sanherib (691 BC), they were located near the Bakhtiari Mountains (Bosworth, 1977). Starting around 550 BC, the ancient Persians spread their language and culture to other parts of the Iranian Plateau. Persians also interacted with other ancient civilizations in Europe and Africa. Great Persian kings Darius and Xerxes proclaimed themselves “Iranian” and “of Iranian stock,” Ariya and Ariyachica, respectively. During the Sassanid period, the Persian identity reached its height in every respect. It dominated the Iranian Plateau politically, religiously, culturally, and even linguistically (Ruzicka, 1992). Old Persian was the language of the Achaemenid Empire while Middle Persian, which is the immediate ancestor of Modern Farsi (Persian) and a variety of other Iranian dialects, became the

official language of the Sassanid Empire. Zoroastrianism was the religion of the rulers of the Achaemenid and Sassanid empires; however, the presence of Mithraism and the worship of goddess Anahita also remained strong during Achaemenid times (Herzfeld, 1968). During the Sassanid period, Zoroastrianism was proclaimed as the official religion of the empire.

The powerful empires of Achaemenid (550–330 BC) and Sassanid (AD 226–651) dynasties are supposed to be the Persian-dominated powers in Iranian history.

The Achaemenids

The first of the great Persian empires was the Achaemenid Empire, founded by the descendants of Achaemenes (*Haxāmaniš*) in the 7th century BC. Achaemenid clan was part of the Persian tribe of Pasargadae. They came into prominence after the collapse of the Median Empire. Cyrus the Great (Kourosh) was the greatest of the emperors and Xerxis 1 (Khashayarshaa) expanded the empire into Eastern Europe, Egypt, and Sindh. Cambyses (Kambiz or Kambujieh), Darius (Daryush), Artaxerxes (Ardeshir), and Arses (Arshak) were other famous emperors of the Achaemenid dynasty. They were also known as the kings of Anshan as Achaemenids were originally ruling the Median province of Anshan.

The empire was multicultural. It was administratively divided into 26 dahyus (satrapies or provinces) where the satraps ruled in the name of the emperor. During the reign of Artaxerxes I, Zoroastrianism became the de facto religion of the empire. Achaemenid rulers in their bid to expand their empire were constantly engaged in wars against the Greeks and Mesopotamian powers. Achaemenid emperor Artaxerxes II built the great ancient city of Persepolis as the winter capital of the empire.

Apart from the expansion of the empire in all directions, the adoption of Zoroastrianism as the religion of the ruling clan and the civil war during the reign of Darius I were important events during the Achaemenid rule in Iran. Darius had his hands full dealing with large-scale rebellion which broke out throughout the empire. On his rock inscriptions, he boasted of killing nine rebel kings in one year. Mass slaughter of rebellious ethnic groups was carried out. It has also been reported but could not be substantiated that people who opposed the declaration of Zoroastrianism as the official religion of the empire were also suppressed violently.

With the rise of the Macedonian kingdom, the fall of the Achaemenid Empire began. After uniting the Macedonians and Greeks, Alexander, the son of the murdered Macedonian king Philip, gathered an army and invaded Persia in 334 BC. In 334 BC, the Achaemenid Empire finally collapsed when Alexander (became known as Alexander the Great), occupied Persepolis

in 330 BC. After the occupation of Ecbatana, the summer capital of the empire, the last Achaemenid emperor Darius III was murdered.

The Sassanid Empire

The Sassanid Dynasty ruled Iran from AD 224 to 651 by replacing the Parthian. The first powerful Sassanid ruler Ardashir I, after dealing with many rebellions, consolidated his power and extended the empire to the limits of the Achaemenid times. The Sassanid Empire encompassed all of today's Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Dagestan), southwestern Central Asia, part of Turkey, certain coastal parts of the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf area, and areas of southwestern Pakistan, sometimes even stretching into Sindh (Frye, 1983). Contrary to the confederacy during the Parthian rule, the Sassanid Empire was a centralized government. The local kings and governors in the provinces reported directly to the royal court. The majority of them were among the members of the Sassanid family.

The Sassanid Empire played a major role in developing a distinct Persian nationalism, which even survived the Islamic conquest and mass conversion of Persians to Islam. The Sassanid saw themselves as successors of the Achaemenid after the Hellenistic and Parthian interlude and believed that it was their destiny to restore the greatness of Persia. The national

pride, religious zeal, and imperial ambitions of Sassanid rulers brought Persia into numerous conflicts not only with the Roman Empire but also with various ethnic and religious entities within the Empire (Herzfeld, 1968). Their religious zeal fuelled upheavals and ethnoreligious disputes in the empire and caused genocide and deportation of many tribes and ethnic groups. The bloody conflict which culminated in the genocide of the Baloch, although portrayed as an administrative issue by the Persian historians like Firdausi of *Shahnama*; by all accounts, it was religious or sectarian. The religious aspects of the Sassanid-Baloch conflict cannot be ruled out taking into consideration the religious fanaticism of some of the Sassanid emperors like Shahpur and Khusrau I.

The religion of the Sassanid Empire was Zoroastrianism. Sassanid religious policies contributed to the flourishing of numerous religious reform movements, the most important were Manichean and Mazdakian religious doctrines. Alongside Zoroastrianism, other religions, primarily Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism, also existed in the Sassanid Empire but in a relatively subordinate position to the official Zoroastrian religion (David, 1996). Middle Persian was the language of the Sassanid Empire.

The list of Sassanid emperors includes Ardashir I (Ardeshir Papakan), Varhran (Bahram), Narseh (Nersi), Peroz (Piruz or Firuz), Shapur II (Shapur Zolaktaf), Ardashir II (Ardeshir Nikukar), Yazdgard I (Yazdgerd Bezehkar). Varhran V

(Bahram Gur), Valkash (Belash), Zamasp (Jamasb), Kavad (Ghobad), Khusrau I (Khusrau Anushiravan), Khusro II (Khusro Parviz), Kabad II (Shiruyeh), Buran (Puran doght), Vistahm (Gashtasb) and Yazdgerd II.

The might of the Sassanid Empire was weakened by the incursion of Hephthalite Turks in the east and the protracted wars in the west with the Romans. However, it lasted until the Arabs defeated Yazdgerd III in the seventh century. With this centuries of Persian supremacy on the Iranian Plateau was replaced by the Arabs under the banner of the new religion of Islam.

The Seleucid Empire

The Achaemenid empire was replaced by the Seleucid Empire that ruled from 312 BC to 63 BC. The Macedonian prince who became famous in history as Alexander the Great, conquered Iran and destroyed the mighty Achaemenid Empire. The Greeks ruined large cities including the great city of Persepolis. They also demolished temples, palaces, and mausoleums such as the tomb of Cyrus the Great. They also carried out a mass slaughter of the Zoroastrian religious elite.

Alexander the Great died young without an adult heir. This prompted his generals to jostle for power resulting in the division of the vast empire. One of his generals, Nicator Seleucus, founded its empire in 312 BC after the civil war. This

empire kept a vast amalgam of nations from Phrygia to the Indus as subjects. At its peak, Anatolia, Levant, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Cappadocia, Persia, Parthia, Bactria, Arabia, Tapouria, Sogdia, Arachosia, Punjab (India), Persian Gulf, and Hyrcania were part of the Seleucid Empire (Bellinger, 1949).

The fall of the Seleucid Empire began during the third century BC with its loss of control over large territories both in the west and in the east. By the middle of the third century, Parthia, Bactria, and Sogdia/Sogdiana had gained their independence. As observed by Bellinger (1949), the decline of the Seleucid Empire accelerated after the death of Antiochus IV, with the loss of Commagene in Syria and of Judea in Palestine. By 141 BC, all lands east of the Euphrates were gone and attempts at revival by Demetrius II and Antiochus VII could not halt the rapid disintegration of the empire.

Rawlinson (1901) believed that the gradual fall of the Seleucid Empire began when, in the West, Rome became too powerful to resist, and in the East, the Parni founded the Parthian Empire truncating the empire. In AD 64, the Roman general Pompey ended the Seleucid Kingdom in the West, followed by the Parthian rise to power over the Seleucid countries in the East.

Shipley (2000) observed that the Seleucid Empire was a major center of Hellenistic culture, which maintained the pre-eminence of Greek customs and manners over the indigenous cultures of the Middle East and part of Central Asia. Greeks

and Macedonians were in contact with numerous people across the continents of Asia and Europe and were also afflicted with the cultural influences of Asia. Austin (2003) posited that despite the period being commonly known as the Hellenistic era, cultural exchange traveled in both directions during this time; Greek settlers not only influenced their non-Greek neighbors, culturally and otherwise but also the Greek culture was forever changed as well by foreign influences.

Some of the famous names who ruled the empire after Nicator are Antiochus, Demetrius, and Alexander.

The Parthians (Aśkāni)

Seleucid rule was replaced in Iran and India by Parthian tribes who, under the leadership of Parni chiefs, established one of the powerful empires in the region that existed for nearly five hundred years.

Ancient Parthia roughly corresponded to the western half of the Khurasan region in northeastern Iran. The Kopet Dag mountain range in the north and the *Das̄t* ay Kavir desert in the south formed its borders. It bordered Media on the west, Hyrcania on the northwest, Margiana on the northeast, and Aria on the southeast. Herodotus spoke of Parthians as a people subject to the Persian Achaemenid Empire during the reign of Darius. Their designated Dahyus or satrapy was the sixteenth, which also comprised the Arians, the Sogdians, and the Chorasmiens.

Rice (1957) posited that the Parthians sprang from the admixture of Scythians and Dahais and that their original home was the tract of steppe lying between the Caspian and the Sea of Aral. Classical historians Strabo, Justin, and Arrian believed that Parthians belong to the Scythic Group of tribes assuming they were of Turanian stock. However, Rawlinson (1873) observed that such conclusions could not safely be drawn from the mere fact that the ancient writers assert the Scythic character of the Parthians in the strongest terms. He observed that the term "Scythic" is not, strictly speaking, ethnical but designates a lifestyle rather than descent, customs rather than blood connections.

Parthians probably maintained their independence in Iran from the time of their settlement in the province of Parthia/Parthua—called after their name. They lost their sovereign status with the sudden arrival in their country of the great Persian conqueror, Cyrus the Great. However, they once again tried to regain their independence after his death. In 521 BC, during troubles that broke out upon the death of the Pseudo-Smerdis, Parthia revolted in conjunction with Hyrcania and several Median tribes, espousing the cause of the Median pretender who declaring himself a descendant of the old Median monarchs, set himself up as a rival to Darius (Rawlinson, 1873). Hytaspes, the father of Darius, held at this time the Parthian satrapy. In two battles within the limits of his province, he defeated the rebels, and after their second defeat, the Parthians made their

submission and once more acknowledged Darius for their sovereign.

After the disintegration of the Seleucid Empire in Iran, the Parthians rose to a supreme position in Iranian political history. Parni, a Parthian tribe of Central-Asian origin, established the Arsacid (*Aśkāni*) Dynasty and ruled a vast area of the Iranian Plateau, and went to war with Romans (Bivar, 1983, 2007). A Parthian family also established an Indo-Parthian Empire in the northwest of India. The Parthians ruled under a tribal confederacy where the king of kings was the supreme ruler while the vassal kings enjoyed autonomy. Famous among the Parthian kings were Arsaces (Arshak), Priapatios (Fri yapit), Phraates (Farhad), Mithradates (Mehrdad), Artabanus (Ardavan), Gotarzes (Gudarz), Sinatruces (Sandruk), Pacorus (Pakor), Tiridates (Tirdad), Vonones (Vanan), Vologases (Belash), Osroes (Khusro)

Parthian (Pahlavi/Pahlavanik) was the official court language spoken alongside Middle Persian, Aramaic, Greek, Babylonian, Sogdian, and other languages in the multilingual empire (Curtis, 2007). According to Boyce (1983), the Parthian language was a northwest Iranian language, related to the Median language. Sundermann (2004) believed that Middle Persian and Parthian were two languages so closely related that the speakers of one language would readily have understood what the other said. Parthian has been labeled the “prototype”

of north-western Iranian languages and Middle Persian as the representative of southwestern Iranian languages.

Bivar (1983), Brosius (2006), and Curtis (2007) observed that a typical Parthian outfit consisted of loose-fitting and many-folded trousers held by garters, and a diadem or band over his coiffed and bobbed hair, and the typical Parthian belted shirt (Kamis). Generally, both hair and beard were carefully braided or curled, but, sometimes, they only depended on long straight locks. The religion of the Parthians seems to be a very relaxed form of Zoroastrianism (Perikanian, 1983; Lukonin, 1983). Unvala (1925), noted that the sun, moon, and Venus also enjoyed a special place in the mythological beliefs of the Parthians.

The Sakas

The Sakas were a Scythian tribe or group of tribes. Indo-Scythians is a term used to refer to Sakas, who migrated into Bactria, Sogdia, Arachosia, Gandhara, Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, beginning from the middle of the second century BC to the fourth century CE.

After 178 BC, Yuezhi and Wusun people, who were displaced by the rising Xiongnu Empire, invaded the Sakas's homeland from the east. Under tremendous pressure, some of the Sakas forced their way over the Pamir to the border area of present-

day Afghanistan, Iran, and northwest India before 139 BC (Puri, 1994).

According to Colledge (1967), in Iran, Sakas became part of the army of Parthian king Farhad II who reigned from 127 to 138 BC. However, hostilities soon broke out between the Parthians and Sakas, in which Sakas went on the rampage in Parthian Empire as far as Mesopotamia. Farhad II was killed in a bloody battle between the Sakas and the Parthians. However, during the reign of Farhad's son Ardavan I, the Sakas were restricted to Sakastan (present-day Sistan) under the Parthian suzerainty. Sakas grabbed much of the Indus Basin from the Indo-Parthian and established a short-lived empire under King Mauves, which existed until about AD 45. As observed by Colledge (1967), they were probably still under Parthian sovereignty, since there are no written records that distinguish the Parthians and the Sakas. Yu (1998) posited that from AD 79 after the Kushans conquered the Indo-Parthian Empire, the Sakas were once again ousted by the Kushans and forced to wander further into Central India.

The Hephthalites

The group of Turkic tribes called Hephthalites appeared over the Iranian political horizons during the Sassanid period. These were Huns with fair complexions and received the name of White Huns. It is assumed that the Hephthalites constituted a second Hunnish wave that entered Bactria early in the fifth

century CE and seemed to have driven the earlier Huns (Kidarites) into India.

McGovern (1965) observed that Hephthalites or the White Huns were in constant conflict with Sassanid rulers. The Sassanid Emperor Peroz I (AD 457–484) launched three campaigns against them, all ending in disaster, and the Hephthalites exercised undisputed control over an extensive territory in Central Asia, Khurasan, northern and central regions of present-day Balochistan, and Afghanistan for a long time. Khusrau I (Anusherwan) between AD 558 and 561 finally was able to crush the Hephthalites in an epic battle near Bukhara, demarcating their territories along the line of the Oxus as mentioned by Firdausi in *Shahnama* (Firdausi, 1915). Although the power of the Hephthalites was destroyed in Transoxania, some of the Hephthalites chieftains exerted political powers in Afghanistan, northern and central regions of present-day Balochistan even at the time of Arab invasion of Iran (McGovern, 1965).

Before their final eclipse because of the Arab conquests in the region, around AD 510, a Hephthalites ruler, Toramana established his power over much of northern and western India. Succeeding rulers of the Hephthalites kingdom seem to have been based in Afghanistan, though it is uncertain whether it is in Kabul, Bamiyan, Gardez, or, most probably, Ghazni (Bivar, 2007). Many Hephthalites moved into present-day Sarawan and Jhalawan areas of Balochistan, where they became

absorbed into the Baloch national identity after the mass migration of the Baloch tribes beginning from the ninth century and lasting up to the fifteenth century. At the time of the Arab invasion of present-day Balochistan in the seventh century, the areas, which now comprised Jhalawan and Sarawan of Balochistan, were controlled by Hephthalites chiefs under the sovereignty of Sindh. As the Arab writers were familiar with the term Turan as the region of Turkic people, they also named the area as Turan after these Turkish tribes.

The Romans

After the decline of Greek power, Rome emerged as a major power in the Mediterranean and shaped the socio-political map of the world for nearly two millennia. Transformed from being a republic into an empire in the 6th century BC, after devastating civil wars, it became stable and prosperous beginning from the 31st century BC. It occupied large areas in Europe, Africa, and Western Asia and became the largest empire in the ancient world. In a later period, the empire of Rome was divided into Western and Eastern parts. It is said that the institutions and culture of Rome had a profound and lasting influence on the development of language, religion, art, architecture, philosophy, law, and forms of government not only in territories it controlled but their impact reached far beyond the Roman borders. After its adoption as the state religion of the empire, Christianity became one of the major religions of the world. From 376-382 BC, Rome fought a series of battles

against invading Goths. For many analysts, Gothic wars and declaring Christianity as the state religion were two main causes for the fall of Roman power. Political instability due to the expansion of the empire, division of the empire into two, reliance on mercenary armies, corruption, and unemployment were also quoted as the causative factors in the demise of the Roman Empire.

The Romans and Parthians came into conflict when they tried to grab territories out of a disintegrated Seleucid Empire. In 53 BC, the Parthians defeated a Roman attack under the command of Marcus Licinius Crassus on their province of Mesopotamia. Next year, the Parthians' attack on the Roman territory of Syria was repulsed by the Roman legions. In 40 BC, the Parthians invaded the Roman territory of Syria and advanced into Judea, overthrowing the Roman client and installing one of their own. However, after a few years, the Romans regained their lost territories in Asia minor, and their control of Syria and Judaea was restored. But the Parthians gained control of Armenia at the same time.

Roman-Parthian rivalry over control and influence in Armenia continued unabated for the next several decades. Emperor Trajan invaded Armenia and Mesopotamia during 114-115 AD and annexed them as Roman provinces. He captured the Parthian capital, Ctesiphon. However, Roman control over the Parthian regions was a temporary affair and they were forced to withdraw into Syria. Between 161 and 163 AD, Armenia was

occupied by Parthians and Romans alternatively. The Romans and Parthians at the same time fought inconclusive wars for the control of Mesopotamia.

After a period of relative peace the new power in the Iranian Plateau, the Sassanids who replaced Parthians, tried to restore the Persian might on the territories once included in the Achaemenid Empire. This caused the eruption of hostilities between Romans and Persians. Armenia, Syria, and Mesopotamia again became battlegrounds of the two superpowers. In one of the battles, Roman Emperor Valerian was captured by the Persians. In 298 AD, Romans defeated Persian emperor Narseh at the Battle of Satala and sacked the Sassanid capital Ctesiphon. For many years, Mesopotamia and Armenia went under the control of the Romans. The peace and war situation between the Romans and the Sassanids continued until the 7th century. Both superpowers became exhausted financially and physically. This caused their defeat in the hands of Arab Bedouins. The Romans were forced to withdraw from Syria and Judea.

Out of Balāśagān

During the late period of Sassanid rule and early Islamic era, there was no mention of any presence of the *Balāścik* or the Baloch in *Balāśagān*. While there is mention of some Kurdish tribes in that region by Arab historians, there is no mentioning of what was happening to the ancient Baloch. However, during

the decaying years of the Sassanid Empire and from the beginning of the Arab invasion of Iran, one can observe the presence of the Baloch in Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, Sistan, Makuran, and Turan. One can frame a scenario of the Baloch wanderings from *Balāśagān* to their present-day abode by correlating various historical happenings during the Achaemenid, Greek, Parthian, and Sassanid periods. Two phenomena could have been responsible for the exodus of the Baloch from *Balāśagān*: first would be a voluntary migration of the Baloch as a typical phenomenon of nomadic tribes, and the second could be forced migrations and resettlements of the Baloch by superior powers of the day. Or, both phenomena could have been happening at the same time.

Voluntary Migrations

The Baloch were pastoralist nomads, dependent upon domesticated animal husbandry—their economy was based on the herds and their products. Like other pastoralist nomads, they had routine migrations along established routes between focal grazing areas. The voluntary migrations of nomadic Baloch tribes in that sense could have been influenced by maintaining equilibrium between the resources of the natural environment and the economic needs of their people. Snow-covered meadows and the grasslands of Zagros and Alborz would have been unable to sustain a large number of grazing flocks in winter (Le Strange, 1905). Here, grazing would have been restricted to a few months of late spring, summer, and

early fall during which the regions were ideal pastures and grazing grounds for sheep and goats. For the Baloch as a mobile nomadic group, however, it might have been important to find a combination of summer mountain pastures and winter grazing grounds to make animal husbandry economically viable. The great desert, the vast unsettled lands of Sistan, the planes around Kuh ay Bazman and Kuh ay Taftan, the mountain ranges of Makuran and Kerman, and the valleys of Turan might have provided formidable alternative pasturelands. These areas were mostly semiarid natural steppes with little agricultural but considerable pastoral potentials and would have been ideal environments for winter pastures.

In the above-mentioned context, in search of new grazing lands, the Baloch tribes might have gone as far as the boundaries of modern Balochistan. The Arab historian, Maqaddesi, quoted by Hansman (1961), noted the presence of the Balochi-speaking people in Punjgur a few decades after the conquest of Iran by the Arabs. He described Punjgur as the main town of Makuran, inhabited by Balochi-speaking people only nominally Muslim. Frye (1961) pointed out the presence and migration of the Baloch through *Dasht ay Lut* desert at different times. It is highly probable that during these migrations to greener pastures, some of the neighboring ethnic groups and, most probably, some of the Kurdish and Jat tribes accompanied the migrating Baloch tribes. This is apparent from the presence of some of the Kurdish tribes in Balochistan, which have been merged with the greater Baloch identity. It is interesting to still find many

Balochs in Kerman, southern Makuran, and around the *Baškarō* region known as Kertiki. They are, most probably, originated from the Cyrtii (Kerti) and migrated along with the *Balāścik* from *Balāśagān*. Probably, this admixture of Kurdish and the Baloch tribes in these areas compelled some researchers to believe that Koch and Baloch were Kurds and Baloch, whose presence was mentioned at the end of the Sassanid era in Kerman, Sistan, and Makuran (Le Strange, 1905; Markwart, 1931). In this context, the volunteer migration of some tribes among the Baloch or their neighboring and allied tribes toward the aforementioned areas might not have been only due to changing political conditions in *Balāśagān* but also due to economic conditions.

During the Baloch stay in *Balāśagān*, the Romans fought a series of wars against Parthians and Sassanids and one of the battlegrounds was the region surrounding *Balāśagān*. In the ensuing tug of war for supremacy between the two superpowers, towns, fortifications, and provinces were continually sacked, captured, destroyed, or traded loyalties between these powers. Neither of these warring sides had the logistical strength or manpower to maintain such lengthy campaigns far from their borders, and thus neither could advance too far without risking stretching its frontiers being too thin, nevertheless, from time to time, both sides did make conquests beyond their border. One can easily imagine the plight of people living in these disturbed border regions of warring powers. The *Balāścik* probably thought it better to

vacate the region rather than to be minced under the hooves of the horses of the great armies marching through their land.

Tribes or groups of tribes on their routine migratory sojourns to remote areas far from their original abode may opt to settle permanently in these new areas. The presence of some of the Baloch tribes in Sistan, Kerman, Makuran, and Turan during Sassanid or pre-Sassanid times can be explained in this manner.

Deportations and resettlements

Deportation which is the expulsion of a person or a group of people from their residence—had been a practice of various Iranian and other empires. Accounts of deportations of the whole population of Hatra and Dura-Europos had been well documented by ancient writers like Strabo, Arrian, and Herodotus. The Assyrian king Tiglathpileser III deported 65,000 Medes, replacing them with Aramaeans. In ancient chronicles, there is a graphic description of three deportations of Jews to Babylon in 597 BC, 587 BC, and 582 BC. In Iran, during the Median, Parthian, and Sassanid era, deportation was a common practice implemented to neutralize the unruly population. Cyrus the Great in 547 BC defeated the Lydians in the Battle of Sardis, and a part of the population appears to have been deported to Nippur in Babylonia. Although there were several mass deportations under the Achaemenids, reports of such events during the Parthian period are rare. However, during 176–171, the Parthian king of kings Phraates I settled

the Mards in Charax and, later, deported them to the northeastern borders of the Parthian Empire (Rawlinson, 1873). It is noteworthy that *Balāścik* were living side by side with Mardis and other ethnic groups in *Balāśagān* at that time. During the Sassanid period, the peoples of the provinces along the eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire had endured several deportations. Sassanid Emperor Shahpur I (in his rock inscriptions) boasted about the people from the Roman Empire whom he had carried off as booty and settled in various parts of his empire such as Persis, Parthia, Khuzestan, Asoristan, and in other provinces (Wiesehofer, 2006). The mention of pillaging and burning of a whole region, including *Balāśagān* by Sassanid Emperor Shahpur as mentioned in the revised rock inscription of Kerdir is noteworthy in the context of disappearance of the *Balāścik* from that region.

It is difficult to learn exactly from limited sources about the extent of deportation of peoples within the Sassanid Empire; however, some accounts of persecutions of Christians and other religious sects by the Sassanid emperors have been presented by various authors. During AD 609, the Sassanid deported the whole population of conquered Edessa to Sistan and Khurasan (Frye, 1984). Theophanes (1997) reported the deportation of many thousands from Caesarea in Cappadocia. According to Theophanes (1997), after Armenia and Georgia came under Sassanid control in the reign of Emperor Shahpur II, the cities of Artashat, Valarshapat, Eruandashat, Zarehawan, Zarishat,

Van, and Nakjavan were taken, and their populations deported. *Balāśagān* was situated in that region.

Resettlements of tribes and people within the Sassanid Empire during the reign of Khusrau I (AD 531–579) have been frequently mentioned in historical accounts (Pourshariati, 2008). The Arab historians writing on Persian history had mentioned the resettlement of the people of the Barez Mountains in different parts of the Sassanid Empire. They also recorded the resettlement of thousands of people belonging to Abkhaz, Banjar, Balanjar, and Alans in Azerbaijan and neighboring regions. The people identified by Baladhuri in *Fotuh al Baladan* as *Siasijunn* or *Siasijiya* were resettled in Emperor Khusrow's newly built cities of Saberan, Masqat, Darband, Dabil, and Nakjavan and the castles of Ways, Kelab, and Sahyunis.

Tribes and ethnic groups described by ancient writers, including Strabo, as nomads, migrants, and predatory brigands included Cyrtians, Cadusii, Mardis, Caspians, and others (among these "others," it is certain that the *Balāścik* were the main component). They seem to have had continual troubles with the Achaemenid, Greek, Parthians, and Sassanid central governments. It appears that as they were located on the important mountain passes along the trade routes joining Europe and Persia, the governments or powers of the time would give them "unofficial" authority of taking taxes from the caravans for their "safety." Conflicts and troubles are inevitable

when two groups holding unequal power bases try to make standstill arrangements. Excesses from either side could ignite troubles and taking into account the known independent behaviors of the people of *Balāśagān* and the surrounding regions, minor disagreements certainly could have caused violent battles with much bloodshed, most probably, ending up with deportations and forced migrations of the defeated populations.

According to Strabo, Arrian, and Herodotus, these predatory tribes mentioned above were living within the powerful empires of the period in a “love and hate” relationship (Herzfeld, 1968). When their relationship was normal, they fought for or alongside the Achaemenids, the Greeks, the Parthians, and the Sassanids while, during times of hostilities, they fought violent battles against them and, sometimes, faced the brunt of the powerful armies and often ended up with total rout and faced resulting genocide and deportations. The Achaemenids tried to pacify these predatory tribes with gift-giving as mentioned earlier; however, there is a description of a revolt about 405 BC, around the end of Emperor Darius II’s reign (Cook, 1983). There is evidence of an expedition against the Cadusii by the Sassanid Emperor Ardsher II during the great revolts around 380 BC; this expedition was a fiasco, and only diplomatic negotiations by the Satrap Tiribazus made a retreat possible, with the king himself marching away on foot (Olmstead, 1948). Sassanid Emperor Darius III is said to have been made satrap of Armenia after having defeated a rebellious

Cadusian in one-on-one combat during an expedition against that tribe in the first years of Ardsher III's reign. Alexander the Great refused to follow the Achaemenid *modus vivendi* with the mountain tribes, that is, he did not accept the notion of "not subject," and by not giving "gifts" to these tribes, he chose to battle for their complete submission. One can easily imagine the disastrous consequences of a fight of these tribes with the mighty forces of the Macedonian conqueror.

The main reason for conflicts between the Baloch (and other ethnic groups in the region mentioned earlier) with the powerful empires, according to ancient historians of Iran and Greek, was the disruption of the trade due to the predatory activities of these tribes. Schoff (1914) and Cook (1983) observed that one of the important routes for trade caravans was the Royal Road, which stretched for hundreds of miles from Sardis in Asia Minor through Mesopotamia and down the Tigris to Susa. Other roads connected Babylon with Ecbatana, Bactria, and the borders of India. Persia was also linked with the Indus valley by a road through Makuran (Cook, 1983). In the west, a road ran from the Gulf of Issus through Asia Minor to Sinope. Another important commercial route ran south from Sardis to the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor and thence to Tarsus, where it was connected with a road through the Cilician Gates and north to the Black Sea. The northern shore of the Black Sea was connected by road with Siberia via the southern Russian steppes and the Urals (Rostovtzeff, 1963). As observed by Lukonin (1988), securing these roads from robbers and other

disruptions was important for the finances of the Persian Empire and stable relations with other powers in Asia and Europe.

Apart from the punitive nature of resettlements, allied tribes and peoples were also settled to frontier regions for military purposes to secure the border regions. Resettlement of allied tribes to change the demographic balance of a particular region might also be a kind of punitive action against the hostile tribes threatening the trade routes or the stability of the empire. In this context, the military purposes behind the resettlements within the empire were obvious. The resettlement of the Mards by the Parthians was intended to provide guards for the Caspian Gates. The settlement of Arab tribes in Bahrain and Kerman under Emperor Shahpur II was to bring hostile elements under control by dispersing them to remote areas.

Going through the detailed history of the Achaemenid Empire, it appears that earlier deportation of the Baloch might have occurred during the reign of Emperor Darius I. It has been mentioned in Iranian historical accounts that Kurds, Parthians, and many other ethnic groups rose against Darius, immediately after he captured the throne, by killing the so-called usurper. As the Baloch were in the same region where the opposition was built up against Darius I, it is most probable that the Baloch were among the people who were deported after the failure of the rebellion.

It is very interesting to note that despite the initial hostility between the Baloch and the Achaemenid Dynasty, the Baloch, on later occasions, also fought for the Persian kings of that dynasty. During Alexander's campaigns against Iran, to counter the Macedonian advance, the Baloch were mentioned as being part of the doomed Achaemenid Army (Shustheri, 1925). Between 558 and 530 BC, the Baloch was a part of the army of King Kaus (Kai Khusrau). The Baloch were part of the army headed by General *Aśkāś* that was under the overall command of the king's son, Siahwash.

. . . Then from his famous cavaliers, Kaous chose for him (Siahwash) twelve-thousand gallant warriors, while from the neighborhood of "Koch and Pars" he chose Baloch; and from the deserts of Saroch and warriors of Gilan, he chose for war twelve-thousand infantry and buckler men (Firdausi, 1908, p. 226).

On another occasion, when the king advanced to occupy Azerbaijan, Firdausi mentioned that the army of the king comprised of men of Gilan, Deylam, Baloch from the plains of Saroch, and the swordsmen of Koch.

Despite the evidence of Baloch being part of the Sassanid armies on many occasions, due to the high-handed policies of the Sassanid emperors, the Baloch never reconciled to the Persians. Disgust between the Persians and the Baloch is distinctly marked even to this day. The Baloch detest the

Persians almost as strongly as they are detested by them. Perhaps, this inherent distrust between the Baloch and the Persians was one of the reasons for the defection of some of the Baloch tribes to invading Arabs during the last days of the Sassanid Empire.

It appears that the Baloch faced major deportations during the reigns of Sassanid emperors Shahpur (AD 309–379) and Anusherwan (Khusrau I), AD 531–579). There is, however, no concrete documentary evidence, but circumstantial evidence suggests that deportation, migration, or movements of the Baloch from their original abode began long before their persecutions by the Sassanid. However, from the accounts (by Shahnama and other medieval documents) of the Baloch encounters with powerful Sassanid emperors, it is easy to discern that the bulk of the Baloch population or migration en masse may have occurred during the Sassanid period. It is quite understandable that after the brutal campaigns by Anusherwan who was one of the mightiest emperors of the Sassanid Dynasty, and his boasting of the genocide of the Baloch, the situation for the surviving Baloch was untenable at their original abode. It would have also been natural for the surviving Baloch to evacuate the region. Consequently, they migrated en masse and scattered in different far-flung areas of the empire to survive and gain some breathing space.

As mentioned earlier, from the little documentary pieces of evidence mentioning the Baloch in ancient historical accounts,

one can find that there was a “hate and love” relationship between the Baloch and various Iranian empires of the past. There is mention of the Baloch being part of armies of some of the reigning Achaemenid and Sassanid emperors. Firdausi dealt in detail with the relationship of the Baloch and the Sassanid Emperor Khusrau I (Anushirwan) in his famous book of kings (Shahnama) which itself was based on various ancient historical sources.

Firdausi (1915, pp. 241–243) narrated the campaign against the Baloch in one of his narrations:

*The Shah marched thence to Hindustan and sojourned there.
At his commandment, all folk came to him,
Came seeking to ingratiate themselves,
And for two miles beside the Indus bank,
Where horses, elephants, brocades, and coins.
The great men all with the honesty of heart
And loyalty appeared before the Shah,
Who questioned them in accordance to their rank.
With a jocund heart the Shah departed thence:
Troops, steeds, and elephants fulfilled the world.
He went his way, and tidings came to him:—
‘The world is wasted by the Baluchis,
Till from exceeding slaughter, pillaging
And harrying, the earth is overwhelmed,
But greater ruin cometh from Gelan,
And curses banish blessings.’*

*Then the heart of Anusherwan, the Shah, was sorrowful,
 And grief commingled with his joy. He said
 To the Iranians: "The Alans and Hind
 Were, in the terror of our scimitars, like silk.
 Now our realm is turned against us:
 Shall we hunt lions and forego the sheep?"*

*One said to him: "The garden hath no rose
 Without a thorn, O King! So too these marches,
 Are ever troublesome and treasure-wasting.
 As for Baloch the glorious Ardashir
 Tried it with all his veteran officers,
 But all his stratagems and artifices,
 His feints, his labors, arms, and fighting failed.
 And though the enterprise succeeded ill,
 He cloaked the failure even to himself."*

*This story of the thane enraged the Shah,
 Who went upon his way toward Baluch.
 Now when he drew near those lofty mountains,
 He went around them with his retinue,
 And his entire host encircled them about,
 And barred the passage e'en to wind and ant.
 The troops, like ants and locusts, occupied
 The mountain-outskirts to the sandy desert.
 A herald went his rounds about the host,
 Proclaiming from the mountains, caves, and plains:—
 "Whenever the Baluchis are seeking food,
 If they are warriors and carrying arms,
 However many or however few,*

Let not a single one of them escape.”
The troops, aware of the anger of the Shah,
Stopped every outlet with their horse and foot;
Few of the Baluchis or none survived.
No women, children, warriors were left.
All of them perished by the scimitar,
And all their evil doings had an end,
The world had quiet from their ravaging:
No Baluchi, seen or unseen, remained,
While on their mountains, so it came to pass,
The herds thenceforward strayed without a guard;
Alike on waste and lofty mountain-top,
The sheep required no shepherd. All the folk
Around thought nothing of past sufferings,
And looked on vale and mountain as their home.

Emperor Anusherwan did not follow the advice of one of his companions who forbade the king of kings not to undertake action against the Baloch as earlier Emperor Ardashir tried it and failed. According to Firdausi, peace prevailed upon the world with the annihilation of the Baloch. However, it appeared that some of the Baloch survived the genocide. It is most probable that the remaining uprooted Baloch scattered in various directions and settled in different regions of the empire out of sight and away from main administrative centers; or, perhaps, the remnants of the Baloch from *Balāśagān* may have been resettled in the remotest corners of the empire as was the norm of the Sassanid Empire in dealing with hostile elements.

On several other occasions, Khusrau I (Anusherwan) made several terrific marches against the tribes of the northern regions for religious and administrative reasons. Perhaps, due to continued disturbances, the Baloch, to avoid the turbulent situations, or to avoid being the direct target of later actions, might have abandoned their original homeland in the hilly regions and moved relentlessly toward central, southern, and eastern parts of the Iranian Empire.

The Baloch deportations and wanderings: An overview

The Baloch migrations or deportations from *Balāśagān*, most probably, took place in several waves and spanned over several centuries. As there is no documentary evidence of the Baloch dispersion from *Balāśagān*, it can only be a hypothesis, taking into account various historical events. The turbulent events and situations during the Achaemenid, Greek, Parthian and Sassanid Empires bear a direct relation with the disappearance of the Baloch from the Caspian region.

After the capture of the Achaemenid throne by Emperor Darius I (Xerxes I, 550–486 BC), rebellions broke throughout the empire. There were anti-Darius revolts in Persis, Media, Armenia, Margiana, and Parthia. The struggle between different rebel groups and the army of Darius resulted in the murder of hundreds of thousands of people, imprisonment of many others, and deportations of many tribes and ethnic groups. The Baloch were among the rebellious Medes,

Parthians, and others who were supporting the cause of Bardya from whom Darius had snatched the throne.

During the wars between Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) and Emperor Darius III (336–330 BC), the Baloch were allied with the last Achaemenid emperor. According to Shustheri (1925), Darius III, after much hesitation, assembled an army at Arbela to counter the army of invading Greeks. His cousin Besius was the commander, leading the horsemen from Balkh. Berzanthis was the commander of the Baloch forces, Okeshthra was the commander of the forces from Khuzistan, Maseus was the commander of the Syrian and Egyptian contingent, Ozbed was the commander of the Medes, and Phirthaphirna was leading the Sakas and forces from Tabaristan, Gurgan, and Khurasan. Obviously, as part of a losing side, the Baloch certainly got their share of punishment from the victorious Macedonian forces.

During the Parthian period (AD 247–224), the Baloch were allied with the Parthians. There was a protracted conflict in the region in that period. The country of *Balāsagān* was in the arena of the long-drawn-out hostilities between Armenia and Parthia, and one can easily imagine the problems of a pastoralist nomadic group like the Baloch in a situation of continued warfare to sustain economically, culturally, and physically. In this context, vacating the turbulent region by some of the vulnerable Baloch tribes is a strong possibility.

During AD 72–75, the Alans (who were related to northern Iranian-Sarmatian tribes) invaded Parthia through the Caucasus. The conflict lasted for more than a decade, and the tribes or ethnic entities living in conflict zones were certainly affected seriously. Soon after the Alan debacle, the conflict between Rome and Parthia gained momentum, engulfing the whole region in and around Armenia. This time also, *Balāsagān* was in the midst of the region where major battles were being fought.

The long tussle between Rome and Sassanid Iran, beginning from 92 BC and continuing up to the seventh century, brought much destruction to the region from the west of the Caspian Sea to the western fringes of Armenia. These devastating and bloody wars caused many economic difficulties and problems of physical survival to weak and vulnerable tribal and ethnic groups in the region.

Ancient Baloch was in constant confrontation with the major powers of the region in one way or the other. Sometimes they faced the genocide acts of superior powers while on many occasions they were reported to be participating in the war efforts of these empires. The Achaemenid and Sassanid emperors relocated many unfriendly ethnic groups and tribes in the remote areas of their empire to dilute the hostility against their rule and this phenomenon cannot be ignored in the total ouster of the Baloch tribes from *Balāsagān*. Many emperors also relocated friendly tribes in the border regions as the first

line of defense against the enemy forces. The Baloch were either expelled from the region of their initial abode in the Iranian Plateau or they migrated en masse under tremendous political and economic pressures. The relocation of some of the Balāścik by their allied Parthian rulers is also a possibility.

- Settlements of some of the Baloch in Makuran can be ascertained from the accounts of Kai Khusrau when he attacked and occupied Makuran. The Baloch forces under *Aśkāś* made the main part of the invading army, and General *Aśkāś* was made the governor of Makuran when the king marched away from Makuran. Some of the Baloch might probably have opted for settling permanently in the region.
- From the ancient Persian accounts and especially from *Shahnama* of Firdausi, we might conclude the strong possibility that after the revolt of the Medians and Parthians against Darius I (550–486 BC), the Baloch were among many rebel ethnic groups who were persecuted and deported from their homelands.
- Although there is no mention of deportation by the conquering Greeks when they occupied Iran, the region remained in turmoil after the death of Alexander. During the ensuing civil war among the Greeks and in a general state of anarchy where there was not a central control, persecution and deportations of vulnerable cannot be ruled out.
- The persecution of the Baloch in the reign of Khusrau I (Anushirwan, AD 531–579) is well documented. It was

claimed by Persian writers that the Baloch have been annihilated by the orders of Khusrau I; however, deportation of surviving but stubborn and hostile Baloch tribes to far-flung areas of the empire is a strong possibility.

- Baloch might probably have been caught in sectarian conflicts during the Sassanid period. The religious fanaticism of Shahpur II (AD 309-379) and Khusrau I (AD 531- 579) is a known fact of Iranian history. Ancient historians have graphically described his fight against the Christians of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Persian accounts also proudly described the persecution of various sects of Zoroastrian religion or among the worshippers of God Ahura Mazda. There is not much evidence, but it is most probable that the Baloch were the followers of the Mazdakian sects of the Zoroastrian religion. The fact cannot be denied that the persecution of the Baloch and many other ethnic groups by Emperors Shahpur II and Khusrau I included strong religious and sectarian elements.

- The genocide of the Baloch could not have been merely due to administrative realities as documented by the Persian writers, for acts of robbery by groups of bandits were a routine in that part of ancient Iran. However, it is too simplistic to believe that orders were given from the most powerful emperor of the world to annihilate a whole national entity for some acts of robbery. The tussle between the Mazdakite advocating the rights of the underprivileged class in Sassanid Persia and the orthodox priesthood representing the status quo cannot be ignored. It would have been quite natural of the Baloch nomads

to have been influenced by the Mazdakite doctrine of equality, equal distribution of pasturelands, and equal distribution of wealth. The possibility is that the Baloch were among the so-called heretics, whose annihilation was the prime objective of Emperor Khusrau I. The emperor was in line with the orthodox priesthood, who became able to convince him that the Mazdakites were a serious threat to the political, social, economic, and religious hegemony of the Sassanid Dynasty.

- From the evidence available, it is established that the Baloch were not among the main ethnic peoples inhabiting Sistan, Kerman, Makuran, and Turan during the last decades of the Sassanid Dynasty. Nevertheless, their presence in these regions at that time cannot be denied. Gankovsky (1971) observed that in the closing centuries before the Christian era and the first half of the first millennium AD, the population of present-day Balochistan belonged to three major ethnic groups: the Indo-Aryan in the southeastern part of the country, the Iranian in the eastern and northern areas, and the Dravidian, whose members seem to have inhabited mainly Central Balochistan. Among the Indo-Aryans and Iranians mentioned by Gankovsky, one can very well visualize the Baloch, the only people speaking an Aryan language who became visible in Balochistan in later history.

Baladhuri (1924) mentioned that in about AD 645, Caliph Usman sent Salman b. Rabi al Baheli to Arran, and after the surrender of Baylaqan, Barḍa‘a, and so on, he summoned the Kurds of *Balāsagān* to Islam and imposed the jizya (a tax that

Muslim rulers exerted from their non-Muslim subjects) on some of them. The mention of Kurds and the absence of any reference to the presence of *Balāścik* in *Balāśagān* by the Arab writers is noteworthy. If it is not simply an inadvertent omission on the part of the writer, then it may indicate that the *Balāścik* or the Baloch may have been removed from the area or they may have migrated en-masse from their original place from where they got their ethnic or national identity.

It can be safely assumed that the dispersion of the Baloch from *Balāśagān* toward the east ended with their arrival in *Dašt ay Lut*, Sistan, Kerman, Makuran, and Turan in different proportions and in different times. Frye (1961) suggested the Baloch migration through the northern part of the Central Desert, basing his assessment on the linguistic parallel between Balochi and the Bayabanic Persian dialects. Many regions of Kerman, Sistan, Makuran, and Turan have been inundated with migrating Baloch tribes by the time of the Arab conquest of Iran.

Arab historians and geographers have stated that after the initial defeat of Persians in Iraq, the Arabs were engaged in battles with large numbers of Koch o Baloch in the mountains of Kerman and eastern Persia (Bosworth, 1977). It has been established by Masudi (1841), Istakhri (1961), and Maqaddesi (1906) that during the seventh and eighth centuries, the Baloch were residing in Kerman, Khurasan, Sistan, and Makuran with other tribal and pastoralist communities. These authors

described a separate Baloch district in Kerman, and two districts in Sistan, which probably were the present Kharan and Chagai regions of Balochistan. Minorsky (1937) and Frye (1961) have established the presence of the Baloch in the Great Salt desert in an earlier period since they found strong traces of the Balochi language in the people living at the oases of the Great Desert. Although the present central Balochistan in Pakistan during the Sassanid period was called by Arab writers as Turan (Turgestan, Turkestan), indicating the presence of Turkish tribes (White Huns), the presence of the Baloch tribes in the region can easily be discerned from the historical accounts of Masudi, Estakhri, and Maqaddesi.

Conclusion

Balāsagān/Balāškān region was continuously facing turmoil in ancient times. It was a battleground for Greek and Roman armies in their quest for gaining dominance in the Iranian Plateau and the Persian armies that were engaged in countering their incursions. *Balāścik* and other national entities living in the western Caspian regions including *Balāškān* were facing the consequences of the confrontation between the superpowers of the day. One can easily visualize the impacts on an agro-pastoralist community like the *Balāścik* in the situation of a superpower conflict and their region being the battleground.

Although a few mentioning of *Balāśagān* can be found in Armenian and Arabic chronicles of that time, for all practical purposes, it appears that after the collapse of the Sassanid Dynasty in the seventh century, the name *Balāśagān* and the people mentioned as *Balāścik* began to disappear from historical accounts. So it can be established that during the last decades of the Sassanid Empire, the ancient Baloch were no longer living in *Balāśagān*. However, they reappeared in other parts of the Iranian Plateau. At the time of the Arab invasion of Iran, they were living as Baloch or Koch o Baloch in Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, and Sistan. It is hard to find out precisely why *Balāścik* disappeared from the written and preserved historical documents; nevertheless, from the discussion above, we can fairly discern that the Baloch dispersal from their original country of *Balāśagān* had occurred in several waves in different times and may have caused by several factors:

- Some of the tribes or groups of tribes migrated to Sistan, Kerman, Makuran, and Turan simply as a routine way of nomadic life. And some of them settled into these areas and never went back to their original abode.
- During the reign of the Medes and the Parthians when the relationships between the Baloch and the state were relatively cordial, some of the Baloch tribes might have been transplanted peacefully to the border regions of the Median and Parthian empires.
- Some of the tribes fled from the ethnic or religious prosecutions of different Persian rulers or the prevailing

upheavals in the region of the Caspian Sea and went toward the east where there was already a presence of their kinsmen.

➤ Some of the tribes were deported and resettled in different parts of the Persian Empire as were the norms of the time to deal with hostile elements.

Figure 3: Map of Achaemenid Empire

Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/ancientmapsofiran>

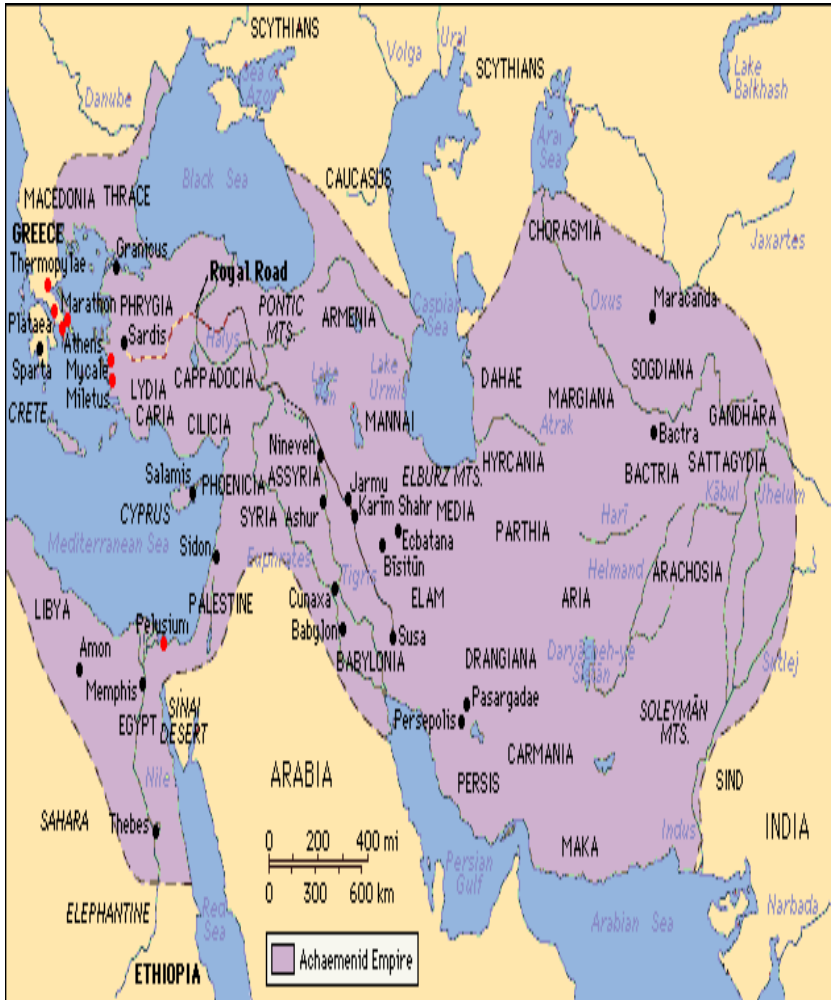


Figure 4: Alexander's Empire

Source: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/>



Figure 5: Map of Seleucid Empire

Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/ancientmapsofiran>



Figure 6: Map of Parthian Empire

Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/ancientmapsofiran>



Figure 7: Map of Saka-dominated areas (first century BC)

Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/ancientmapsofiran>



Figure 8: Map of Sassanid Empire

Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/ancientmapsofiran>

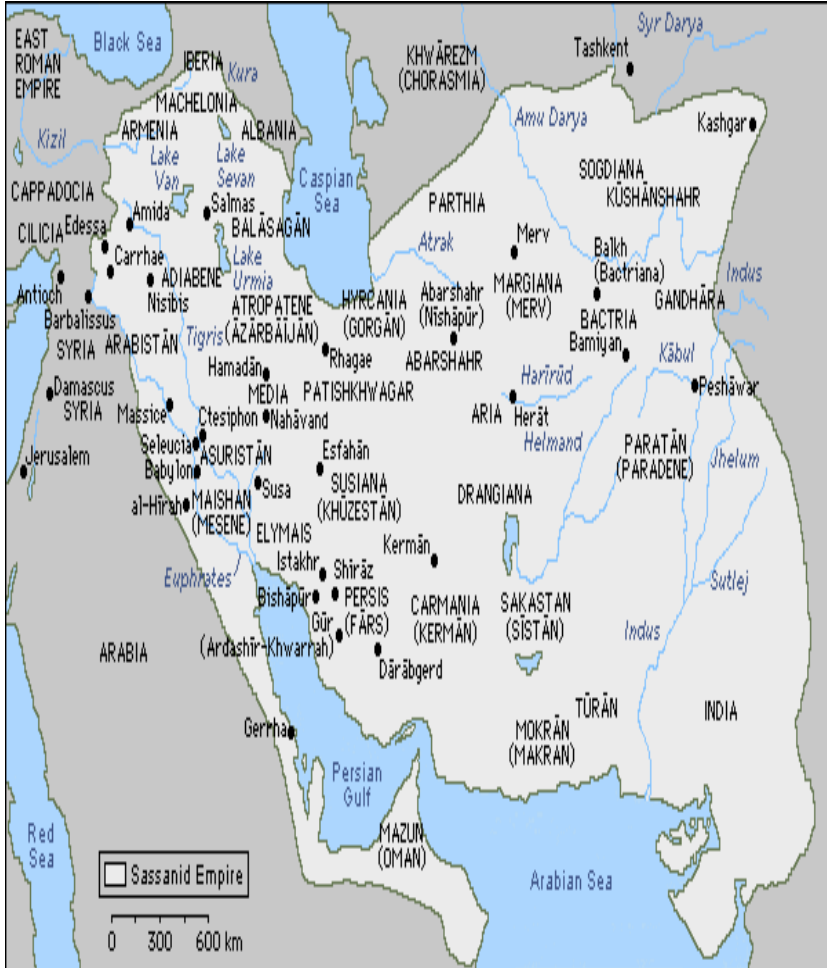


Figure 9: The Hephthalites Empire

Source: Thomas Lessman/www.worldhistorymaps.info



Figure 10: Map of the Roman Empire

Source: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/>



Chapter Four:

The Baloch relations with the Arabs

Introduction

During the last decades of Sassanid power in Iran, the presence of some of the Baloch tribes had been reported in present-day Makuran, Raxsān, and Turan, but the bulk of the Baloch was in Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, *Ḍašt'*, and Sistan. While living in these parts of the Iranian Plateau, they became involved in the conflict between the Sassanid and the invading Arab forces. The Arab invasion of Iran caused division among various Baloch tribes. Some of them defected to the Arabs while many others remained with the Sassanid forces defending Iran against the invasion. Soon after the occupation of Iran, the Arab tribes started a bloody struggle for superiority in the Arab Empire and the Baloch by default become part of various civil wars fought between the Arab tribes.

Arabs in context

The residents of Arabia were called Arabs from time immemorable. Almost a desert area, Arabia is bounded by the Syrian plain, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea. There are some hilly areas, oases, and townships but mostly the semi-arid land was populated by nomadic tribes known as Bedouins. Geographically it was divided into Hijaz, Najd, and Yemen. Oman in the east and the island of Bahrain were included in Arabia geographically but politically these regions remained either parts of Persian empires or retained some sort of independence in various periods.

Arabs living in Yemen claimed their lineage to Himyar who was one of the grandsons of Kahtan. The people of Yemen were mostly described by the writers of medieval ages as Himyarite although they were also written and known as Yemenites. Hijaz and Najd were mainly populated by a tribal union called Quraish. These tribes claimed to be the descendants of Ismail, one of the sons of Jewish patriarch Abraham, and were described by the writers as Modharite. During the second century of the Christian Calendar, some of the Himyarite or Yemenites migrated north and settled in Mecca and Yathrib and became known as Khuzaa, Aus, and Khazraj. Some further moved north and settled at the borders of the Syrian desert and were known as Banu Gassan. Although the language, customs, ideas, taste, manners, and traditions were similar between Modharite and Himyarite, as mentioned by Syed (1955), there had existed a constant antagonism between them verging on hatred. Himyarites considered themselves civilized and looked down on Modharites as uncultured and Bedouins.

Apart from the antagonism between Modharite and Himyarite, the Arabian society was mainly divided into nomadic Bedouins and town dwellers or Madani. Bedouins were pastoralists and lived a life on the verge of poverty. They roamed throughout the peninsula in search of pastures for their camels and goats. Bedouins and the majority of town people were pagans but among the city dwellers, there were also followers of Judaism and Christianity. Jews and Christians were mainly engaged in business activities besides propagating their religious beliefs among the pagan Arabs. Although, the pagan Arabs considered Allah as the supreme god at the same time they worshiped a variety of gods and goddesses as deities of lesser status.

Advent of Islam

During the 6th century AD, Arabian Peninsula was the playground for various Jewish and Christian sects for converting pagan Arabs into their folds. However, their rivalry also involved their business interests in the townships. Intratribal feuds and intertribal rivalries were endemic in Arabian society. In the mayhem of religious rivalries between the Jews and the Christians and tribal animosities among the Quraishi tribes, a new phenomenon occurred which not only changed the fate of Arabs but also changed the entire political and geographical scenario of the world for the coming centuries.

Among the main tribes of Quraish in the Hijaz that got prominence in the early years of Islam were Banu Hashim and Banu Ummaya. In AD 570, in the clan of Banu Hashim, from the family of Abdul Muttalib born a child named Mustafa (later popularly became famous as Muhammad-PBUH). Abdul Muttalib was the chief of the Banu Hashim tribe and keeper of the Holy Mosque in which Kaaba was placed (Kaaba was believed by the Qureishi tribes to be built by Jewish Patriarch Abraham). The child was his grandson from his youngest son Abdullah. At the age of 25 years, Muhammad (PBUH) married a wealthy widow Khadija from an influential family of Mecca. After keeping a low profile in the social and political events in Mecca until the age of 40 years, when one morning he announced his encounter with angel Gabriel and declared that Allah has asked him to be his messenger and that now onward his life should be devoted to the conversion of the people of Quraish into a new faith of Islam.

The new religion of Islam called for equality, goodness, and brotherhood among the Arabs. With the renouncement of paganism, the Prophet called for the worship of Allah as the only almighty god and the creator of the universe. He also called the redundancy of Christianity and Judaism. Islam, in essence, was a reformist ideology and it called for drastic changes in Arabian society. It called for the protection of weaker segments of the society-the poor, the orphans, the women, and the slaves. It called for the end of the age-old practice of intertribal revenge phenomenon among the Arabs.

Facing tremendous opposition from the ruling elite of Mecca mainly from the clan of Ummaya, the Prophet asked his followers which were called Muslims to migrate to safer places. When his own life became endangered, he fled to the town of Yathrib which was later named Medina. After suppressing the resistance of the Jewish and Christian communities and gaining a firm hold of Medina and the surrounding areas, the prophet laid down the foundation of a primitive state structure. Finances for the new state establishment came mainly from the confiscated properties of Jews and Christians and the plundering raids (known in Islamic history as gazwah) in the surrounding regions. The conquest of Mecca in 630 AD which was the stronghold of opposition for the new religion, the state of Medina became so confident of its militant power that the prophet wrote letters to rulers of neighboring countries including the Roman and the Persian empires asking them to convert to Islam or face the might of Muslim forces.

After the death of the prophet, his deputies or caliphs made open warfare and gained significant victories in Roman and Persian provinces. Within a few decades, the Romans were

forced to leave Syria, Judea, and Egypt. The Persian Empire was dismantled altogether by invincible Arab armies. The crumbling of the mighty Sassanid Empire caused the eclipse of the Zoroastrian religion and Allah not only replaced God Yahweh of Judeo-Christian faiths in the Middle East but also marked the end of Ahura Mazda as the supreme god of Central Asia and Iranian Plateau.

Causes of the collapse of the Sassanid Empire

The victory of the Bedouin Arabs over the mighty Sassanid Empire was an unexpected happening but for various reasons, it was inevitable. Persian society was in the grip of chaos because of ethnic conflicts, sectarian rifts, corruption, and mismanagement of the state functionaries. During the final decades of the Sassanid rule, the old animosity between the Parthians and the Persians flared up, further weakening the empire (Tabari, 2007). Economic conditions in the empire worsened with the conversion of cultivated areas into swamps due to neglect of agricultural infrastructure. According to Masudi (1989), a great plague killed nearly half of the population during the early decades of the seventh century. The situation was so chaotic, and the condition of the people was so appalling that according to Baladhuri (1924), the Iranian populace openly spoke of the imminent downfall of their empire and saw its portents in natural calamities. Enemies lurking in the dark for a long time were now looking for the chance to settle their long-standing scores against the Sassanids. The Turks were marching through the eastern provinces, the Khazars were ravaging the north-western provinces, and the long-drawn campaigns against the Byzantine Empire were not successful and exhausted the

imperial finances. Among the various ethnic entities, loyalty with the empire was eroded due to the genocidal actions of Anusherwan (Khusrau I) and Shahpur on sectarian and administrative pretexts (Tabari, 2007). The intrigues of powerful families, degeneration of the royal family, and socio-economic factors caused the crumbling of the Sassanid Empire within 25 years of the Arab invasion.

Zarrinkob (2017), summarizing the causes of the collapse of the mighty Sassanid empire mentioned that the decay began after the end of the Anusherwan and Shahpur era. Their policies caused total disarray. The army was in revolt, the orthodox Zoroastrian religious aristocracy was deeply involved in massive financial and moral corruption. High priests in alliance with the army generals were busy in power politics. Various contentious issues on Zoroastrian belief and tenets surfaced which caused divisions not only among the clergy but also polarized the society on sectarian grounds. The efforts of Mazdak and Mani for religious reforms were not only termed heresy but also crushed violently by the state under the influence of corrupt orthodox high priests. Violent suppression of dissent from ethnic minorities caused permanent dents in the cohesion of Iranian society. The use of the army in dealing with ethnic minorities caused unchecked powers in the hand of generals. Soon, the army in collaboration with high priests rose in rebellion against their emperors. For some time, generals became the actual rulers and the house of Sassan was in nominal control of state affairs. The throne of mighty emperors like Ardsheer and Shahpur became a musical chair on which the generals choose to replace one after another emperor of their choice. Yazdegerd III, the last Sassanid emperor although tried to regain the grip on power but failed to accomplish anything.

The renegade military and corrupt clergy were busy achieving personal gains and gratification. They were not bothered by the events occurring near their borders. The general populace was alienated from the empire because of high taxes and the ruthlessness of the military and priesthood. There was no sympathy left among them for maintaining the rule of a degenerated family.

The last decades of the Sassanid Empire were characterized by the dominance and intrigue of various aristocratic families who were in collaboration with the army and the clergy. Upon the whims of these very powerful warrior families, emperors were selected, deposed, and even murdered. Known as the seven noble families in historical accounts, these were king makers in the Iranian Plateau for many centuries. They were instrumental in shaping the policies of various Persian empires from the days of Darius I. Eventually, this aristocracy gained full independence from the control of emperors, each carving a kind of state for them within the empire.

The downtrodden and often-discriminated Bedouins from the Arabian Peninsula were inspired by a new faith and united by a call to arms under the banner of Islam. They were zealously looking for mundane riches and heavenly blessings. From their initial exploratory inroads into Mesopotamia, they became fully aware of the weaknesses and difficulties of the disintegrating Sassanid Empire.

It was the above-mentioned context in which the Arabs succeeded in destroying the Persian Empire within a few decades. They invaded Iran and became the master of a region, which was among the cradles of ancient civilizations of the

world. However, the conquest of the Persian Empire came in piecemeal, and the Arabs, only after twenty-five years of warfare, were able to conquer nearly the whole of Iran. After the fall of Fars, Sistan fell a few years later. Tabari (2007) noted that during AD 667, the Arab forces of the Umayyad Dynasty occupied regions of present-day Balochistan, which is now Chagai. The conquest of Khurasan began with the capitulation of Merv after the death of Yazdgerd III in AD 656; the Arab armies completed the conquest of the entire Khurasan (Tabari, 2007).

Expansion of the Arab Empire

Under the Umayyad Dynasty, the Arabs expanded their empire further east and conquered Zabul, Bamiyan, and Sindh. At the time of the Arab invasion, Makuran and Turan were part of the Rai Dynasty of Sindh. The Empire of Sindh was a formidable force bordering with the Sassanid province of Kerman in the west. According to Kufi (1979), during the period of Sassanid emperor Hormuzd, the ruler of Sindh, Rai Sahras advanced up to Kerman and marked the boundaries of Sindh and the Sassanid Empire by planting date palms near a river probably near the modern-day Pahraj in the Iranian Balochistan.

The Arab forces entered Makuran from Sistan. The governor of Makuran asked for help from the king of Sindh who sent an army to defend his dependent territory. At the border of Kerman where the limits of Sindh ended, the army of Sindh and Makuran was defeated, and the governor of Makuran Rasil was killed in the battle (Raverty, 1888).

For a while, the expansion of the Arab rule in the east faced ups and downs. It appears that the Arabs faced sustained resistance from the people of Makuran and Turan for a long time. As observed by Tabari (2007), the affairs of Makuran and Turan remained anarchic during the early days of the Arab conquest. Many of the Arab commanders were killed during various revolts in these regions. Tabari mentioned that during the reign of Caliph Ali an expeditionary force sent into present-day Balochistan reached as far as Khuzdar. Another force was sent to subdue Khuzdar and surrounding regions during the reign of Amir Muawiah. This force was defeated and very few Arab soldiers were able to return to Basra via Makuran (Tabari, 2007).

Tabari also informed us about another force, which was sent to deal with the Medes revolts in Makuran during the same period. At the same time, an expeditionary force was also dispatched to Turan. The Medes revolt was crushed in Makuran, but the force sent toward Turan was defeated and its leader killed. Another expeditionary force was defeated while taking the booty from Makuran to Sistan near Pahraj. According to the writer of Chachnama (see Kufi, 1979), another army, which was sent by Bin Ziad, the governor of Basra, was defeated near Khuzdar.

Even, after gaining total control over various regions, which later formed parts of present-day Balochistan, affairs for the new rulers were not running smoothly. The region became the center of a sectarian conflict after the power struggle intensified between the Kharijites and mainstream Islam during the rule of Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. During the reign of Abbasid Caliph Harun, the Kharijite movement in Sistan, Makuran, and

Turan paralyzed the central government administration in these regions. The Kharijite leader Amir Hamza became the de facto ruler of this vast area. He became very popular and gained the support of the local population of Sistan and the surrounding regions when he freed the people from the burden of heavy taxes with the systematic murdering of central government tax collectors (Kenney, 2006; Muir, 1924). Support of the Baloch tribes for the Kharijite movement in Sistan, Makuran, and Turan can be found in some of the historical accounts recorded in Balochi ballads of medieval times. Most probably, a Balochi ballad mentioning the Baloch being the sons of Hamza is indicative of close support of some of the Baloch tribes to the Kharijite leader Amir Hamza and “sons of Hamza” was probably used to describe his followers or staunch supporters.

The Arab conquest of Iran in a true sense did not last for more than 150 years. During this period, they brought social, cultural, and religious changes in their held territories, and several of the Arab tribes settled in many Iranian regions which were brought initially to be settled in garrisons to ensure the payment of tribute to the conquerors and to concentrate on frontiers to protect the border regions (Kenney, 2006; Muir, 1924; Tabari, 2007). These incoming Arab tribes were gradually absorbed into different ethnic groups of Iran, and only a small number of them retained some kind of Arab identity in later centuries. Administratively, Iran was ruled by Arab governors; however, as the Arab conquerors came from an uncivilized background, the customs, laws, and traditions of the Sassanids were adopted in Islamic Iran for the smooth running of the government. During the Abbasid era, the Iranian social and political influence was at its peak (Muir, 1924). The Abbasids, after the rule of their early powerful caliphs, lost the grip on power and

different dynasties of Iranian and Turkish origin became de facto rulers and the Caliphs in Baghdad became mere puppets of the powerful rulers of these dynasties.

The Baloch defection to the Arabs

In the earlier section of the book, it has been mentioned that beginning from the 7th century, the Balāšcik disappeared from historical accounts; however, after a few decades, they reappeared in the historical documents of the Arabs and later Persian chronicles with a new identity of Koch o Baloch. The Baloch were among many ethnic groups who not only suffered politically but also socially and economically during and after the Arab control of Iran. The Baloch, like the other nationalities in Iran, resisted the new rulers with their available resources. However, at least ten of the Baloch tribes under the command of General Siah Sawar defected to the Arab side. This defection, later, proved to be futile as soon this group of the Baloch faced persecutions and deportation to Syria by the Umayyad administrator of Iraq, Hajjaj ibn Yousuf. The Baloch also came into a head-on collision with the Arab forces in Sistan, Kerman, Makuran, and Turan during the reign of early Caliphs and during the Umayyad period. In the initial stages of the invasion of Iran, before the defection of some of the Baloch chieftains, the majority of the Baloch fought on the Persian side against the invaders. The Baloch chieftain, Siah Sawar, belonging to the Siapad tribe (which is mentioned by the Arab writers as Siabaj or Siah Deylami) was the commander of an Iranian force sent to counter the Arab advance in lower Iraq, according to various historical accounts from the Arab and the Iranian writers. The Arab historians had described in detail the agreement of General Siah Sawar, which they mentioned as

Sia-al-Sawar, commander of the royal guard of Emperor Yazdgerd III. The Baloch tribes under Siah Sawar and their allies, the Jats, joined hands with the invading Arabs under an agreement approved by Caliph Omar. The rest of the Baloch tribes, nevertheless, were part of the resistance offered by various nationalities against the invading Arabs as observed by various historians.

Baladhuri (1924) narrated in detail (quoting Tabari), the Baloch defection to the Arabs and their subsequent deportation into Syria. On the cause of the collapse of the Sassanid Empire, Tabari blamed the Baloch chieftain from Deylam whom he mentioned as Siah Deylami. However, it is illogical to attribute the defeat of the mighty Persian state with only one factor. According to Baladhuri, after the Muslim army defeated the Iranians and conquered Jalula; the last Sassanid king of Iran Yazdgerd III summoned a council of war and designed a plan of resistance against the invading forces. While in Isfahan, he dispatched seventy of the highest dignitaries of the country to go with General Siah Sawar, who was the commander of the royal guard, with powers to recruit soldiers from different ethnic groups to raise an army. Siah Sawar was followed by Yazdgerd himself to Isthakhar. Later, he sent him to Ahwaz, where he encamped at Kalbaniyah and waited for the Arab Army under Abu Musa Ash'ari. Instead of engaging the Arab Army in battle, Siah Sawar convened a secret meeting of elders of ten Baloch tribes for consultation whose men were in his army. The meeting concluded that as the Arab forces are gaining ground and city after city is being fallen to their armies, the fate of the Sassanid Empire is seized. They decided that as the resistance is futile, the Baloch forces in the emperor's army should side with the invaders and if necessary, they should

convert to their new religion. They sent General Sheruyeh, along with a delegation comprising ten elders of his people (the Arab historians Tabari called them people of Asawarah, probably naming them after Siah Sawar, according to Arab tradition of naming the tribes after their chiefs) to the Muslim commander, expressing their willingness for joining them. They told Abu Musa that:

“We are desirous of entering into your religion, on the condition that we help you fight your foreign enemies, but that if there arises a difference amongst you, we are not to fight with some of you against others of you; and that if we have war with the [heathen] Arabs, you will grant us help and defense against them; and that we are permitted to settle in whatever part of the country we please, and live among whichever of your tribes we choose; and that we receive the maximum stipend; and that a covenant to this effect is given us by the commander who sent you, that is, the Arabian King.”

Abu Musa agreed to grant them equal status as other Muslims enjoyed; however, the Baloch delegation insisted that they wanted their conditions for joining the Arabs to be accepted by the king of the Arabs. According to Baladhuri, the Arab commander Abu Musa wrote to Caliph Omar, seeking his consent. The Caliph promptly replied, asking him to give the Baloch all that they asked for.

Accordingly, an agreement with the stipulated conditions was drawn and signed by the parties as a consequence of which Siah Sawar and ten tribes of the Baloch under his leadership accepted Islam as their new faith and joined Abu Musa in his

siege of Shustar. Zarrinkob (2017) quoting Persian sources mentioned that the siege of Shushtar by the Arab army under the command of Abu Musa dragged on so long that the Arab army was on the verge of giving up but because of the treachery of Siah Sawar they became able to occupy the city.

The defection of a group of Baloch tribes to Arabs may not be because they thought the Arabs are invincible, but it might be the personal grudge of Sia Sawar against the Sassanids. His grandfather Bahrez Kambar is believed to be humiliated and imprisoned by Emperor Anusherwan who was the grandfather of Emperor Yazdegerd III. Bahrez Kamber, according to Persian writer Dinawari of the 9th century, was one of the commanders of Persian expeditionary forces that were sent to fight the Ethiopians in Yemen by Emperor Anusherwan.

Whatever were the real reasons for the defection, after their alliance or conditional surrender, the defecting Baloch were attached to various tribal detachments in the Arab Army. It was the rule in the early phases of Arab rule in Iran that newly converted or allied tribes were to be attached with various Arab tribes. According to Baladhuri's version, the Baloch defectors asked Abu Musa that they should be attached to the tribe of the Prophet. They were told that the tribe of the Prophet has no presence in Basra. They ask again, in that case, they should be attached with a tribe having close links to the tribe of the Prophet. They finally agreed to be part of the army of the Banu Tamim tribe, and in Basra, they were given separate quarters with them. They settled down and dug their canal, which was the one known as the Nahr al-Sawarah. Here they were joined by the remaining Siapad tribe, and according to Baladhuri, they were joined with some of the Zatt (Jats) tribes of Sindhi origin.

As observed by Baloch (1965) and Mari (1974), Siah Sawar or Siah Baloch, as was described by the Iranian court poet Bahar, belonged to the Siapad tribe among the Baloch. Siapad can be found in different areas of Balochistan today either as a separate tribal entity or part of some bigger tribes.

The Baloch and Arab affair appeared to be a marriage of convenience. Soon disagreement arose between the Baloch and the Arabs as Baladhuri stated that the Baloch were with Abu-Musa at the siege of Shustar but they did not strike a single blow, and Abu Musa said to Siah Sawar, “You and your friends are not what we thought you to be.” To this, he replied,

“I told thee that our way of thinking was not like yours, seeing that we have no harems (wives) among you for which to fear and to fight. We entered into this religion from the very beginning only as a refuge, and in the hope that [your] Allah was one who provides abundant sustenance.”

This was a clear demand for more privileges. To this, Abu Musa assigned to them the maximum stipend and allotted more land near Basra to be irrigated by the previously allotted canal. From this, it became apparent that their joining hands with the Arabs were not for the love of their religion, but a politically motivated move in the context of the prevailing situation in the region.

The stay of these Baloch tribes under the leadership of Siah Sawar in Basra was not smooth. First, the leadership of Siah Sawar was challenged and later tension developed between Ummayyad and the Baloch tribes on various pretexts. It

appeared that Siah Sawar developed serious differences with his colleagues and left to join the army of another Arab tribe Banu Hanthalah. According to Baladhuri, Siah Sawar did not take part in the civil war between Banu Hashim under the leadership of Ali and Banu Ummaya under the leadership of Muawiah. Instead, he went on the expedition of Ibn Amir to Khurasan and so did not take part in the Battle of the Camel which was fought between Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s son-in-law Ali and the Prophet's youngest wife Ayesha, nor at the battle of Siffin fought between Ali and Muawiah. This explains the initial indifference of General Siah Sawar about the internal differences of the Arabs and is indicative of the Baloch remaining neutral and not siding with the Umayyad forces which Baladhuri described as "Moslem forces." However, we found in later historical accounts of Arab historians, including Baladhuri himself, that the defecting Baloch tribes under Sia Sawar and their allied Jats became involved in the long-drawn civil war between two warring factions of the Arabs led by Banu Hashem and Banu Ummaya soon after the total conquest of Iran. This happened perhaps after the death or abdication of Siah Sawar as the chief of these tribes.

The Baloch also sided with the rebel commander of the Umayyad dynasty, Ibn Ash'ath, and invited the rage of Umayyad governor of eastern regions, the notorious Hajjaj bin Yusuf. For this, Hajjaj bin Yousuf, on the excuse of breaking the agreed covenant by siding in the civil war between the Arab tribes, raised their houses, annulling their grant and forcing some of them to emigrate. By the order of Muawiah, many of the surviving Baloch and their allied Jats were "transported" to the coast of Sham (Syria) and Antakya by "kindly methods," according to Baladhuri.

How much were the methods “kindly” in the deportation of the Baloch tribes and their allied Jats to Syria might not be significant, but the description of the Baloch deportation by Baladhuri is important in the explanation of a perception about the origin of some Baloch tribes. This could explain easily the context of the verses from one of the famous ballads, stating that once Allepo was the abode of the Rind tribe of the Baloch. From these accounts, it appears that the main tribe, which was deported to Syria, was Siapad and the Rinds might have been a junior partner or part of the tribal union under the leadership of Siah Sawar.

Why some of the Baloch tribes under the command of Siah Sawar defected to the invading Arabs in the protracted struggle for the supremacy of Iran (between the Arabs and the remnants of the Sassanid force) is quite understandable. This decision might have been prompted by various factors, which were fundamental in any decision-making at that time. First, the undeniable fact was that at the time of the Arab invasion, the Persian Empire was in total disarray and irreparably damaged, and the Persian cause was a lost one. Second, despite the Baloch being part of different Sassanid armies, the fact of an inherent distrust between the Baloch and the Persians after a long history of persecution cannot be ignored. These may be the reasons why the Baloch felt little interest in the struggle of preserving the Persian Empire. As mentioned earlier, the personal grudge of Siah Sawar against the Sassanid family cannot be ignored as a factor in the defection of the Baloch tribes. Although circumstances caused them to send their contingents to various battlefronts at the call of the Emperor Yazdgerd III, nevertheless, when the Persian cause was lost, they felt it needless to make further sacrifices for the Sassanid

Empire in which their ancestors had suffered some of the worst possible humiliations and massacres on many occasions. Later events, however, proved that the Baloch decision of siding with the Arabs did not bear fruits for them, since very soon the Baloch were targeted by the Arabs after the consolidation of their power in Iran. The Baloch tribes under the leadership of Siah Sawar, who sided with the Arabs, were humiliated and deported to Syria, and, a few years later, the Arabs unleashed exceptional force in Kerman to subjugate the Baloch tribes residing in the Mountains of Kufs and Barez.

The Baloch in the Arab Empire

In the earlier section of the book, it has been mentioned that beginning from the 7th century, the Balāścik disappeared from historical accounts; however, after a few decades, they reappeared in the historical documents of the Arabs and later Persian chronicles with a new identity of Koch o Baloch. They were scattered in Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, and Sistan. Some of the Baloch tribes also penetrated the Makuran and Turan regions of present-day Balochistan. The Baloch–Arab relations during their advance and subsequent control of Iran were tortuous. Despite the defection of some, most of the Baloch tribes in Kerman fought against the Arabs during the Iranian resistance against the Arab conquest along with other ethnic groups. They also offered refuge to many of the fleeing Sassanid administrators and Zoroastrian priests. Arab historians and geographers have stated that after the initial defeat of Persians in Iraq, the Arabs were engaged in battles with large numbers of Koch o Baloch in the mountains of Kerman and eastern Persia (Bosworth, 1977). Bosworth (1968), quoting Baladhuri and Tabari, mentioned that pushing

eastwards into Kerman, Arab forces under Suhail ibn Adi and Abdullah ibn Itban killed the Sassanid Marzban of the province and, after fierce fighting, occupied main towns, including Sirjan, Bam, Jiruft, and Bardsir in AD 644. Many of the inhabitants of Kerman including some of the Baloch tribes preferred to emigrate rather than to pass under the Arab domination. Between Kerman and Sistan lay an extremely inhospitable and almost unpopulated tract—the southern part of the great desert, the *Das̄t ay Lut*. This wasteland merges into the arid mountains of present-day western Balochistan. According to later medieval Persian writers, these wastelands and arid mountains were the haunts of predatory Koch o Baloch mountaineers who aided the people of Kerman against the incoming Arabs.

The historical accounts relating to the Baloch at the time and after the Arab invasion of Iran are from Arabic and Persian sources. It is not difficult to find one-sided accounts of events from these accounts since the Baloch conflicted with both of these powers. It is interesting to note how Arab writers described the Baloch in venomous tones. Their account of Arab–Baloch conflict shows how the Arabs justified their brutal actions against the Baloch and the actions of their subservient rulers in their newly created empire in Iran. One can easily observe such biased description when the Arab historians mentioned the barbarism of the Koch o Baloch, who, according to them, were terrorizing the caravan routes across the great central deserts of *Das̄t ay Lut* and *Das̄t ay Kavir*. Maqaddesi (1906) stated that the whole of the Great Desert is a fearful place, namely because of a people called the Koch who inhabited some mountains in Kerman adjoining the region of

Jiruft. From these mountains, they sweep down to the desert just like locusts.

It is also interesting to note how Arab historians described the Baloch social behavior. According to Maqaddesi (1906), the Koch o Baloch professed Islam but were more savage against the Muslims than the Byzantines or Turks. He described the Baloch as a race with no propensity whatsoever toward goodness; they have only savage faces, stony hearts, fierceness, and hardness. They never spare anyone and are not satisfied with merely robbing or plundering nor do they put to death with their weapons anyone they get hold of. On the contrary, they pound their heads with a stone, just as one kills snakes; you see them hold a man's head down on a flat stone and pound it with another until it is split open. When they were asked why they did this, their response was quoted by Maqaddesi as, "In this way, we don't damage our sword blades!" According to Maqaddesi Only rarely does any intruder manage to escape from their area. They possess places of concealment and impregnable mountains, and whenever they are cornered in one administrative region, they merely flee to another. They fight with bows and arrows and carry swords. When they take a man captive, they make him run with them 20 Farsakhs or so, with bare feet and no food.

Maqaddesi, to validate his description of the Baloch as being ignorant of the Arabic religious tenets, mentioned the encounter of a Muslim priest who was fallen into the Baloch hands while he tried to convert them to Islam in Kerman. The cleric was asked to read from the Quranic document that he was holding. When they did not understand what he was reciting, they presented him to their chief. According to Maqaddesi, in the

conversation that followed, the chief belittled the Muslim god, Islam, and Quran. When the priest warned the chief that his actions bring down inexorably upon himself the hatred of Allah and a painful punishment in the next world, the chief gave a choking gurgle and fell to the ground laughing with a chalky-white face before letting him free, together with a group of other captives.

During AD 651–652, disturbances arose in Kerman, which was dealt with by Abdullah ibn Amir ibn Kuraiz, the governor of Iraq. Abdullah, in AD 651, dispersed the fugitive Persians taking refuge in Kerman with the Baloch (Baladhuri, 1924; Tabari, 2007). The Arab forces searched the province thoroughly and turned southward of the Koch o Baloch country and Hormuz. Many Persian refugees from the towns of Kerman fled and scattered in all directions; some went along the coast of Makuran, some took to the sea, while others wandered into Sistan. Consequently, the lands and houses of those who escaped were occupied by the Arabs, who settled there, populated the land, and dug wells and channels. Despite the Arab attempts, Kerman and Makuran, for a long time, continued to serve as a refuge for the followers of Prophet Zoroaster, who had been displaced from Persia or fled from the Arab persecutions. According to Arab writers, even, in the last decades of Abbasid power, the Baloch were causing trouble in Kerman. According to Meskawiah (1915), the Caliph al-Mugtadir's representative in Kerman, Abdullah Mismasi carried out an expedition to attack the region of Barez Mountain in AD 925, and on that campaign, he took captive 5,000 of the Koch o Baloch prisoners that were sold as slaves in different regions of the Abbasid Empire.

The Arab invasion of Sindhi province of Makuran and Sindh proper came from two directions—by land and sea. The earliest failed attempts to occupy the region were made during the reign of the second caliph, Omar, between the years AD 636 and 640 (Tabari, 2007). The Arab forces under Hakam ibn Amr al Taghlibi marched toward Makuran, and it seems that they swept over it rapidly and successfully as neither Tabari nor other historians have reported any obstacles that they might have encountered. The Arab forces might have reached Sindh without facing any formidable resistance since Tabari mentioned that they reached as far as the tract lying just before the river, which the people of Makuran had fled to. This river must have been River Purali or Hub, according to the descriptions offered by the Arab writers of the period. The Arab forces then retreated to their headquarters in Makuran as they faced tough resistance from the detachment sent by the king of Sindh, which met the invading Arab horde somewhere near River Purali. Makuran seems to have been made a base for future raids eastward and on Sindh; however, which city of Makuran was the headquarters of the Arab Government is not known.

Despite the unrest that followed the killing of Caliph Usman with ensued civil war between two powerful contenders for power, the Banu Hashim and Banu Ummaya, efforts continued to expand the Arab control further east. These efforts continued throughout the reign of Caliph Ali, the fourth caliph. In AD 656, the Arabs, under the command of Harith ibn Murrah invaded Kikan (Kikan is supposed to be modern Kalat) in Turan (Tabari, 2007). The Arabs seized large quantities of booty, but the Kikani caught the Arab forces in a particular place where they were dealt with a serious blow, and a majority

of them were wounded by the Kikani arrows. Two years later, Harith led another expeditionary force from Pahraj to raid Kikan, and he succeeded to such an extent that he collected so many spoils and slaves as to be able to distribute a thousand heads in one day. However, the Arabs withdrew from Kikan in a hurry as they heard the news of Caliph Ali's assassination (Tabari, 2007).

It was during the last four decades of the Umayyad power that Makuran and Turan came under the effective control of the caliph's representatives. Under the Caliphate of Muawiah in AD 662, the Arabs invaded Las Bela (Kufi, 1979). A year later, Muhallab ibn Abu Sufra is reported to have invaded Kikan and marched toward Kachchi (Qandabil). According to Chachnama, when Arabs, under the command of Abdullah, arrived at Kikan, the Kikanis made an assault upon them, but the Arab Army routed them and secured plentiful booty. The people of Kikan soon regrouped in large numbers and occupied the mountain passes. The mountainous region became completely alive with fighting men; however, the Arabs were able to beat the Kikanis. Following this, they drew back to Makuran. Abdullah ibn Sawwar was reported to have taken all booties and spoils to Damascus. Among the booty was included a horse from a unique stock that was much admired by Caliph Muawiah.

During AD 667, Abdullah ibn Sawwar again attacked Kikan with 4,000 troops, but this time, the Kikanis are said to have offered the invaders very stubborn resistance in a fierce battle. It resulted in the killing of Abdullah ibn Sawwar himself, together with many members of his army (Tabari, 2007). The survivors of the Arab Army then returned to Makuran. Another

attack was launched under the command of Rashid ibn Amr which was presumably successful, for he compelled the inhabitants of Jebel al-Bayah (which is supposedly the Mashkey area of Balochistan) to pay a fixed tribute. Rashid, thereafter, entered Kikan and made an attack, obtaining booty and spoils. He also dealt severely with the disobedient and outlaws. However, while taking the booty from Kikan and Makuran to Damascus, Rashid was attacked by the Baloch near Pahraj. The Arabs were defeated, and Rashid himself was killed (Tabari, 2007). Another raid had been reported on eastern Balochistan in the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Yazid when Hakam, the then governor of the province of Kerman, was reported to have successfully raided Kachchi and to have overrun the country.

Although the Arabs were thinking of invading the rich country of Sindh after their conquest of Iran it could not materialize until the reign of Caliph Walid of the Ummayad dynasty. The powerful governor of eastern regions, Hajjaj bin Yousuf was frequently asking for permission to invade Sindh for various reasons including personal and financial. According to Masudi, Caliph Abdul Malik of the Ummayad dynasty reportedly asked some Syrian merchants to bring for him 10 virgin girls from Sindh and Hind. The girls were bought but never reached the palace of the Caliph. The case of the girls who were bought by the Syrian merchants from Sindh for the Caliph and were abducted by pirates belonging to Meid tribes provided the opportunity for Hajjaj bin Yusuf to persuade the Caliph in Damascus to grant the permission for the invasion. After getting permission for the invasion of Sindh, he recruited a large army composed of seasoned Arab fighters, soldiers of fortunes from the newly converted Muslims, and mercenaries

from Syria who previously were parts of defeated Roman legions. His nephew Muhammad bin Qassim al-Thagafi was appointed to lead the army. However, with the death of Abdul Malik, for some time, the invasion was postponed but sanctioned by his son Walid after he became the Caliph. In AD 710, Ibn Qassim departed for Makuran from Shiraz with 6,000 cavalries (Kufi, 1979). He continued towards Makuran pushing his way to Punjgur where the inhabitants offered stubborn resistance and caused Ibn Qassim a hindrance. This resulted in his conquering and ravaging the town, collecting many spoils. From here, he went to Bela (Armabel) and, after waging war for a few days, conquered this city also. He then stayed there several months and, later, headed for Daybul in Sindh.

The Baloch encounters with the Arabs in other parts of Sassanid Iran had been described by Arab writers such as Tabari, Maqaddesi, and others. In Sistan, the Baloch met the Arab invaders when, during the reign of Caliph Omar, the Arab forces occupied the region. Tabari (2007) described a group of tribes who were in constant war with Turks, Medes, and the people of Kandahar. This must indicate the distinct identity of the Baloch tribes who were living in Sistan at that time. It is most probable that the Baloch tribes in Makuran and Turan had fought against the Arabs as part of the army of Makuran under the Sindhi ruler Rasil as mentioned by the writer of Chachnama (Kufi, 1979).

The Arab civil wars and the Baloch

Soon after the emergence of the Arab Empire, the Arab tribes fought each other for gaining control of the flourishing state. Banu Hashim fought against Banu Ummaya, Yemenis against

Modharite, and Kharijites zealots against mainstream Muslims. Baloch like other national entities of Iran at that time by default became involved in these conflicts in one way or the other.

Banu Ummaya-Banu Hashim conflict and the Baloch

The first conflict among the Arabs originated soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in the year 632. The conflict divided the Arabs and later the Muslims into Sunnis and Shiites sects. The term sunnah, which means a “well-trodden path” and in the religious terminology of Islam normally signifies “the example set by the Prophet,”. It also denotes the traditional and well-defined social and political practices of the Arabs before Islam.

Banu Hashim and Banu Ummaya were the two clans who became the power behind the prophet’s rule over other Arab tribes. However, after the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), tension developed between the two on the selection of the caliph. Banu Hashim and their supporters were optimistic that as the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali will automatically be declared the first caliph. However, unexpectedly, with an alliance made with the people of Medina in much haste, the Banu Ummaya clan became able to nominate Abu Bakar as the first caliph before even the burial of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Initially, the Prophet’s family resisted the move and refused to recognize Abu Bakar as the ruler, but later they remained aloof and did not participate in the matters of the newly emerging empire. In the Arab civil war between Banu Hashim and Banu Ummaya (661–750 AD), the supporters of Ummayad's right to rule the empire were generally known as Sunnis. Supporters of Banu Hashim led by

the Prophet's son-in-law were originally called Shiahan e Ali or partisans of Ali. Later they were popularly known as Shi'as. They believed that leadership should stay within the family of the prophet. The Ummayyads on the other hand believed that leadership should fall to the person who was deemed by the elite of the community to be best able to lead the community. It was fundamentally that political division that began the Sunni-Shia split among the Muslims. The conflict continued even after Ali's death, the Shi'a demanded the restoration of the rule to Ali's family, and from that demand developed the Shi'i legitimism, or the divine right of the holy family to rule.

On the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the residents of Medina (Ansars) were expecting a caliph from their ranks. However, at a time when his family was busy making funeral arrangements, Ummayyad leaders Omar and Abubakr persuaded the people of Ansars to withdraw their claim on the leadership. After heated debate and many much-hesitations, leaders who were representing the people of Medina withdrew their claim on the caliphate and took the oath of loyalty for Abu Bakr as the first leader of the Muslims or the first caliph. Banu Hashim and the allied made it clear that they are not happy with the claim of Abu Bakr as the first caliph. Many of the supporters of Ali gathered at his residence and deliberated how to counter the Ummayyad move of gaining control of the state. On being informed of such a meeting, Omar and Abu Bakr went to Ali's house with drawn swords where a minor scuffle took place between Ali and the Ummayyad leaders. However, with the intervention of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet and wife of Ali, major bloodshed was avoided at that time. Ali openly did not declare his claim for the leadership but kept a low profile regarding the state affairs, nevertheless, he did not declare his

allegiance to Abu Bakr for six months. In retaliation, the agricultural properties owned by the Prophet and supposed to be handed over to his heir, Fatima, were confiscated by Caliph Abu Bakr.

The caliphate remained with Banu Ummaya until the murder of Caliph Osman in June 656 AD. Omar and Usman succeeded Abu Bakr as the second and third caliphs. During the reign of Usman tension remained high between Ummayad and Banu Hashim clans that ultimately led to a bloody and prolonged civil war. Many Arab tribes who settled in Iraq and Egypt after the Arab conquests of these regions, became disappointed with the way the Arab Empire was being run by one family. Corruption and nepotism were the factors that joined many tribes into action against the Ummayad rule. The resulting discontent led to the assassination of the Caliph Usman, who was murdered by rebel forces in 656 AD. Usman's body was dismembered, and heads of various rebel groups took his body parts as souvenirs. After the rebels left, his wife could find only one finger from the body of the third caliph of Islam.

After murdering Usman, the rebels then recognized the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, as the caliph and the ruler of the Arab Empire. However, Banu Ummaya blamed Ali for instigating the rebellion against Usman and called for revenge. Ayesha, daughter of first caliph Abu Bakr and the widow of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not recognize the caliphate of Ali and declared war. Ali fought the rebel army led by Ayesha in the battle of Jamal. She was defeated and detained in her house in Medina for the rest of her life. But the rebellion of Muawiah, who was the cousin of Usman and the governor of Syria, one of the richest provinces of the Arab Empire, caused

much damage to the authority of Ali and sow the seeds of an unending dispute between those Muslims who believed that Ali was the rightful heir of the Prophet and the Ummayyads were the usurpers and those who believed that Ali's claim of political inheritance cannot be proved by the sayings of the Prophet or sayings of Allah in the Holy Qur'an.

Ali was able to defeat the rebellion of Ayesha but Muawiah with a formidable army of Ummayyad supporters and Syrian mercenaries gave tough resistance to his forces. After much bloodshed in the battle of Siffin where no one appeared to be victorious, on the suggestions of an arbitration council, Ali and Muawiah agreed on the partition of the Arab Empire. Ali was recognized as the ruler of Hijaz, Yemen, and Iraq while Muawiah became the ruler of Syria and Egypt.

Ali was murdered by a Kharijite zealot. Under an agreement with Ummayyad chief Muawiya, Ali's elder son Hassan withdrew the claim for the caliphate. For a while, the two factions enjoyed peace. Tensions between the two resurfaced when Muawiah died in 680 AD. The conflict intensified between Ummayyads and Banu Hashim when Ali's second son Hussain tried to gain power with the help of his loyal tribes in Iraq. However, his attempt was pre-empted by the Ummayyad authorities. He was engaged in a fight near Kufa where he and 72 members of his family and companions fought against a very large army of the Ummayyad emperor Yazid. They were all massacred. Hussein was decapitated and his head carried in tribute to the Ummayyad caliph in Damascus. His body was left on the battlefield at Karbala. The conflict between the Ummayyads and Banu Hashim continued throughout Ummayyad rule but the flag bearers of the cause for the rule of Banu

Hashim became the sons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s uncle Abbas. Eventually, they became successful in overthrowing Ummayyad rule with the help of Iranian tribes.

The civil war between Banu Ummaya and Banu Hashim affected the Baloch in the Iranian Plateau and although it was not in significant proportions, nevertheless, the Baloch became the victim of this Arab divide by default. The Baloch tribes who defected to the Arab camp during the early years of the Arab invasion of Iran retained a kind of neutrality between the two sides involved in the Banu Hashim-Banu Ummaya conflict. But in the given circumstances, it was nearly impossible to remain neutral in a conflict of such magnitude. However, one cannot find enough documentary mention of the overwhelming support of the Baloch for either party in the civil war. It appears that in the beginning, the Baloch in Basra supported the Ummayyad rule but when Ali became the ruler of Iraq, they had to follow the new ruler. That might have been one of the factors which caused the grudge against the Baloch by Ummayyads and caused some devastating consequences for the Baloch. The support of the Baloch for the rebellion of Ibn Ash'ath was the last straw in relations of the Baloch with the Ummayyads. After the defeat of Ibn Ash'ath, an enraged Hajjaj bin Yusuf (the all-powerful Ummayyad governor of Iraq and eastern provinces of the Arab empire) unleashed a reign of terror on the Baloch living in Basra. He carried out a general massacre and many of the Baloch families were detained. These detainees were spared after the intervention of Caliph Muawiah. Later they were deported to the Aleppo (Halab) region of Syria where they remained in exile until the emergence of Abbasids as the new rulers of the Arab Empire.

Hajjaj bin Yusuf and the Baloch

One of the characters in the tortuous history of the relations of the Baloch with the Arabs is Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thagafi. As a trusted ally of the Ummayyad dynasty, Hajjaj ruled Iraq and Iran for nearly 20 years. He played a pivotal role in the Ummayyad victory in the long-drawn civil war between various Arab tribes. He was appointed as the governor of Iraq and the eastern provinces of the Ummayyad Empire. As the governor of Iraq, he ruthlessly crushed the Kharijites with mass killings of the supporters of this puritan Muslim sect. He was a key figure in organizing the invasion of Sindh. During the reign of Ummayyad Caliph Abdul Malik, he also crushed the rebellion of Musab bin Zubair by destroying the holy mosque in Mecca in which Musab was taking refuge.

Many writers including Masudi estimated the number of prisoners during Hajjaj's rule as fifty thousand. The number of people he killed has been calculated as more than 120 thousand. After his death, 30 thousand men and women were released from Iraqi prisons. These included thousands of Sindhis, Persians, Baloch, and Kurd women whom he kept in his private and secret prisons (Among the captives were two daughters of Sindhi king Daher). He is one of the loathsome characters in early Islamic history. He was notorious in his dealing with political prisoners. He was reported to personally supervise the torture and humiliations of prisoners. On certain occasions, he ordered that the prisoners should be given water to drink mixed with salt and lime, and, instead of food, they should be fed with a mixture of dung and donkey urine.

The major opposition against the overwhelming influence of Hajjaj in the empire came within the Ummayyad administration from Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Ash'ath. His rebellion was political and personal. When the Arab Empire's grip on Kerman and Sistan became weak because of the rebellion by the local population, the Kharijite uprising, and the inroads of the Turkish tribes of Gazz and Khalaj, the Ummayyad Caliph appointed Abd al-Rahman Ash'ath who belonged to a pre-Islamic noble family of Kandi as the governor of Sistan in 680 AD. He was also tasked to check the increasing encroachments by the Hindu ruler of Kabul into Arab domains of eastern Iran. He recruited a large army and regained lost grounds there.

Ibn Ash'ath and Hajjaj bin Yusuf had a history of mutual hatred. Hajjaj admonished Ibn Ash'ath on the quantity and quality of war booty collected from Kerman and Sistan and openly blamed laziness in dealing with the affairs in eastern Iran. Feeling insulted by a person of low social standard as compared to his royal background, Ibn Ash'ath asked the caliph for the replacement of Hajjaj as the supreme governor of the eastern provinces of the empire. After the Caliph refused his demand of dismissing Hajjaj as the governor of Iraq, this loyal Ummayyad general had no option but to rebel. Initially, from Sistan, he marches towards Iraq to dislodge Hajjaj but when the Caliph openly announced his support for Hajjaj, it became an anti-Ummayyad campaign by default. Many Yemeni tribes including Tamim, Bakr, and Kinana joined him in the rebellion. The Kufan and the people of Basra also joined hands with Ibn Ash'ath in his fight against Hajjaj. In many ways, Ibn Ash'ath's rebellion became a fight against the Syrian Arabs and Iraqi Arabs. The cruelties of Hajjaj had driven many discontented

nationalities and neo-Muslims to join the army of Ibn Ash'ath. Among these were believed to be many Baloch and Kurdish tribes. After initially, gaining victories in many battles against the Ummayyad forces, Ibn Ash'ath was finally defeated in the battle of Dayr al-Jamajim near Kufa and brutally murdered by Hajjaj.

Because they misjudged the strength of Ummayyad forces, the Baloch in Basra who earlier defected to the Arabs during the reign of Caliph Omar sustained mortal consequences because of the unforeseen outcome of the conflict between Ibn Ash'ath and Hajjaj bin Yusuf. Siding with Ibn Ash'ath was one of the reasons that they finally broke away from the Ummayyad side and faced persecution that included massacre and deportation.

The Kharijite phenomenon and the Baloch

When Banu Hashim and Banu Ummaya managed to settle their dispute peacefully by dividing the empire, a significant section of Ali's supporters accused him of betrayal and working against the sayings of the Prophets and the writings of the Qur'an. After fighting the indecisive Battle of Siffin in 657 AD Muawiah and Ali agreed to arbitration by neutral umpires that ultimately resulted in the division as both Muawiah and Ali became the rulers or caliphs of a divided empire. This aroused the anger of a large group of Ali's followers who declared him and Muawiah as renegades and call for their assassination to save Islam. They became known as Kharijites (expelled or who left). Ali fought against this extremist group and in the battle of Nahrawan thousands of them were slaughtered by the forces loyal to Ali, but the Kharijite movement persisted in a series of uprisings that plagued the rule of both Ali and Muawiah. One

of the Kharijite zealots, in a daring suicidal mission, assassinated Ali while he was worshipping in a mosque in Kufa. After Ali and Muawiyah, Kharijites became the permanent source of serious disruptions within the Umayyad and Abbasid domains in Iran and Arabia. The Umayyad governor of the eastern provinces of the empire Hajjaj bin Yusuf fought bloody battles against them and for a while their strength became insignificant. However, during the last years of Umayyad rule and the early decades of the Abbasid caliphate, the Kharijites by allying themselves with the Yemeni group of tribes who were engaged in a civil war against the Modharites became a major disturbing factor in the stability of the Arab rule over Iranian Plateau. During the reign of Umayyad ruler Merwan, not only Himmarites and Modharites Arabs were at each other's throats but the Kharijites gained unexpected support and for a while held sway in Hijaz, Yemen, and Iraq. Their supporters emerged from their desert hideouts, swarmed the townships, and called for a general insurrection to overthrow the illegal Umayyad rule. The Kharijite leader Amir Hamza became a force to be reckoned with. After the collapse of the Kharijite rebellion in Hijaz and Iraq, Amir Hamza moved to Eastern Iran and for nearly three decades he defied Umayyads and early Abbasid rulers.

Amir Hamza (Hamza bin Adharak) was one of the famous characters in the Arab civil war. Being a Yemenite (in some accounts, Hamza himself has been mentioned as from Iranian stock), his rebellion has also been a reflection of the Modharites-Yemenite's conflict. In his Kharijite uprising against Umayyads and later with the Abbasids, many dissatisfied tribes and nationalities in the eastern Iranian provinces joined his cause. Hamza was killed in the battle in

Zaranj in 828 AD and the Kharijite phenomenon ended in eastern Iran. Some of the authors mentioned the death of Hamza near the *Wās* (Khwaash) region of present-day Balochistan.

The Kharijite phenomenon originated in response to a religious-political controversy over the Caliphate. Ideologically, the basic doctrine of the Kharijites was that a person or a group who committed a grave error or sin and did not sincerely repent ceased to be a Muslim. In other words, good works were an integral part of faith and not extraneous to it. The Kharijites considered jihad to be among the cardinal principles or pillars of Islam. The Kharijites were known for their puritanism and fanaticism and believed in the literal interpretation of the Qur'an, however, for orthodox Muslims, the Kharijites with their radical agenda were highly inflammable fanatics, intolerant of almost any established political authority. The Kharijites were able to draw to themselves many who were dissatisfied with the existing political and religious authorities in the Arab Empire. They fought bloody battles against Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties and caused turbulence in the Arab society for a long time. Kharijism mainly attracted nomadic agropastoral tribes and people living in villages.

After the initial phase of the Arab conquests in Iran, the Baloch in Sistan, Makuran, and Turan became involved in the civil war between the Kharijites and the followers of Sunni sects of Islam. As observed by Mari (1974), although there is no mention of any significant role of the Baloch tribes in Makuran and Turan during the period of early caliphates, it is obvious that those Baloch who were present in these regions became

part of different uprisings by governors of these regions against the central authorities. It could not have been possible for local rulers, without the active support of the local population, to rise against the overwhelming power of the Caliphs. Bosworth (1968), observed that during the protracted conflicts initiated by the Kharijites, for many decades, Sistan and Makuran were major centers of Kharijite sentiments, and some of the Baloch tribes were the supporters of Amir Hamza, the Kharijite chief.

Although Kharijism originally began as an entirely Arab conflict, in Kerman and Sistan, many Iranian tribes were influenced by its enmity towards the brutal rules of Ummayyads and Abbasids. It is probably because Kharijism in the eastern Iranian Plateau succeeded in transforming itself from a movement with its roots in the politico-religious vicissitudes of the early Arab rule into one with some local foundations and with regards to their socio-economic concerns. During the early Abbasid period, Sistan became the region where Kharijism retained its following and became a vital force. Amir Hamza was successful in cutting off permanently all revenue and tributes from Sistan to Baghdad offering some relief to the local populace.

The conflict between northern and southern Arabs and the Baloch

The civil war between the northern and southern Arabs was an ongoing phenomenon throughout the rule of Ummayyads and Abbasids. From time to time, from Spain to Khurasan, the old animosity between the two factions surfaced with ferocities and much bloodshed. During the rule of Merwan, the last caliph of the Ummayyad dynasty, the conflict between Modharites and Himyarite tribes in Eastern Iran became so intense that for

many analysts it became the final blow to the trembling Ummayyad Empire.

It was during the Ummayyad era (638–750), that the Arab tribes began organizing themselves along with Himyarite and Modharite to constitute something like a political party. Initially, the old conflict between these northern and southern Arab tribes resurfaced within the Ummayyad army and administration in the 7th and 8th centuries. The conflict, however, did not effectively take shape until after the reign of Caliph Muawiah 1. Although the Umayyad rulers attempted to balance the powers and privileges of both factions, the rivalry continued to smolder. Their rivalry diminished significantly under the Abbasids except for some occasional outbreaks of violence.

The Himyarite-Modharite conflict in Iraq, specifically Basra, intensified with the mass migration of Azd tribesmen from Oman to Basra changing the balance of power in favor of Yemeni tribes. Basra was the eastern headquarter of the Arab army and many Iranian ethnic groups settled there after their conversion to Islam or their joining of the Arab army as mercenaries. The Baloch tribes who settled in Basra after their defection and affiliated with the Banu Tamim tribe were also caught in the civil strife between northern and southern Arab tribes.

Political disarray spread throughout the Arab Empire in the wake of Caliph Yazid's death in 683 and the succession of Muawiah 11 as the decision on the appointment of new caliph several weeks. The struggle for the caliphate resulted in a bloody battle between Himyarite and Modharite supporters.

The confrontations began in Upper Mesopotamia and the Palmyrene steppe but at a later stage, this civil war spread to Hijaz, Iraq, and the eastern regions of the Empire. The two factions then fought a decisive battle at Marj Rahit, which lasted twenty days, beginning on 18 August 684 AD. The far more numerous Modharites were routed and many of them were killed as they retreated. But the Battle further consolidated the division of the Arab tribes into northern and southern factions and the feud was to continue for generations. Following Marj Rahit, the northern tribes initiated a series of raids and counterraids against the southerners in famous Ayyam battles.

The Himyarite-Modharite conflict among the Arabs was based on tribal loyalties, which sought to control access to military power and the privileges in the Ummayyad dynasty. The ultimate objective for each faction was the Ummayyad caliph's favor and appointment to provincial governorships. Following the collapse of the Umayyads, the political significance of the Himyarite and Modharite factions diminished considerably.

The Baloch and other ethnic groups were facing a real dilemma during the civil war between Himyarite and Modharite Arab tribes. It was very difficult for newly affiliated ethnic groups and tribes in the Arab empire to avoid association with either camp in the protracted civil war. However, they were facing the hard choice of whom to favor. It can be observed that like many other tribes, the Baloch tribes were favoring one faction for a while and changing their loyalty to the other according to the developing political and military situation.

Umayyads-Abbasid's conflict and the Baloch

During the last years of Ummayyad rule, the descendants of Abbas, one of the uncles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), organized a secret network aiming for the overthrow of the Ummayyad dynasty. Their network of political and religious activists portrayed the Abbasid clan as the champion of the cause of the prophet's family. They got tremendous responses not only from those who sympathize with the cause that the right to rule should be given to the family of the Prophet but also from the Iranians who were still dreaming of taking revenge for their humiliating defeat by the Arabs. Many writers believed that the support to Abbasids by Iranians was primarily to weaken the Arab Empire. The hide and seek continued between the Ummayyad hit squads trying to wipe out the network and the determined supporters of Abbasids for many years.

Abbasid opposition to the Ummayyad rule gained momentum during the rule of Merwan who became the last ruler from Ummayyad tribes. In 747 AD, an ordained supporter of the Abbassids cause, Abu Muslim from Khurasan gathered a huge army and openly called for the ouster of illegal Ummayyad rule and the restoration of the caliphate to the family of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Inspired by the news of Abu Muslim's gains in the East, the rebellion erupted against the Ummayyad in the south and the west of the empire. Ummayyad forces were outnumbered and overwhelmed in many places. Within two years, almost all of the Iranian Plateau came under the actual control of Abu Muslim. In 749, forces led by Abu Muslim occupied Kufa, and a parallel Abbasid caliphate was proclaimed. From Damascus, Ummayyad ruler Merwan led his

army towards Kufa. Both forces met at the banks of River Zab in January 750 AD. Ummayyad army was crushed. Merwan fled to Egypt where he was killed by Abbasid hitmen. The civil war between Ummayyad and Abbasid clans end ingloriously when the first Abbasid ruler, deceptively invited all the members of the former ruling family of the Ummayyad clan in a reconciliatory banquet where they were massacred.

Nothing can be seen about the role of Baloch tribes in the Ummayyad-Abbasid conflict. But they might certainly have decided on siding with the Abbasid cause as the other Iranian people were enlisting in the army of Abu Muslim Khurasani. After the defeat of the last Ummayyad ruler Merwan, the immediate release of some of the Baloch tribes which were exiled to Aleppo during the Ummayyad reign is indicative of the Baloch support to the Abbasid cause.

Conclusion

One of the great events in the history of the region where the ancient Baloch were living is the collapse of the mighty Sassanid Empire. Armed with the new religious doctrine of Islam, the divided Arab tribes united and became an invincible force. Within a short period of twenty-five years, the complete occupation of Iran by a little-known group of tribes was one of the fascinating events in world history. The Arab conquest of Iran affected not only the Iranian world but also the whole of Central Asia. The unexpected collapse of the Persian Empire, the eventual decline of the Zoroastrian religion, and the supremacy of Almighty Allah as the all-powerful god in the Iranian Plateau changed the dynamics of politics and religion in the whole region.

During the last decades of the Sassanid period and at the time of Arab invasion, the pastoralist nomadic Baloch tribes were scattered in Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, and Sistan. They have their distinct way of life as dwellers of mountains and deserts. Although the Baloch in Sistan, Makuran, and Turan were not in a position to play important roles in the political upheavals of the time it can be assumed that the Baloch in Gilan, Deylam, and Kerman was a force to be reckoned with, and they played important roles and participated in some of the events which were pivotal in changing the political situation of Iran. The Baloch role in Kerman during the early Arab advance was significant as they were part of the Iranian resistance. They were giving protection to Iranian religious and administrative officials in their mountain dwellings.

The Baloch suffered in a series of civil wars between various contender of powers in the Arab Empire. The Baloch did not play any significant role in the first phase of the struggle for power between Banu Hashim and Banu Ummaya that began soon after the death of the Prophet. However, later, by default, they became involved in the protracted conflict. It was unavoidable because the Baloch tribes who defected to Arabs were affiliated with those tribes who participated in the civil war one way or the other. It was also logical for the Baloch who were facing atrocities during the Ummayad rule to side with the opposition led by the Abbasids.

From the account of the Baloch deportation to Syria by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, it appears that the decision of defection to Arabs made by some of the Baloch tribes did not bear fruit for them. They also miscalculated the strength of the Ummayad dynasty and sided with the losing sides in the Arab civil wars. Their

sufferings during the Arab rule in Iran were part of their own and partly by default. Even after the collapse of Sassanid's power, there was no respite for the Baloch.

The Kharijite phenomenon not only caused turmoil especially in the eastern regions of the Arab Empire during Ummayyad and Abbasid rules but also affected Iranian people under Arab rule. The Baloch tribes were present in significant numbers in Kerman and Sistan regions during the peak of the Kharijite insurgency and became involved in the protracted and bloody conflict between the Kharijites and the orthodox Muslims. Many of the Baloch sided with Kharijite chief Amir Hamza in his 25 years long uprising in eastern Iran.

The entry of Arabs with their new religion marked a major turning point in the history of Iran. The Arabs made decisive changes in Iranian society, affecting the culture, language, and religious beliefs of all ethnic and national entities of Iran. They tried to create a new Muslim identity by forcing the population to adopt Arabic theological and cultural concepts, language, and script. In many cases, even the names of the tribes and individuals were changed into Arabic names. Arabic began to infiltrate the vernacular, and gradually, many Arabic words entered the languages of Iranian origins. Although the Iranians fought long and hard against the invading Arabs, for many, it was already a losing battle as Persia at the time of the Arab invasion was a society in decline and decay and once an all-powerful empire and the second superpower of the ancient world was on the verge of imploding due to its internal contradictions. The Arab invasion of Iran caused divisions among the Baloch. Some of them defected to the Arabs while others fought alongside other Iranians to counter the invasion.

In the end, the Baloch faced persecution, humiliation, and deportations in various regions of the Iranian Plateau by the new rulers who replaced the Sassanids.

Figure 11: Map of the state of Medina and its invasion of Iran from AD 632 to 750

Source: <http://iranpoliticsclub.net/maps>

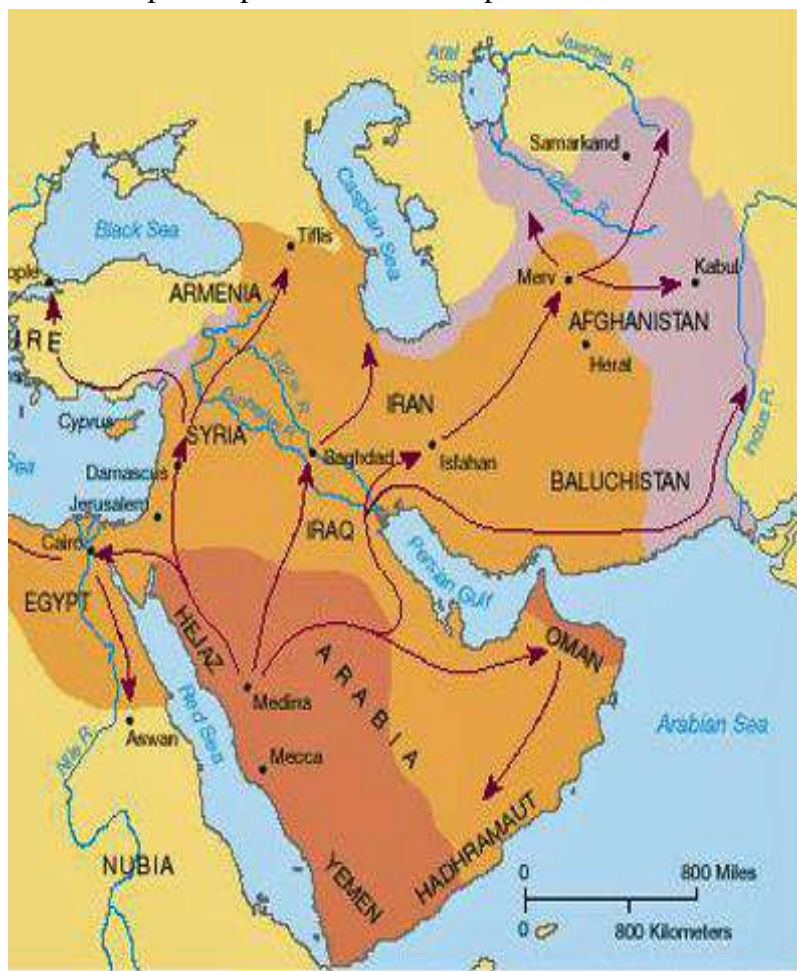


Figure 12: **Map of the Arab Empire during Umayyad rule**
Source: <http://www.google.co.uk>



Figure 13: Map of the Abbasid Empire

Source: Wikipedia



Chapter Five:

Regional dynasties of Iran and the Baloch

Introduction

After the collapse of the Sassanid power, Iran was ruled directly by the Arabs from Medina, Damascus, and Baghdad but their effective rule lasted for only 150 years. At the end of the reign of early powerful Abbasid Caliphs, Iran was practically ruled by different dynasties of Iranian origin enjoying various forms of autonomy, and the caliphs virtually became powerless. As mentioned in the earlier sections of the book, from the last decades of Sassanid rule, the Baloch or *Balāscik* was not mentioned in any historical accounts. However, after a brief interval, they showed their presence in Deylam, Kerman, Ṣaṣṣ, and Sistan regions of Eastern Iran. Some writers of medieval times mentioned them as Koch o Baloch. The Baloch came into conflict with some of the emerging regional powers including the Saffarids, Buyids, and Ghaznavids. Their bloody conflicts with them were instrumental in waves of migration by the Baloch tribes further east. Perhaps, this was the period during which almost total evacuation of the Brahui (Barezui) group of Baloch tribes occurred from the Barez mountains in Kerman and their settlement in Turan began.

The Baloch and regional dynasties

The Abbasids initially relied on the people of Iran in their struggle to overthrow the Umayyad Dynasty. However, soon they got rid of Iranian political influence by physically eliminating powerful Abu Muslim who was becoming a threat

to their power. Not trusting the Arab tribes, they were forced to rely on Turk slaves as bodyguards, generals, and pages in the harems. Within a few decades, these mercenary Turks became very influential in the court of the caliphs in Baghdad. They assumed the role of King makers and the caliphs became their puppets. This also encouraged various powerful Persian families in Iran to assert their political power in various regions. After nearly 150 years of effective rule in the Iranian Plateau, the Arab power in practical terms ended, and an era of Iranian and Turkish dynastic rules began. Many dynastic kingdoms or emirates appeared on the political map of the Iranian Plateau that dictated their terms on caliphs in Baghdad. Among the various Iranian dynasties that were ruling different regions of Iran under the nominal leadership of the Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, the Tahirids Dynasty was the first Persian Dynasty that ruled eastern Iran independently for fifty years from AD 821 to 873 (Bosworth, 1977). The end of the Tahirid domination began with the rise of the Saffarids of Sistan and was followed by many other regional dynasties.

The Saffarids

The Saffarid's rule (861–1003) was centered in Sistan, and Yaqub bin Laith and his brother Amer bin Laith were the founders of the dynasty. In the beginning, they were able to capture the power with the help of Ayyaran (a paramilitary Sunni group that was the main militant force against the Kharijites) and some of the disgruntled elements within the Kharijite Movement. They took Kabul and, later, wrested Khurasan from the Tahirids, ultimately adding Kerman, Makuran, and Fars to their rule (Bosworth, 1977).

The extended rule of the Saffarids did not last long, and Amer bin Laith was defeated in a battle with the Samanids in AD 900. Their state was truncated, subsequently, confined to the heartland of Sistan, with their role reduced to that of vassals of the Samanids rulers. Bosworth (1977), observed that the Saffarids were the most powerful among the rulers of Iranian origin, who proudly called themselves Iranians. During their rule, the Persians initiated a practically independent power display after their devastating defeat by the Arabs in the seventh century. According to Bosworth (1977), although Tahirids were hesitant about admitting their Persian origin, the rise of the Saffarids Dynasty was, admittedly, the first significant breach in the territorial integrity of the Arab Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad.

Mari (1974) observed that the Baloch were eternal enemies of the Buyids, Turks, and many other Iranian rulers but were friendly toward the Saffarids rulers of Sistan. However, according to *Tarikh-e-Sistan* (Gold, 1976), the Baloch, living in Barez Mountain, fought against Yaqub bin Laith in Kerman. In AD 863, Yaqub attacked and captured Bam and advanced toward Kerman, where the local commander Towq bin Moghallas was taken into prison. Some of the writers mentioned Yali Barezui as the chief of the Baloch tribes living in the Barez Mountains. The governor of Kerman Ali bin Husain (also called Kursh) assembled an army with the help of Koch o Baloch. The army was called the "Army of Kursh" and the fighters were known as Kurshi. We do not know, exactly, the names of the Baloch tribes and their chiefs who were part of this army and fought against Yaqub. We only know that after a fierce fight, the Army of Kursh was defeated and one of the Baloch chiefs was taken as prisoner. He was taken to Bam

where he was executed. Many Baloch families were also deported into various regions in Persia. The presence of a group of Baloch in the surrounding areas of present-day Shiraz calling themselves Kurshi can be explained in the context of this episode of Baloch history. The Baloch tribes loyal to Ali ibn Husain (Kursh) who were deported to Persia might have been given or taken the name of Kurshi (supporters or followers of Kursh). Istakhri (1800), described in detail the events of the fight of the Saffarids against the Baloch whom he termed as brigands. He mentioned that the people of Jiruft, with leaders from the Baloch of Barez Mountains and the Koch, along with some other brigands, revolted against Yaqub bin Laith, but he managed to subdue them, capture their leaders, and imprison them at Bam where they died or were executed. Except for their confrontation in Kerman, there is no precise and detailed account of any major encounter of the Baloch tribes with Saffarids rulers in other regions has been mentioned in the historical accounts.

During the last years of the ninth century, Saffarids chief Amer bin Laith dispatched Laith bin Ali, a nephew of Yaqub bin Laith, with a strong army to reduce Makuran. Saffarids extended their rule over Makuran, and during the late ninth and early tenth centuries, the ruler of the region, Isa ibn Madan, became tributary to the Saffarids of Sistan (Bosworth, 1977, 1968). The Baloch tribes living in Makuran at that time had been on the side of the Madan family in its struggle against different rulers who tried to exert their influence on Makuran. However, the administration of the Saffarids in Kerman and Makuran ended shortly after the defeat of Amer bin Laith by the powerful Samanids in the reign of their chief Nasr bin Ahmad in AD 911.

The Baloch presence in Sistan, Makuran, and Turan had also been established by various writers during the Saffarids period {Istakhri mentioned a place named as Gumbaz ay Baloch and two provinces of Sistan as the Baloch country which were most probably modern Kharan and Chagai}. However, Bosworth (1977), observed that at that period of Baloch history, although they were part of various armies, perhaps, the Baloch were not among the major political players in Sistan, Makuran, and Turan.

The Saffarid rule was short-lived. When the power of Saffarids diminished in Fars and Kerman, for some time, the caliphate in Baghdad resumed the direct control of the regions previously under Saffarid's authority until the emergence of Buyids on the political scene of Iran.

Ziyarids, Buyids and the Baloch

In western and northern Iran, Ziyarids and Buyids emerged as powerful dynasties at the time when the Saffarids were emerging as a regional power in the east. Based in northern Persia, the Deylamite Ziyarids and the Buyids ruled major parts of Iran between AD 928 and 1055 (Bosworth, 1994). Later, they were among the major contemporaries of Ghaznavids who became the dominant power in eastern Iran.

The Deylamites acquired a reputation as hardy and brave fighters in the army of the early Abbasid Caliphs and were supporters of Shi'ism. Deylamite leader, Mardavij bin Ziar, established his rule in most of northern Persia and captured Hamadan and Holwan near the present-day Iranian border with Iraq. In AD 935, he was assassinated, and his empire fell apart,

even though his dynasty continued to rule, on and off, in Tabaristan and Gurgan until AD 1090, mostly as vassals of the Ghaznavids (Bosworth, 1968).

After Mardavij, in 936 AD, three sons of a Deylamite chieftain Buya (Ali, Hassan, and Ahmad) gained power on most of Central Iran and entered Baghdad in 945. A year later, they deposed the Caliph al-Mostakfi and replaced him with al-Moti. Thus began 110 years of domination of the Buyids over the Caliphate. After Ahmad's son, Azod-al-Dawla (AD 949–983), the Buyids Empire was divided among his successors. Morgan (1988) observed that at its height of power in the latter part of the tenth century, the Buyids Empire included Iraq, central, western, and northern Persia, Kerman, and Oman.

The Buyid's rule in later periods is marked by never-ending conflicts among the descendants of the three founding brothers and their wars with other emerging powers: the Samanids, the Ghaznavids, the later Saffarids, as well as other local warlords. Morgan (1988) believed that these protracted conflicts eventually weakened them so that the Sunnite Seljuqs had little difficulty in defeating and putting an end to their dominant role in the courts of puppet Abbasid caliphs when they entered Baghdad in AD 1055. The Buyids survived as rulers for a few more years in Kerman until they succumbed to the Kurdish Shabankara rulers who soon lost Kerman to the overwhelming power of emerging Seljuqs. For many decades, Kerman became the battleground of regional powers. The possession of Kerman was alternatively claimed by various semi-independent dynasties, including the Samanids and the Buyids throughout the eleventh century. As a major factor in the power politics of the day, the Baloch tribes living in Kerman and

Sistan came into conflict with Buyids. They also became involved in the power struggle of various contending dynasties for rule over the Iranian Plateau.

During the prominence of Deylamites, many Baloch tribes living in Deylam have already settled in the Barez mountains and other parts of Kerman after their release from forced exile during the Ummayyad period. Although, migrating Baloch tribes penetrated many regions which constitute present-day Balochistan the major concentration of the Baloch in the 10th and 11th centuries appears to be in Kerman and surrounding regions. According to Istakhri (1961), the country of the Baloch in Kerman was lying between Barez Mountain and the Gulf of Oman. Minorsky (1937) suggested that a number of the Baloch tribes were in a dominating position in an area bounded by the sea in the south, Hormuz, and Manujan in the west, the districts of Rudbar and the hill region called Kuhistan ay Abu Ghanim in the north, and Khwash and the desert in the east. Hudud al Alam (see Minorsky, 1970) described the Kuh ay Kufij as a chain of seven mountains running from Jiruft to the sea, with seven tribes, each with its chief and being “professional looters.” However, it became obvious, looking at later events, that either these mentioned entities were, in fact, different Baloch tribes, or they were under a tribal confederacy led by the Baloch.

Events developed in such a way that the Baloch became engaged in a protracted and bloody confrontation with the Buyids resulting in immense suffering for them. The Baloch encounters with the Buyids had been graphically reported by the historians of that period. Bosworth (1994) observed that in eastern Kerman and southwestern Makuran Baloch were a

significant force in AD 971 when the Buyids General Abid bin Ali captured Tiz and the surrounding territory and converted the population to Islam. Buyids chiefs Mu'izz ad-Daula and Adud ad-Daula took draconian measures against the Koch o Baloch in Kerman. Maqaddesi was very proud of the actions of Adud ad-Daula when he stated that he destroyed them and wrought damage among the Koch and Baloch. From Maqaddesi, it appears that Adud ad-Daula used "very decent tactics" in dealing with the Baloch as he took eighty young sons of the Baloch tribal chiefs and elders as hostages to Shiraz and these hostages were exchanged with other eighty youths every so often. Some of the noble deeds and very decent tactics of this Buyids chief vis-à-vis the Baloch will be described in the following sections.

The relationship between the Koch o Baloch with Buyids dates back to AD 933 when Ali Buya, also known as Imad al-Daulah, recruited an army of 1,600 Deylamites and 500 Turks to subjugate the Baloch. He gave the leadership of the army to his younger brother Ahmad Buya, known as Mu'izz al-Daulah. Tabari (2007) described how Mu'izz ad-Daula succeeded in subjugating the Baloch. First, Ahmad Buya took Bam. Approaching Jiruft, he was received by the delegation of Yali Guluya (Yali Barezui), the chief of the Baloch and Koch, and other tribes in the area allied with the Baloch.

The Koch o Baloch in Kerman were known to show courtesy to every major power that approached them by professing submission and paying tribute, but they never attended their courts and never tolerated any infringement on their territory and their way of independent living. This was the ground of negotiations of Yali Guluya with the Buyids. Accordingly, to

avoid unnecessary confrontation with a mighty force, the Baloch chief evacuated the city for Ahmad Buya. The Baloch encamped themselves in a supposedly impregnable place, ten leagues distant from the city. The delegations came and went between the two sides and ended with an agreement to the effect that the Baloch chief would send a hostage and an annual tribute of a million dirham's supererogatory to the tribute. Furthermore, the Baloch chief acknowledged the Buyids' supremacy in the khutbah (Friday sermon) and thus showed subservience to the Buyids' rule.

Ahmad Buya, however, violated the agreement and set out to attack the Baloch unawares. The Baloch chief, being informed about the treachery, prepared to counter the Buyids Army and organized contingents of his fighters in concealment on both sides of a defile in the postulated route of Buyids advance. This defile was called Dar ay Farid or Dilfiirid in the mountain zone connecting the central massif of Sardsir with Barez Mountain (Bosworth, 1977). As Buyids forces passed through it in the darkness of the night, the Koch o Baloch took them by surprise, slaying and capturing so extensively that only a few of the Buyids fighters could escape. Ahmad Buya himself received many conspicuous sword-strokes and lost his left hand and several fingers of his right one and was so severely wounded in head and trunk that he fell among the slain. The whole of the Buyids garrison in Jiruft, when informed about the bitter defeat, fled toward Fars. On the following morning, the Baloch found Buyids prince close to death, but he was carried to Jiruft and, on the instruction of the Baloch chief, was treated and taken care of for his wounds.

Following these events, Buyids ruler Ali Buya sent another force of 2,000 toward Kerman. The Baloch chief Yali Golayah (He is also written as Yali Barezui in many scripts), meanwhile, to diffuse the situation, sent a mission with a letter to Buyids capital Istakhir to apologize to the Buyid ruler for the injuries sustained by his brother and to explain the heart of the matter that the Baloch were not to be blamed. He also professed obedience to Buyid rule. Ali Buya in turn, dispatched a deputation with the Qadi of Shiraz, Abu al-Abbas al-Hannat, and other notable men to express satisfaction and that he accepted the Baloch leader's explanations and apology and his fulfillment of what had been agreed. He returned the hostage and renewed the treaty and covenant reached earlier with the Baloch. Then, in reciprocation, the Baloch released his brother Ahmad Buya and all other captives after treating them favorably and bestowing on them gifts and other benefits.

However, despite the agreement of his brother, Ahmad Buya launched a reprisal attack from Sirjan to avenge his hurt upon the leader of the Koch o Baloch. Yali Golayah went to meet him in battle and stormed the army of the Buyids on a rainy night when people could hardly discern each other except by their languages, and Koch o Baloch inflicted heavy losses upon their enemy. However, in the morning, the Buyids forces regrouped and fought the Baloch in a fresh battle, resulting in the ultimate defeat of the Baloch fighters. This success seems not to have been an act of sufficient revenge for the young Buyids chief. According to Meskawiah (1915), Ahmad Buya, having satisfied merely a part of his grief, still cherished hatred against the Baloch in his heart. Nonetheless, the Buyids troops were recalled to capital Istakhir for the time being as the dynasty was facing another danger in the northwest.

After a decade or so, the Buyids again turned their attention toward Kerman. Buyids chief of Fars and Khuzistan, Adud ad-Daula, launched many punitive expeditions against the Koch o Baloch. The court poet of Adud ad-Daula, Mutanabbi, in AD 965, mentioned in a verse that his patron was the one who offered cups of death to his foes on the one hand and cups of wine to his intimates on the other hand, when he made the Koch like the previous day that had passed away totally (Bosworth, 1977). However, it appeared that despite this boast, the Baloch did not vanish altogether from the political scene of Kerman.

Adud ad-Duala clashed with the Baloch when he attacked Kerman in AD 967 and defeated Ilyas the son and successor of Muhammad bin Ilyas (Bosworth, 1977). The Baloch were allied with Ilyas, and a major part of his army was made of the Baloch fighters. Another son of Muhammad bin Ilyas, Suleiman, attempted with Samanids' help to make a retaliatory attack in AD 970 in alliance with the Koch o Baloch. Although this time also, the Ilyasid forces were defeated, the resistance of the Koch o Baloch against the Buyids continued for a year or so afterward. Istakhri (1961) observed that this resistance, whose leaders included Abu Saeed Baloch and his sons, compelled Adud ad-Daula to take as drastic measures as possible against this running sore of the Koch o Baloch. In AD 970 and 972, two campaigns were launched against them, and, as a result, the Buyids authority was extended as far eastward as Makuran (Istakhri, 1961).

According to Istakhri (1961), in the first campaign, the Buyids generals Kurkir bin Jastin and Abid bin Ali marched southward from Jiruft, defeating an army of the Koch o Baloch and the fighters from Manujan in the south of Jiruft in December AD

970. The Koch o Baloch was routed, with five thousand of their numbers killed, including two of their generals who were the sons of the Baloch chief, Abu Saeed. The Buyids forces then turned eastward to Tiz. In the second campaign, Adud ad-Daula came personally to Sirjan to direct operations against the Baloch; an army penetrated Barez Mountain, defeating the Baloch under the leadership of Yali Barezui (Yali Barezui is probably Yali Golaya of other accounts), slaughtering their males, and enslaving the women and children in AD 972 (Bosworth, 1977). The remnants of the Baloch were deported from the Barez Mountain, and peasants and cultivators from other parts of his domain were settled in their place.

According to Meskawiah (1915), Adud ad-Daula, during this expedition against the Baloch, resorted to a unique tactic to force out a group of Baloch from a very narrow valley in the Barez Mountain where, after the main battle, they were taking refuge. As it was dangerous for the army to move into the valley after traversing a very narrow pass without being shot at by the Baloch taking stand on the lofty mountain ridges, he sent a messenger for negotiation. The Baloch were asked for some kind of tribute to leave them alone in their hideout. As the Baloch were not in a position to pay any ransom, Adud al-Daula agreed to leave the Baloch if every family would furnish him with a dog. After the Baloch sent him the dogs, these were sent back toward the Baloch bound with burning naphtha on their necks. The dogs with the burning naphtha fled back to the tents of their respective masters causing fires all over the settlement. In the mayhem that followed the burning dogs, the Buyid army entered the valley from the narrow pass and massacred the Baloch. With the use of this innovative tactic, he was able to burn the whole settlement of the Baloch and

annihilate the population. During the same campaign, an amphibious invasion of Makuran was launched, with ships coming from Siraf and Hormuz and with an army marching by the land. Maqaddesi (1906) observed that after repeated aggressive and extensive campaigns, the Buyids ruler had scattered the Baloch and lay waste their lands, taking some into slavery and settling others elsewhere.

As mentioned by Maqaddesi, the Baloch living in Barez Mountains and surrounding regions were deported or made slaves and their lands were wasted. Later events in Baloch history showed that the annihilation of the Baloch was not total. The Baloch were still there in Kerman after the victorious campaigns of the Buyids. However, defeats in the hands of the Buyids and genocide acts of the Buyids rulers forced a wave of mass migration of the remaining Baloch tribes toward the east into Makuran, Sistan, and Turan where many of the Baloch tribes had already a presence because of their earlier migrations. In many ways, this was one of the major exoduses of the Baloch from west to east, toward the lands that later formed the present-day Balochistan.

The Samanid Empire

Nuh, Ahmad, Yahya, Ilyas, were the sons of Saman Khuda, a farmer in the Balkh province of the crumbling Abbasid caliphate who founded a strong dynasty in the 9th century. The Samanids Dynasty from the beginning of the ninth century to the beginning of the eleventh century ruled a large part of northern Iran. The Samanid's domain stretched north as far as Chorasmia and the upper Oxus valleys, to Khurasan, Gurgan, and, for a while, it stretched as far as the present-day border

with Iraq. Samanids rulers recruited many Turkish captives as soldiers and officers in their army and as pages and servants in their palaces. This recruitment ultimately caused the demise of the empire.

Samanid initially acted as the vassals of the Tahirid dynasty but after their weakening because of the protracted conflict with Saffarids, they declared their independent rule in present-day Afghanistan and Central Asia. For a while, the sons of Nuh fought for the throne but eventually, Ismail became victorious and took control of the Samanid Empire. After defeating the last Saffarids ruler Yaqub bin Saffar in 900 AD, the puppet Abbasid caliph recognized him as the ruler of Khurasan, Tabaristan, Ray, Isfahan, and Transoxiana. After Ismail's death, his son and successor Ahmad invaded Sistan and by 911 it came under complete Samanid control. That was the peak of Samanid power.

During the latter half of the 10th century, the Samanid dynasty was facing decline and it crumbled in the latter half of the 10th century. In 962, one of the slave commanders Alp Tigin, who was commanding the Samanid army in Khurasan, seized Ghazna and established himself there. His successor, Sebuk Tigin, continued to rule as Samanid governor. With the weakened Samanids facing rising challenges from the Karakhanids for the control of Transoxiana, Sebuk Tigin later took control of all the provinces south of the Oxus and established the Ghaznavid Empire. By the end of the 10th century, the Samanid empire collapsed, but for a while, Ismail Muntasir, the last ruler of the Samanid, tried in vain to regain the Samanid grip on the region.

For many observers, the Samanid Empire was part of the Persian renaissance after the Arab rule. Even though the Samanids professed Sunni Islam, they were, however, much more tolerant towards their Zoroastrian subjects. There is mention of several fire temples during the Samanid rule in the Iranian Plateau. Samanid era is also known for the revival of Persian cultural traditions and literature. Famous poets patronized by the Samanid rulers were Rudaki, Dakiki, and Firdausi.

The Samanids faced permanent resistance to their rule by Deylamite and the nobles of Gilan. The Baloch in Sistan, Kerman, and Gilan were caught in these conflicts but there is no mention of any active Baloch involvement on either side. It appears that for the Baloch living in territories controlled by Samanid rulers, the Samanid era was the most peaceful period.

The Ghaznavids and the Baloch

When the Samanids state began to weaken, Turkish slaves asserted their power on the ruling family. Some of the Turkish slave officers openly rebelled against their sovereigns. One of the slave chiefs, Alp Tigin, the nominal vassal of the Samanids, conquered Ghazna in 962 from the Lawik dynasty. His son Sebuk Tigin, who governed Ghazna for twenty years till 997 AD and founded an independent dynasty based in Ghazna, following the decline of the Samanid Empire in the 990s. He was succeeded by his son Mahmud. During his reign, the Ghaznavids Dynasty was at its peak of glory and power (Bosworth, 1963). Mahmud was succeeded first by his son Muhammad who was, however, overcome by his brother Masud. Masud was decisively defeated by Seljuqs at

Dandanqan in AD 1040 and lost control of Khurasan (Baihaqi, 1945). With the extension of Seljuq's power, the Ghaznavid's territory shrank, and, at the time, it was confined to their Indian regions until the Turkic Ghurids of Afghanistan put an end to the dynasty in AD 1186.

Among the Ghaznavids, the ruler who consolidated Ghaznavid's rule and gained notoriety for his ruthlessness during numerous plundering raids in India and Iranian Plateau was Mahmud. At the beginning of his rise to power, he defeated the army of Esmail II, the last of the Samanids, in 1005 and became the master of Khurasan. He then occupied Sistan and expanded his territory into eastern Turkestan (Bosworth, 1963). His raids on the Indian plains of Punjab and Sindh enriched him with considerable booty and numerous Indian slaves. His devastating advances penetrated the Ganges-Jumna Doab, and he went in search of Indian riches as far as Gwalior in Central India. He was also able to recruit a large number of mercenaries from India to bolster his war efforts in conquering a vast region of Central Asia. Later, in his reign, he also annexed Chorasmia to his possessions and extended his attacks to Buyids territories, and captured Ray.

The relation between the Ghaznavids and the Baloch had never been peaceful. The Baloch living in Turan and Makuran at that time became involved in conflicts between local rulers and the Ghaznavids. Turan and Makuran came under the Ghaznavids founder Sebuk Tigin's suzerainty as early as AD 976–977 (Bosworth, 1963). It is reasonably clear that Turan was brought under the Ghaznavids allegiance, perhaps even before Sebuk Tigin was proclaimed as independent Amir of Ghazna when in AD 976, he launched an attack upon Khuzdar. The Baloch

came into conflict with the Ghaznavids in Turan and Makuran in still earlier periods. The Baloch fought against Sebuk Tigin as part of local forces when he again attacked Khuzdar in AD 994. The Baloch tribes were allied with the Kharijite ruler of Turan when Mahmud attacked Khuzdar in AD 1011. At the beginning of the reign of Masud I (AD 1040), he sent an army under his influential uncle Yusuf bin Sebuk Tigin to reduce Khuzdar and Makuran. Afterward, in AD 1047, during the reign of Moudud, Turan again rebelled, and an army was dispatched there to compel the rebels into submission.

The Baloch were in alliance with Saffarids chief Amir Khalaf and fought against Mahmud when the Ghaznavids forces invaded Sistan in AD 1013 (Muir, 1924). Many other occasions were mentioned by the historians of the Ghaznavids era in which the Baloch came into confrontation with the Ghaznavids forces (Nizam al-Mulk, 1960). Masud, son of Mahmud, attacked Kerman and occupied it for two years in AD 1034 and 1035 (Bosworth, 1963). The Baloch resisted their occupation as an ally of the local ruler. On the pretext that the Baloch have robbed Mahmud's ambassador in the desert north of Kerman between Tabas and Khabis, Mahmud sent his son Masud against them (Dames, 1904). The Baloch engaged the Ghaznavid forces under the command of Masud three times, and in one of the encounters, they were able to defeat the Ghaznavids contingent but were defeated in the following two.

The encounters of the Baloch with the Ghaznavids had been mentioned by Nizam al-Mulk (1960) in his famous book *Siyasat Nama*. In one of his narratives, he described how Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was forced to deal with the spoliations of the Koch o Baloch as they were marauding the whole region

between Sistan and Kerman. Sultan Mahmud sent presents through his ambassador to the ruler of Kerman. According to Nizam al-Mulk, a party of the Baloch marauders between Tabas and Khabis caught the ambassador of the Sultan, and his party was looted to the last man. The ambassador came back and met the Sultan who was on his way to Khwarezm (Choresmia). While staying at Bust, Sultan Mahmud sent his son Masud with a strong contingent to punish the Baloch. The Baloch fought fearlessly but ultimately were defeated by the Ghaznavid's forces. Many were killed and captured, and their settlements were looted, and Masud returned with immense booty.

On many other occasions during the reign of Masud, several expeditions were sent to deal with the issue of the ever-hostile Baloch. It appears that while finding it hard to subjugate the Baloch in classical ways of fighting, the Ghaznavids ruler resorted to the poisoning of the Baloch. A caravan of poisoned apples was purposely sent through the Kerman desert. The court historians of Ghaznavids rulers, including Nizam al-Mulk, proudly stated that Baloch attacked the caravan and devoured the apples as hungry wolves. The poison acted as an epidemic and exterminated a great number of them.

According to Baihaqi (1945), the Baloch were part of the forces of Isa bin Madan, the ruler of Makuran, the one who fought against Masud. In this battle, hundreds from Makuran and the fighters from the Reiki tribe of Kharan were massacred, and the Ghaznavids Army devastated the area. For ten days, the Ghaznavids killed whoever came into their sight in Kech Valley. According to Raverty (1888), during the reign of Moudud, after the murder of his father Masud in AD 1047, the

Ghaznavids forces entered Turan and quelled a rebellion near Khuzdar.

The mentioning of various encounters of the Baloch with the Ghaznavids, especially in Sistan, Makuran, and Turan, suggests that the Baloch at that time were able to exert their presence in these regions, although their presence was not a significant one politically. This may be because they were still in a transitory phase (as the migrations were still going on) and the pastoralist Baloch tribes were still looking for safe and greener pastures, or maybe they were not fully in charge of their affairs in a satisfactory way. But the accounts also indicate that the Baloch were still a force to be reckoned in some parts of Kerman and Sistan at the time of Sultan Masud of Ghazni, and they were beginning to assert their presence in Makuran and Turan making alliances with local rulers or being parts of their armies.

The empire of Sindh and the Baloch

During the last century of the Sassanid Dynasty and before the Arab invasion of Iran, Sindh played a major role in the history of the ancient Baloch. Major parts of present Balochistan were ruled by the Rai Dynasty of Sindh during AD 489–632 (Masum, 1855). Rai Divaji was the greatest ruler of this dynasty. The Rais ruled an area extending to Kanauj in the east, Makuran in the west, and Surat port in the south. In the north, it extended to the borders of the Sistan and Suleiman ranges. Five kings of this dynasty are found to have been mentioned in the old historical accounts of India. They are Rai Devaji, Rai Sahras, Rai Sahasi, Rai Sahras II, and Rai Sahras V. Alor was the capital city of the dynasty, and Makuran and Turan regions

of present-day Balochistan were among the provinces of Sindh. It is most probable that some of the Baloch tribes that were settled in Makuran and Turan joined the forces of Sindh who were defending their land against the Arab invasion and became the targets of invading forces during the Ummayyad era when the final invasion of Sindh was carried out.

The penetration of some of the Baloch tribes in Sindhi territories had been mentioned in the medieval historical accounts. Some of the migrating Baloch tribes might have reached Sindh proper in their process of migrating to safer places during the oppressive rules of various regional powers in Iran. The Baloch presence has been reported in the area where they were part of at least two uprisings against the local Summrah Dynasty that was under the protection of Ghaznavids. Masum (1855) described that on one occasion, a Baloch chief Mehran was involved with Shodha and Jharejha tribes in the conspiracy of overthrowing Khafif, a Summrah ruler. On a second occasion, the Baloch were involved in a rebellion against Omar, the grandson of Khafif, allying with Shodhas and Jats. These two events occurred during the reign of Masud and Moudud of the Ghaznavids Dynasty (Masum, 1855).

Conclusion

In the initial stages of their conquest, the Arabs replaced the Sassanid governors of different regions with chiefs of different Arab tribes. After the total collapse of the Iranian resistance, most of the Sassanid commanders and local notables defected to Arabs, converted to Islam, and secured different administrative positions in the new regime. Some of these

notables were allowed to rule locally on the condition that they pay the agreed tribute. In this context, only major cities and centers were in Arab hands, and they were never in actual or permanent control of many regions, such as Gilan, Tabaristan, Gur, Zabolestan, and areas of present-day Balochistan.

The Baloch after their dispersion from the north-western Caspian region of *Balāsagān*, after a short interval, reappeared as Koch o Baloch in various parts of the Iranian Plateau during premediaeval and medieval times. It was the time when the Iranian Plateau was ruled by various regional dynasties. The confrontations with emerging powers caused the dispersion of the Baloch tribes after they had recovered from the shocks of their dispersion from *Balāsagān/Balāškān* and massacre and humiliations by the Arabs during the Ummayyad period. The Baloch encounters with these powers were among the main reasons for the eastward push of many Baloch tribes from Kerman and Sistan into Makuran, Turan, and even further east into Sindh and Punjab.

The Buyids and the Ghaznavids adopted inhuman tactics in dealing with the Baloch. Despite the impregnability of Barez Mountain, Saffarids penetrated the region, crushed the Baloch resistance, took their leaders as hostages, and deported many tribes. With the pacification of the Baloch, the Saffarids and Buyids forcefully introduced Islam in the region, which, until then, had been a bastion of Zoroastrianism. Effects of these conflicts were so devastating for the Baloch that they not only lost their political importance but many of them were forced to flee eastward in regions that form the landmass of present-day Balochistan.

Branding the Baloch as horrible and barbaric shows the bias of the Arabs and Persian historians of the time. It was also to justify the genocidal acts of Buyids and others. The portrayal of the Baloch by Arab chroniclers like Tabari as nominally Muslims and characterizing them as distinctly “pagan savages,” was perhaps to justify the forceful conversion of them or to justify frequent incursions into Baloch land and way of life. On many occasions, the narratives of the Arab writers are full of contradictions. While Maqaddesi, writing at the same time, described the Baloch as pacific pastoralist people who helped travelers and the Koch as barbarians who, in time, were terrorizing the caravan routes across the great desert, respectively. Regardless of their opinions about the Baloch, the accounts they produced, obviously, the biased ones, provided us with an overview of the situation the Baloch were facing in those days of Iran.

The history of the Baloch from the 8th to 11th centuries in Iran is marked by renewed persecutions, deportations, and migrations. The Baloch in Kerman and Sistan suffered the worst persecutions and genocides. Although the Baloch tribes in Makkuran and Turan were not in a position of any significant political and social existence at that time, nevertheless, in the long campaign by various regional powers for the supremacy of the region, they suffered along with other people. By all accounts, conflicts with the regional dynasties were not because of what the authors of the victorious powers called the continual harassment of the settled population by nomadic Baloch tribes. It was rather a reaction from the Baloch against encroachments on their traditional way of living an independent life. The Baloch conflict with the regional powers of Iran might have a religious element as some of the rulers of

these dynastic empires especially the Buyids and Ghaznavids were known for their religious zeal. Some were also known for their use of Islam in the subjugation of many ethnic communities in the region. As the Baloch were slow in adopting the strict Islamic way of life, this might have been one of the causes of the Baloch sufferings.

Figure 14: The map of the Saffarid dynasty

Source: Google maps



Figure 15: Map of Buyids Dynasty

Source: <http://iranpoliticsclub.net>



Figure 16: Map of Samanid Dynasty

Source: Google maps

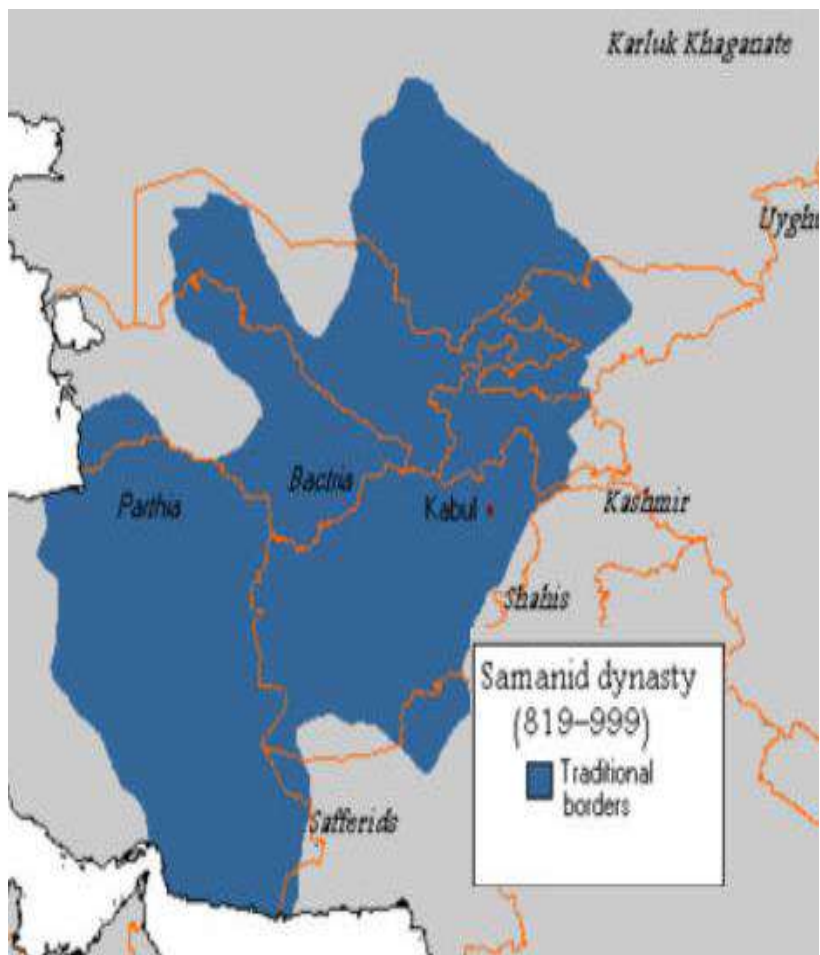


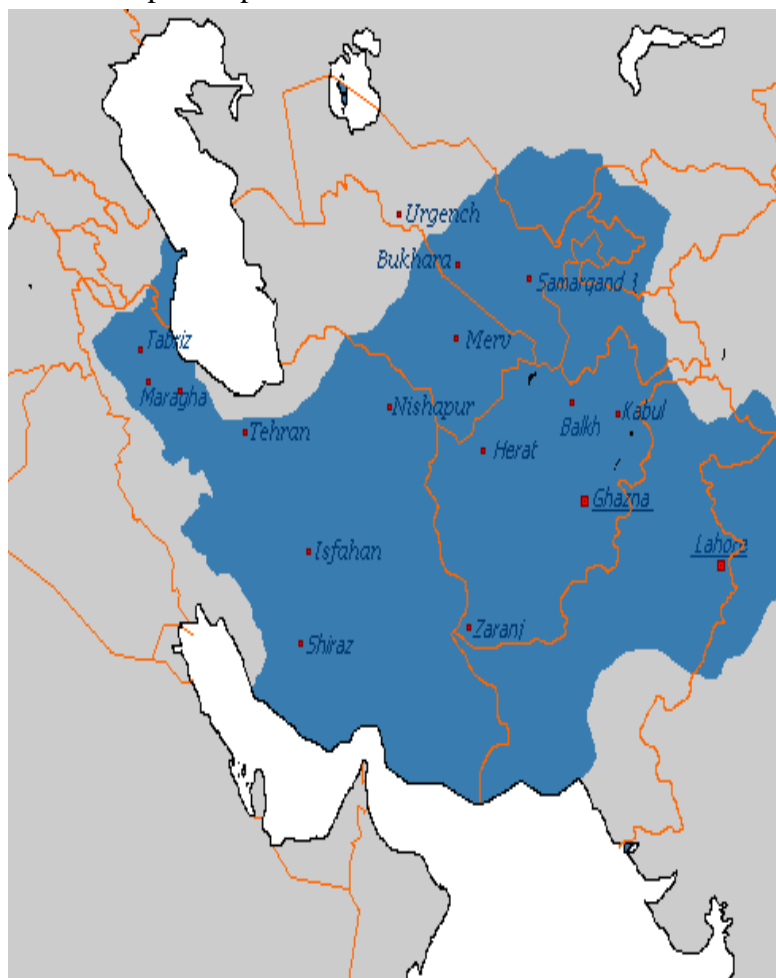
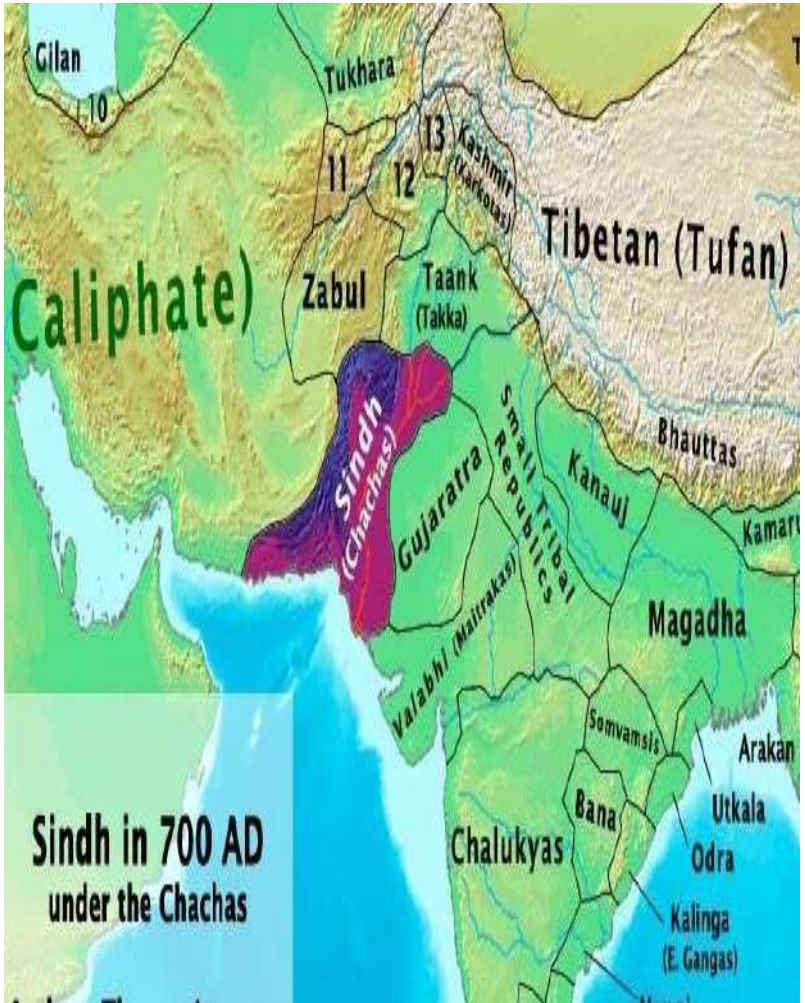
Figure 17: Map of the Ghaznavids EmpireSource: <http://iranpoliticsclub.net>

Figure 18: The Empire of Sindh

Source: www.worldhistorymaps.info



Chapter Six:

Socio-cultural traditions of the ancient Baloch

Introduction

Culture is anything distinctive about the way of life of a community, group of people, or nation. It constitutes a people's lifestyle, its entire activity as it reflects not only the economic life of a people but has a long-range of socio-political and religious aspects. More precisely, it is the manifestation of the combined thought processes, rules, values, languages, beliefs, arts, literature, music, social roles, customs, traditions, ideas, rituals, and social conduct of a particular community of people. It is also the manifestations of some physical objects, spaces and resources created by a particular people such as homes, schools, places of worship, factories, offices etc. Culture is a defining feature of not only a person's identity, but the shared values, customs and historical traditions are the ingredients which characterise a particular people and make it distinct among the among the nations.

Culture works like the vein of the society through which the life flows. Cultural values bind people together which makes them strong and united. Socio-cultural values are principles passed on generation after generation by the ancestors and considered as the spine of any community to which they belong to. They are standard for discerning what is good and just in a particular society. They help shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful, and ugly, to be sought or avoided.

The political structure of the ancient Baloch

Throughout history, Central Asia has been the abode of mobile or nomadic groups exploiting a diverse range of agro-pastoral subsistence strategies. Despite being diverse in origin, these

ancient societies had many similarities in material culture, customs, and mores.

Perhaps in the initial period of their existence in Central Asia, the people speaking Indo-European languages were not living in compact societies, nevertheless, changes came slowly and led to the development of a complex socio-political structure. Geiger & Sanjana (1885), observed that the ancient Aryan society was based on the clan system. This was also the case with the Baloch social structure in ancient times. The mobile agro-pastoral Baloch were organized on a clan and tribal structure.

Like other Indo-European societies of ancient times, the family was the basic social unit of the tribal and patriarchal ancient Baloch society which was based on patrilineal, endogamous, and polygynous practices. It was the nucleus of social life. The relations between husband and wife, father and son were hierarchically organized. The father was the head of the family. Joint families or extended families were also part of the social organization. Each extended family (*kotom/kahoal*) was headed by an elder. Many *kotoms* made a clan and clans united to make a tribe with a chief (*Sarṁār*) assisted by a council of clan elders. Many tribes were united into a *rāj* headed by a *rājṁār*. The authority of the *Sarṁār* and *rājṁār* depended on his prowess and initiatives and was limited by the decisions of the council of elders.

Although, the whole tribe was a centralized political unit headed by a Chief with considerable authority and prestige, nevertheless, the council of elders acting as a tribal assembly performed the functions of governance and administration. Clan elders were also involved in the selection of the chief from amongst the clansmen. They were instrumental in keeping the

Baloch society democratic by having a check on the power of the chief. In this way, the tribal system of the ancient Baloch was founded on the principle of decentralization of power, observed Dashti (2020). He posited that this was important because the tribe was scattered over a vast area, and it could have become a practical impossibility for the Chief to have all the administrative and judicial powers centralized in his own hands.

The council was the most important institution of the entire tribal structure. The tribal council composed of the heads of clans and sub-clans was the supreme body dealing with administrative, judicial, and other important matters affecting the welfare and general condition of the tribe. Each clan also had its council of elders to decide matters concerning that section. Dashti (2020) observed that in the ancient tribal society of the Baloch, the heads of the sections or *Pali* and sub-sections or *Takk* enjoyed sufficient power and were independent in managing the affairs of their sections, except matters concerning war and peace. They adjudicated minor disputes and acted as the court of appeal for their people. According to Dashti (2020), there was a sort of mutual dependence between the *Sarṁār* and sectional heads and among various sections in ancient times. The headmen of clans had the support of the chief or *Sarṁār* because they had the corporate will and understanding of their respective people behind them. But that support could hardly be invoked or utilized against the Chief who had the general mandate and support of the entire tribe. The Chief, theoretically, had control over the headmen of clans though he was always depending on them in many matters. In ancient times, the office of the *Sarṁār* was not hereditary; but an elective position that required great personal qualities for the

man who held it. *Sarṓār* was elected among the best of the individuals in a tribe. In a way, the Baloch political system under tribalism was a form of meritocracy.

Geiger & Sanjana (1885) posited that intertribal and intratribal rivalries were norms of the ancient societies. That was also true for many Indo-European societies including the Baloch. The need for more pasture lands and cattle for the economic welfare, physical protection of the people, and competition for acquiring better and suitable places for agro-pastoralist activities probably contributed to an increase in inter and intratribal conflicts and warfare. This permanent state of conflict made the tribal chief the most important person in a tribe. As the entire administration of the tribe rested on the shoulders of the chief (*Sarṓār*), seasonal contributions were made towards the *Sarṓār* under various nomenclatures to meet his personal and family expenses. He was allocated a certain portion of land to cultivate for his use. Such property was held by the Chief under his title. In case he was removed from his position, the land was restored to the tribal pool for reapportioning to his successor.

Dashti (2020) observed that among the ancient Baloch, in normal circumstances, the gathering of the tribesmen as a body or assembly was rare. The majority of the people, however, participated in ceremonies for the selection of the Chief; on the birth of a son to the Chief or some similar occasions, but only in an extraordinary situation the entire tribe would gather to hear their elders. In normal conditions, all decisions were taken by the headmen or the tribal council.

There was a strong check and balance system in place. The clan headman or chief of the tribe could have been replaced on the charges of his dubious character, gross irregularities,

incompetence, mental or physical disability, or misuse of power. His incompetency in wars or other emergencies also provided sufficient cause for his replacement. Dashti (2020) maintained that in such an eventuality, the people, especially the elders of the section, gathered and voted to remove and replace them. An overwhelming majority of tribal subheads and important persons had to vote to form a resounding majority demanding his dismissal. However, a vote of no confidence was rare except in extraordinary circumstances. The council was convened usually on important issues. On certain occasions, very important decisions were taken by the Chief and subsequently put before the council for its consent. In case the Chief did not convene the council, or he was prejudiced against a party or was himself a party to the dispute, the council members after consultation amongst themselves could convene the council and decide the matter without the *Sarṁār* presiding or attending. In case of differences of opinion, or if there was a standstill, the action on the issue was postponed. In the case of unanimity, the *Sarṁār* had to accept the decision.

There were no hard and fast rules regarding the succession of a new Chief and usually, it had to be smooth and without a dispute and difference. However, the succession issue was decided according to circumstances. As the Baloch considered the purity of blood essential for the leader, they never agreed on the chieftaincy of a person (even the person in question might be the son of their *Sarṁār*) who descended from inferior stock. In case of serious differences, the matter was to put for active consent or vote, and the majority decision had to be accepted. In such a situation there was a lot of maneuvering and behind-the-scenes manipulations from various quarters. Sometimes, even the chiefs of neighboring tribes discreetly

intervened in some way or the other to ensure the election of a favorable candidate or person of their choice as the new Chief.

Issues regarding the election of a chief were decided mostly through general consent, often unanimously, but if there were differences of opinion on any matter, majority decisions would prevail. As regards membership of the council, practically all persons of consequence and heads of the clans were members. The *Sarṓār* with the approval of the council could replace any member. In such an eventuality, the person would lose his position as the local head of the clan and be replaced through a consensus or election. The method of election for the *Sarṓār* or the clan head was identical, that was the formal expression of trust which was general and explicit. In the case of voting on an issue, normally heads of clans were counted: those who favored and those who opposed.

The ceremonies after the election were simple. A *pāg* or turban was put on the head of the elected person as the *Sarṓār*, and he was formally declared the leader. All important people from the tribe took part in the ceremonies.

Since their descent from Central Asia, the ancient Baloch tribal structure and composition had been changing. With the assimilation, admission, and absorption of aliens or outsiders from the Iranian Plateau, in later years, the tribal organization of the ancient Baloch practically became a loose union of various classes and groups who could hardly be called homogenous. On various occasions, if a sub-section of a tribe migrated to another area or had its quarrel with its Chief, it declared itself no more attached to the main tribe and asked for the membership of another tribe, first as an ally: and when it proved its worth by rendering meritorious services to the tribal cause, as a full member of the new tribe.

The constant state of warfare with hostile tribes and powerful empires became a struggle for economic and physical survival for the ancient Baloch. This became fundamental in the consolidation of the feeling or necessity among the Baloch tribes to forge unity. It was the aggression of superior powers which had greatly helped in the development of a united Baloch approach. Permanently facing grave situations strengthened the tribal bond. The Baloch ethnic identity either the *Balāścik* of ancient times or the Baloch of the medieval period is the reflection of this unity in the time of a crisis. Their fight against indigenous peoples of the Iranian Plateau established feelings of greater unity among various tribes. According to Dashti (2020), the development of a strong bond of unity among the Baloch tribes and its manifestation as the Baloch national entity was perhaps because of the Baloch resistance to Anusherwan's bid to annihilate them. It was not a single tribal fight or concern, but all Baloch tribes fought the aggressor. The defection to the Arabs was also by a union of Baloch tribes under the command of Siah Sawar. We can observe the continuation of this fraternity among the Baloch tribes later in medieval times in Kerman, Sistan, Makuran, and Turan.

The economic system of the ancient Baloch

A pastoral society relies more on its animal wealth than agricultural produce. Pastoralism is a subsistence strategy adopted by people who live in areas where large-scale agriculture is not feasible due to environmental factors and to a certain extent, cultural constraints. The region where the ancient Baloch were living received low rainfall and were without the facilities of large-scale irrigation. That was among the factors of adopting pastoralism by the Baloch. In this context, cattle rearing, and its associated functions were the

main economic activities of the ancient Baloch. A majority of them did not lead a fully sedentary life. They moved out of their dwellings with their herds for a certain period to feed their cattle.

Khazanov (1984) and Salzman (2002) observed that the diversity in agro-pastoral subsistence and production strategies of the Central Asian tribes was in response to dynamic environmental, political, economic, and ideological contexts. It appears that the ancient Baloch tribes were divided into pure nomadic pastoralists with fully mobile livestock grazing, seasonal transhumant pastoralists, and partially sedentary mixed agro-pastoralism.

In the initial stages of their presence in the Iranian Plateau, among Baloch, there was no concept of private property based on land ownership. No one was denied access to the resources of nature. Everyone had the freedom and vested right to exploit natural resources but it would be simplistic to believe that the ancient Baloch society was completely egalitarian. Lands were usually jointly cultivated. Sometimes private possession of the land acquired by individuals or groups was recognized but that was always subservient to the right and obligations of kinship and other interests and was also a later practice. Theoretically, however, rights on land were vested in the community and not in any individual. In later times, communal ownership was reduced, and it was taken over by the people with the same lineage.

The economic system at the beginning appears to have been one of the joint economic responsibilities of the community. As mentioned above, there was no private ownership of land; the entire cultivable lands and grazing fields were jointly owned by all tribesmen. The produce was equally distributed. The

cultivation of land was given to a group of people, and the produce was distributed equally according to requirements. At a later stage, however, various tribes held lands for cultivation and grazing purposes and such distribution was less judicious and depended upon the relative strength of the tribe. Powerful tribes occupied fertile lands; tribes of lesser consequence were contented with less fertile areas. This often led to tribal rivalry and conflict in a series of unending tribal wars. Originally a nomadic and agro-pastoral community, ancient Baloch tribes with changing political and economic conditions after their settlement in the Iranian Plateau faced new pressures to abandon nomadism; some of them adopted sedentary or semisedentary lifestyles while others became pastoral.

According to Dashti (2020), in the ancient Baloch society, there was no administrative infrastructure, a bureaucracy, a regular army or a peacekeeping agency to be paid, so there was no need for taxes. However, at a much later stage, taxes became a feature of economic life. The rulers and empires usually imposed levies and taxes which were always resented and refused, sometimes leading to disastrous consequences for the Baloch.

Various occupational groups such as those of weavers, smiths, carpenters, leather workers, etc. have also been mentioned as an integral part of the ancient Baloch society. The presence of priests was also there but they were socially insignificant. There were relatively rich people having more cattle or horses, but this was not an important stratifying factor to determine the social status of a person which was based on the practice of certain traditions which made a person an honorable Baloch. Begging was disgusting for the ancient Baloch and the inclusion of this practice in the society was probably one of the

influences of the indigenous social values adopted by the migrating Aryan tribes after their settlement in the Iranian Plateau.

Bijjār and gift exchange had an important economic role in the ancient Baloch society. Tribal conflicts led to the payment of tributes and presents to the victorious chiefs by the defeated or the subordinate groups. The rest of the clansmen of the victorious tribe had a share in the spoils and booty won in the war. The chief also fed and gave gifts to his clansmen during ceremonial occasions. *Māljangi* (Plundering raids into enemy territories) was practiced as a form of economic activity. It was to collect booty and distribute it among the needy of the tribe on an equal basis.

The military structure of ancient Baloch society

Like other Aryan tribes, the fundamental character of the Baloch tribal organization was that it was a close-knit unit of fighting men. As there was no concept of a regular army, all the able-bodied men constituted the fighting force. The war was not the business of any particular section of the people or tribe, but every Baloch had the obligation to place his services for the battle. Men were generally commanded by the sectional heads who were under the overall leadership of the Chief.

Among the ancient Baloch, war was always glorified through national traditions. It is deeply rooted in their culture and language. War against the enemy either for defense or to avenge a wrong was always treated as honorable and righteous. Heroism and courage were glorified, while passiveness and cowardice were condemned as effeminate and defamatory. Bravery and courage were the only criteria for getting respect from the common folk. Everybody was full of praise for the

men who fell in the battle. Minstrels composed verses in their honor and women sang such verses as lullabies to their kids. Those who ran from the battlefield were always cursed and dubbed as not true sons of their fathers. Their relatives and friends considered their cowardliness as a great insult to them.

Dashti (2020) observed that the ancient Baloch loved to be killed in the battle and earn lasting glory and become a legend. The Baloch son was nursed and taught to be a war hero. It was the only desire of his mother and sister. The mother confidently express the thought of those days in her lullaby when her son would come to the age, ride on horseback, have a sword, shield, and fight the enemy when need be. This was also the wish of his proud sister who boasted of having a brother because those who had no brothers were unfortunate.

The village ladies who used to gather in the house of a mother to congratulate her on the birth of a son, sang *sepat'* (songs of praise) for the mother and the child because she was lucky to give birth to a son who would create a name in glory. A Baloch was expected to be hospitable and the protector of the helpless. He was constantly mentored to follow the path of bravery and earn a name for himself, his forefathers, and the tribe. His mother wished him to be a man of exceptional courage, always firm in the saddle. She wished him to die only on the battlefield because it never behooved brave men to die in the bed and because death on the battlefield was the road to eternal fame. A Baloch mother was deeply proud of her son who would have the usual six armaments: sword, shield, spear, dagger, bow, and a quiver full of arrows, always ready to fight. In her imagination, she accorded him an important place where the chief would call for her brave son in a time of emergency to explain the crisis and the nature of its resolution or the fight

with the enemy. In this context, from the very childhood, the son of an ancient Baloch would boast among his friends that he would behave in the manner expected from him by his family and tribe: live like a warrior and die on the battlefield with honor.

Battle tactics

Ancient Baloch were engaged in confrontations of various kinds, but the major wars were intertribal or against those powers that tried to infringe on the Baloch political freedom or their social-cultural beliefs.

The Baloch approach to war was not purposeless violence but mainly the reaction to injustices, individual or collective. It was conditioned usually by external factors. A Baloch was peaceful as long as he did not see any danger to his security or honor. Once he was convinced that a threat existed, he would start a relentless struggle that may take any shape: an open fight or hit-and-run activities.

Because of the geographical and political circumstances, ancient Baloch was engaged in perpetual confrontations with powerful enemies. Fighting against the overwhelming strength of the foes forced the Baloch to adopt tactics that suited the weaker. Surprise raids were rare, but in a series of continuous battles, such raids were not discounted when both sides were practically at war. Asprey (2008), opined that guerrilla warfare was a common strategy among the nomadic and migratory tribes such as the Scythians, Goths, Vandals, and Huns. They used elements of guerrilla warfare to fight the might of the Greek, Persian, and Roman empires. Guerrilla warfare or hit and run was the most suitable strategy that was adopted by the ancient Baloch; although there were head-on collisions against

the enemies on many occasions with disastrous consequences for the Baloch. Under tremendous odds, evacuating the place and later regrouping was another tactic used by them. We find that Baloch fighting the Iranian might during the Sassanid period perished but refused to submit. Instead, the surviving Baloch preferred to be scattered in various inhospitable regions of Iran. Leaders of some Baloch tribes picked up a rivalry with the Kerman ruler in late 9th century A.D; they preferred migration en masse than accepting the insulting terms for a settlement with him.

As mentioned by Hildinger (1997), collecting information about the enemy, or forwarding any information regarding an invading party was important in combating an enemy among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. Like other tribal entities, the ancient Baloch also adopted several coded procedures to communicate news or situations concerning tribal security or other important matters. War codes included movement during particular hours and analysis of intelligence reports. It was equivalent to the modern cipher system of national states. Being an important and responsible member of the tribe, if anyone saw or guessed something important was to occur, he would take steps to convey the news to others. He would resort to codes or signals if there was no other way, such as drawing some sign on the highways, near a tribal well, on a stone, or setting fire at some conspicuous places, etc. During day times, signaling with mirrors was also practiced as a mode of transferring coded information. Another method was to give a meaningless call in a particular manner. Waving of flags was also common. When such signs were seen or noises heard by persons belonging to the same tribe, they would easily decode those and took not only precautions but immediately informed

the *Sarṁār* or others in the manner suitable under the circumstances.

The wars in ancient times were complete for the losers: men put to death, the women kept slaves, boys castrated, cattle taken away, and structures damaged or razed to the ground. But the Baloch warfare was completely limited to engaging combatants on the battlefield only. Battles were usually fought outside the settlements. In their intertribal wars, they never took the Baloch women as slaves, nor did they enter the houses after a victory on the battlefield. Dashti (2020) observed that the Baloch never believed in the killing of non-combatants. They recognized certain persons, women, children, and old people as non-combatants and never killed them. One of the striking points in war ethics was that great respect was accorded to the leader of the opposing forces. Baloch leaders who showed magnanimity to the defeated leaders get high praise from the community. Those who do not accord due respect to the opponents were considered villains or painted as low castes.

Whenever the Baloch fought face-to-face battle, their tactics were honest. Deceitful or devious tactics were hardly adopted in such cases, apart from usual legitimate tactics to divert the attention of the enemy from one side and attack from the other. However, the element of surprise was one of the favorite war tactics among the Baloch.

The horse had been one of the main instruments of war. The battle dress appears to be a normal tribal dress. The large *Pāg* (turban) has its usefulness in the war in protecting the head from the sword-cuts. In face-to-face battles, the Baloch might have used *Zerrah* (the coat of mail or chain mail) for body protection. As an excellent marksman, he used the arrow very effectively; however, the sword was the main weapon of war.

There was an equal distribution of the war spoils among the fighting men, but with the consent of the fighting men, *Sarwār* and other clan heads might have got a greater share (Dashti (2020). Persons who possess a particular type of arms or perform specific acts during the war had a specified share in the war booty. Shares of a horseman and a footman differed; so was the difference for war spoils of a person carrying bow and arrows and sword.

The judicial system in the ancient Baloch society

The justice system of the ancient Baloch society was based on their intolerance to injustice in individual or collective life. Justice was done either by taking revenge or making compensation. A Baloch considered it his duty and inalienable right to do himself justice by compensating the property lost or by avenging the blood of his relative. It was always lawful and honorable for him to avenge his losses in the same proportion as he had received.

Dashti (2020) observed that although it was considered a personal duty to get justice, in many disputes, the council of elders of a tribe was to adjudicate the cases where both parties agreed to accept the decision. The council's decision was binding which had the moral and physical strength of the entire tribe behind. Non-compliance with the decisions could invoke serious punishment, usually fine and in certain circumstances even outlawry. The council in its decision was always guided by tribal codes and precedents. There was virtually no deviation from the general principles of justice to all, regardless of one's position. As every Baloch was supposed to be truthful and considered it a dishonor to tell a lie, there was no difficulty in ascertaining the facts of the issue. Both the parties to the dispute or their representatives were allowed to argue. Witnesses were

called whenever required. When the dispute involved two sections of the same tribe, they were represented by their respective heads in the council. The persons found guilty of a crime against the tribe, such as treason or rebellion, could be severely punished. The punishment could be death.

Collective responsibility was an important ingredient of the social conduct of the ancient Baloch. An offense against the individual such as theft or robbery was a corporate offense against the entire tribe. The individual acts consequently would become the responsibility of the tribe concerned. His family and the entire people suffered. The opposing tribesmen could appropriately revenge the guilt; not necessarily against that particular individual but any person belonging to the tribe of the offender.

For compensating the loss of property in case of theft or robbery fines were imposed. Sometimes, robbery was also punished with death. Punishment of corporate crime was outlawry of the person that is disowning the individual, outcasting and declaring him isolated from the tribe. This was one of the major punishments and was rarely awarded. In that case, he was also banished from the area.

Beheading was the common mode of inflicting the sentence. There is the least evidence of awarding punishment of *soar ay kaśśag* (tearing to pieces by pulling the accused in opposite directions by two horses) or *Pāho* (hanging), which was awarded to traitors and the enemy agents. According to Dashti (2020), these forms of punishment nevertheless were a later addition and not the original Baloch practices. There is, however, no evidence of any permanent hangman among the Baloch to execute criminals. Although, the practice of punishment of death by drowning, throwing from rock,

burning, or burying alive, pouring molten lead on the criminal, starvation in the dungeons, tearing to death by red hot pincers, cutting asunder and stoning to death or the practice of blinding and maiming was being exercised in the region, the ancient Baloch thought these modes of capital punishment as insulting. For them, it was more honorable to be beheaded than hanged. Extreme torture or dishonoring a criminal was against the tribal norm, however, torture to aliens or low castes involved in serious crimes was sometimes perpetrated. One of the social behavior of the Baloch made torture to extract information or confession of guilt quite unnecessary which was never to lie even in the face of instant punishment. Telling a lie was against his sense of honor and pride.

In cases of murder, the relative of the deceased had the inalienable right to claim blood for blood; and this claim had the tribal code of conduct, the deceased family having the backing of entire tribal strength. The murderer could be forgiven only by the nearest kin. Among a few tribes, blood compensation was given by the offender or his family. Relatives of the offender had to accept the punishment and were obliged to agree to the award sanctioned by elders if no settlement was reached.

Adultery was punished with death. The man and woman would get the same punishment. In the case of adultery, there was no need for the aggrieved husband to resort to any tribal council to get a decision. He had the right to inflict the sentence. The unmarried women or widows got punishment from their near relatives.

Among the ancient Baloch, trial by ordeal was perhaps in vogue. The culprit had to prove his innocence by walking through the fire or putting his hands on a hot rod.

In most cultures, any child of fewer than 14 years of age was usually considered incapable of guilt on the ground that he or she was too young to differentiate between right and wrong but according to Dashti (2020), the practice was completely reversed among the ancient Baloch. The Baloch child had a penetrating sense regarding his enemies and friends. Old blood accounts sometimes were settled by persons of less than 14 years. A Baloch child took part in battles. Therefore, the case of guilt or criminal responsibility for the minor was always judged according to the circumstance and merit of the case. The members of the family of the minor would have to bear the responsibility of his guilt if the crime were provoked by them.

Dispute resolution by *meid o marakah*

Ancient Baloch had a peculiar way of resolving personal or tribal disputes. *Meid o marakah* was a unique social phenomenon among the Baloch. It had a prime place in the adjudication of disputes between individuals and groups. The *meid* was a voluntary effort by responsible individuals to solve disputes among individuals, families, clans, and tribes.

In a dispute, the aggrieved party could be contacted and requested to agree to *meid* according to traditional norms. Generally, they conceded. Then the *jirga* which may include many tribal elders and social personalities would go to the house of the victim and accept without any reservation the guilt of the offender and offer an unconditional apology on behalf of the person and ask formally the forgiveness and magnanimity of the host. The aggrieved family then declares its forgiveness and the matter would end there. The *meid* could not be taken to the house of the victim without the prior consent of the head of the family or clan in cases of great injustice or inhuman cruelty.

Simple murder cases of sudden nature provoked by the deceased were, however, the easiest to be solved through *meid*.

Members or persons who constituted *meid* were not elected or had any authority save the moral pressure they could exert. The elders usually sent feelers to the parties involved for the solution of the dispute through a *meid* and someone acted as a conciliatory go-between. The success of a *meid* was due to strict observation of tribal code and ethics by the ancient Baloch. According to Dashti (2020):

“in tribal philosophy, the individual was of supreme importance, and matters concerning him could be tackled only through his consent. Surprisingly, even the entire tribe could not force him to agree to a decision regarding any dispute in which he was a party. Secondly, the right to revenge or agree to compensation for the loss he suffered was the inalienable right exercised by him and not by any person or group of persons on his behalf. Thirdly, he always wanted to make the culprit accountable for his wrong; and once he admitted his guilt, it would be honorable for him to forgive if requested. Such an act was always considered appropriate and behooving a Baloch. Fourthly, the proud Baloch could not refuse the requests of persons who were his guest of honor and that once in the house they could not be treated as hostiles” (page 126).

Social and cultural practices of the ancient Baloch

For the individual Baloch, the ancient tribal system served as a practical means of enhancing one's good fortune in the economic field and a position of respect in societal matters. The main characteristic of the system was that it treated every member with due regard and accorded him an honorable place

in society. Among the Baloch, no one could tolerate a secondary or undignified position. Every Baloch had the same privileges and rights as enjoyed by the *Sarṁār* or elder. He never forfeited his identity as an equal partner in all matters in social life. Everything circled the individual, who was extremely proud and mindful of his exalted position. The ancient Baloch individual was rigid in his social outlook and hardly charmed by alien customs. He was to maintain the true spirit of Baloch national character and behavior.

It appears that many cultural practices were common among the people of Median, Persian, and Parthian origin in the Iranian Plateau. Over time, the Persians and the remaining tribes of Median and Parthian origin had abandoned many of their cultural practices, but strangely enough, the Baloch had retained most of the practices of their ancestors in later periods.

Dress and Costumes

Traditional clothing of ancient Baloch was similar to the dress code of the majority of the people in the Iranian Plateau. Men's garments included the baggy trousers (*Śalwār*), and shirt (*Jāmag*, *Kamis*), sometimes with a wide belt called *Kamarbanṁ*. The shirt (*Jāmag*) falls to the knees over the trousers. *Sarbanṁ* or headdress was mainly a turban. Scarf (*Sarig/gośān*) was the headdress for ladies which was usually a *cācer*. Long frocks or gown was the main dress of the women with various kind of embroidery works. Both men and women used clothes made of cotton or wool. Men's *jāmag* had side pockets. Men always tried to wear white dresses. Overcoat or waistcoat (*Kabā*), which was usually embroidered in different colors. *Śāl* or *cācer* as a mark of distinction was used by elderly persons who wrapped it around the waist and knees for a particular sitting position called *kamarzāni* in Balochi *ṁiwān*.

Footwear consists of *moazag* or shoes and sandals made of leather or *sawās*, made from the leaves of Mediterranean dwarf palm (*Mizri/pis*). Socks have also been in use.

The gown and long frocks of women were ornamented with a profusion of needlework of various matching colors. The lower part of the shirt had a large front pocket (*panḥoal*) which was also embroidered. Women wore shoes and socks. Virgin and widows usually wore black *jāmag*; and among some tribes, widows used white, without any embroidery, while a married woman used various colors, the favorite being red. The unmarried or widows did not use any jewelry or ornaments. If a widow used embroidered dress, it was a clear indication that she intended to remarry.

There was no tradition of cutting the hair or shaving among the ancient Baloch men. Both men and women had long hair. Hair was usually braided and parted in the center of the forehead. This separation was called *giwār*. The men usually had a single braid while for women the hair was beautifully managed in two and left down back. The use of hair extensions was also in vogue among the women.

Women and men also used *sarbanḥ* on their heads. *Sarbanḥ* was usually for the binding hair with a fillet or black stuff or silken cloth. *Titok* or tattooing was made on women's forehead and cheeks, especially of newly married girls.

A variety of ornamental jewelry was used by the ancient Baloch. The women wore *ḥorr* (earrings), polo or *pollok* (nose rings) *hār* or *ʿoak* (necklace), *munḥrik/callah* (rings in hands and foot fingers), *Sangah* or *tāl* (bracelets), *Bāhóbanḥ* or *bāhink* (armlets). Ornaments of various kinds were fixed on the hair

including *Cuti-poll*, *Móci*, which were fixed in the hair near the back. *Tāli* was added as a hair extension.

Birth rites of ancient Baloch

Ancient Baloch celebrated the birth of a child with much fanfare. The occasion was marked with music and singing. The womenfolk attended the mother for seven nights and sang *sepat'* or *nāzeink*, literally meaning a song of praise. Food and sweets were prepared and distributed among neighbors and needy families. The birth of a boy was greeted with greater rejoicing than the birth of a girl. The birth ceremonies included *śasīgān* (selecting a name on the sixth day), *borrok* (circumcision), *pāṅgāmi* (the ceremony marking the first step taken by the child) and *śalwār* (the first wearing of trousers by the child), etc.

Marriage rites

The institution of marriage was an important socio-cultural practice among the Baloch. Different types of marriages—monogamy and polygyny were common. The wife enjoyed a respectable position in the family and society. Marriages were mostly arranged.

Marriage ceremonies included music, dancing, and distribution of food or almsgiving. Expenses of food prepared on either side were borne by the bridegroom. To meet the expenses and the amount of *labb* (the price for a bride), the family members of the bridegroom collected *bijjāri*, which was donations or subscriptions from relatives and friends. Traditionally, everyone who was asked contributed according to his means. Sheep, cows, goats, or camels were also presented as *bijjār*. Relatives of the bride also collected *bijjār* called *giwāri* on the wedding evening.

Betrothal (*Sāng* or *harbarsinōi*) was the first step. *Labb* was fixed beforehand. The marriage expenses (*parōāc*) were given to the bride's family by the bridegroom. *Parōāc* was paid in cash or kind before the marriage date. It also included embroidered clothes and other essential articles for the bride. After the engagement, the parents of the girl were bound to give the hand of the lady to the person to whom she was betrothed. There was no backing out from either side save in exceptional circumstances. Only in rare cases, could the man forego his fiancé (*ōištār*).

Sāhbaōal or a system of exchange of girls between families without stipulations paid was also prevalent. Betrothal in childhood among close relatives was also common.

The invitation for participation (*Loatok*) in the wedding ceremonies was sent to the entire clan which then selected the individuals for taking parts in the ceremonies on their behalf. The delegation sent for inviting the people, *Loatuki*, included singers and dancers who started singing and dancing before entering an abode. The delegation would then be feasted by the headman before their return.

In most cases, marriage ceremonies were held in temporary tents called *mangir* or *kāpar*. All ceremonies including dancing and singing were performed there. This would also serve as a guest house for visitors from the nearby villages. Among peculiar customs, *koarag*, was most prominent. The bridegroom was taken a few furlongs outside the settlement as the word connotes most probably to the riverside, in the afternoon or mid-day, where arrangements were made for his bath and makeup. He would then mount on horseback or camel and was brought to *ōiwānjāh* or *mangir* amid much singing and dancing. The occasion is also marked with *tirjangi* / *tiranōāzi*

(archery) among the participants. After sunset, the bridegroom profusely arrayed, accompanied by close friends and relatives moved to the bride's house where proper arrangements were made for their food. The formal wedding was performed after the guests were feasted. Another peculiar custom was that a week before the marriage, the girl was secluded from the rest of the family. Only the closest female relatives and friends could visit her. During this period, she was briefed regarding her duties and responsibilities after marriage.

Burial rites

According to Zoroastrian religious belief, the dead body of a person must be exposed to the elements for decay. In the days when the Baloch were the followers of the Zoroastrian religion, there seems to be no desire to preserve the corpse according to the Zoroastrian philosophy. After converting to Islam, they adopted the Arabic funeral rites. However, even after adopting Arabic burial ways, the ancient Baloch burial customs remained very simple. No tombs or any such conspicuous arrangements were made for the dead.

Baloch mourned the death of a person in a manner appropriate to the dead man's social position. The death of a hero or a *Sarwār* was lamented for several days extending to forty days, the phenomenon is called *pors*. Almost the entire tribe participated in the *pors* ceremonies which were always simple. On the death of a person, people gathered at the house of the deceased or that of the head of that family to express their sympathy to the dead man's relatives. Most people would come during the first few days. However, those who might have been on a journey or belonged to remote areas could visit the mourning family conveniently even after months. The third day of the death was marked by a feast called *Āsroak*. Contributions

were offered by the people according to their means to support the family or in meeting the expenses on that occasion. The dead were praised for their good deeds. Generally, there were no *pors* for a person killed on the charges of adultery. The death of women was also mourned but the *pors* was observed with less rigor.

The ancient Baloch commemorated their dead on the 3rd day and annually for a few years. We have little historical evidence to arrive at firm conclusions regarding the exact nature of such death rites and ceremonies, but most probably it may be some form of Aryan sacred gathering to bless their ancestors periodically.

Among the early Baloch before the adoption of Zoroastrian religious practices, dead were simply buried. No arrangements were made for the identification of each grave save those of tribal heroes. Burial was done in the daytime and seldom at night. They believed that evil spirits may cause some inconvenience to the body during a night burial.

Almsgivings were offered on the death of a family member. This must have its genesis from the Baloch observation of certain rites for the spirit of their ancestors.

For a Baloch man, crying, weeping, or mourning in public on the death of his relative or friend was considered not to be an honorable act (Dashti, 2020). Weeping was considered the greatest weakness for him. He usually sat calmly well-dressed in a dignified manner. His expression of grief was always in an honorable way. If an uncontrollable emotional stage arose, a Baloch would cover his face with his turban or *cācer* so that nobody could see him shedding tears.

Entertainment activities

A variety of entertainment activities were practiced among the ancient Baloch. The leisure hours were spent playing and gambling. The most favorite among the games for the adults was horse racing. But as observed by Dashti (2020), surprisingly quite a few games of sport developed any uniform rules or specifications to be organized on a vast scale as intertribal games, save the horse race and archery. Horse races and sports resembling polo or archery provided sound practical training for young men to participate in wars. Another important innovation was betting on the games by participants themselves or by onlookers. The games of chance which were prevalent in almost every ancient culture were also there in Baloch traditions. Lots were also cast not only as a favorite game of chance but also for ending disputes or dividing the property.

Coanki or *aś'ti* (Four Shagai) was also a common game. It was also common among other tribes in Central Asia. *Ji*, *kappagi*, and *warinǎó* were favorite games. Children played a variety of games including cowrie shell game (*kocki*), knuckle game (*majóli*), and the game of 'Hide and Seek' (*tappān pāpuli*).

Storytelling and lyric poetry were not only major sources of entertainment for the Baloch but they helped them to pass on their history to the next generation. Poets, bards, minstrels, and lyricists were rewarded accordingly.

Ancient Baloch was profoundly interested in music. Among the musical instruments flute (*nal*), harp (*cang*), cymbals (*Senj/Jalājal*), *Soroaz*, *tamburag*, and drums (*dohl*) were important musical instruments played by the ancient Baloch and were among the popular pastimes. The music had also a

spiritual or mythological aspect. The Baloch treated persons suffering from a type of psychological disorder “*Gwāt*” through music. The patients were called *Gwāṭi*. The expert in treating such ailment or exorcist was called *Gwāṭi ay māṭ*. Minstrels played music on *soroaz* and *tamburag* in a rhythmic and repeated way. When the music reached its climax the *gwāṭi* started a relentless movement in a dancing pattern. This would continue for many hours until late at night. It was believed that music would construe some magical effect, and the disease which had been caused definitely by some evil forces would end.

Music was part of many social occasions which were marked with much singing and dancing. The Balochi *sor* or ragas which is termed *zahirag* because of their general characterization of melancholy pattern could be categorized under two main heads: Balochi (*Balóci*) and Kurdi (*Kurṛi*). All others which may be as many as twenty come under these heads. Under *Balóci* ragas, comes its various branches: *mieṛi*, *goar-o-bām*, *mayānag*, *aśrap ay ṛorrā*, and *janozāmi*. *Kurṛi* ragas included *Baśkarṛi*, *Jahlāwāni kurṛi*, *śahr kurṛi*, *salāṭ*, and *tat*. It may, however, be noted that the entire Balochi musical structure is based on *zahirag* which is equivalent to modern country music of many nations in Europe. Some of the folk music such as *laiko*, *daihi*, and *lailadi* appears to be somewhat different from it but in their formal structure, all musical *sor* or derivatives have their base in *zahirag*.

Dances in ancient times were always collective and associated with the group. We cannot find a mention of individual dance among the ancient Baloch. Also, there was no fiery manner of dance. The main dance was *ṛo-cāpi* where men gathered and danced, clapping hands with the movement of the foot, neck,

and head on rhythmic music on the drum (*dohl*). On many occasions, women moved in a circle clapping hands but without body movements such as in *ᵛo-cāpi*. In the later stages of their migration, the ancient Baloch also practiced *latti* and *hambo* which were dances of the ancient indigenous people of present-day Balochistan.

Food and drinks

The main ingredient of the food for the ancient Baloch was meat and milk products but they also used wild or some cultivated vegetables as food items. They also drank intoxicating liquors such as *Bang*, fermented milk of horses, cows, sheep, and goats.

Ways of socialization

Socialization was an integral part of the Baloch social practices. Every Baloch was expected to be socially an active member of the tribe. He took part in discussions in *ᵛiwān* (literally means gathering or assembly) which was open to everyone, at the house of the *Sarᵛār* or the elder. Sometimes, there was a separate meeting place, *ᵛiwānjāh*, for such gatherings. Social, political, and economic problems concerning the tribe were debated in these assemblies. *ᵛiwān* in its formal nature was to be participated in by the elders and selected personalities. In all informal get-togethers, everybody felt his presence. This spirit had made the ancient Baloch into a close-knit tribal structure based on mutual benefit and loss (Dashti, 2020).

ᵛiwānjāh was the place where history, legends, ballads, drama, lyrics, and tales of love were told and sung. Everyone wished that he could exert himself and attract others with his knowledge and manners during such discussions. Mothers in

their lullaby were desirous that their sons, when grown up, should show sagacity and create fame in Balochi *ciwān*.

Hāl was giving and receiving news when one chanced to meet another. It was an obligation, and always reciprocal. A person must communicate the latest happenings which may include the prices of essential goods in a nearby market or some events of a more serious nature. This helped in conveying the latest happenings in remote areas. When traveling in groups, the *hāl* was given by the elderly person of noble birth. This was called *cehabar*. Taking the *cehabar* that was to reveal or receive *hāl* was considered to be a mark of distinction.

Mest'āgi was the reward for giving good news such as the birth of a son, news of the arrival of a lost relative, or a report of a victory in the battle. The reward was appropriate and according to the good news conveyed. *Mest'āgi* could have been in cash or kind, and the social status of the giver of the news was also counted in apportioning *mest'āgi*.

Social security system

Ancient Baloch society was based on the principle of mutual benefit and loss. The whole tribe became involved in a situation where someone needed help. Hand of cooperation was extended to needy persons. The needy could ask for financial help from anyone. Subscriptions were raised on all important occasions and ceremonies, on marriage, death, or any calamity or any event requiring expenditures that may be beyond the capacity of the individual to pay. If a person was faced with some circumstances beyond comprehension requiring expenditure or if his flocks were lost through a general epidemic: or crops by flood, in such eventualities he asked for *bijjār*, that was a contribution or donation and always

forthcoming. Dashti (2020) observed that the contribution or *bijjār* was entirely voluntary. No amount was fixed for that contribution which could be in cash or kind. This was, however, regarded as a debt of honor. A similar contribution and usually more than the original value would have been paid to the person who had already paid, and the occasion had arrived for him to ask for help. The needy person didn't need to go personally to everybody and ask for help on ceremonial occasions such as marriage. He could depute someone for the collection of subscriptions on his behalf. Occasionally, the *Sarṁār* also asked for *bijjār* for a needy tribesman. It appears that in the early ages, the tribesmen would always volunteer to offer a subscription to meet the expenses of the *Sarṁār*. Later, this practice of *bijjār* was institutionalized and the *Sarṁār* was helped after every harvest. The *Sarṁārs* and Chiefs got contributions as *bijjār* but were not supposed to pay back.

There were also various other systems of helping or extending assistance to fellow tribesmen. They were termed as *cankok* (a contribution in food grain after each harvest); *nekān* (assistance to the neighbor in-kind); and *bānji* which was a help in providing prepared food to the neighbor. If someone died in a family, there was no cooking until *Āsroak*. The neighbors and family friends usually would supply prepared foodstuffs for the family during the first three days of the death.

Hawāck is the voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and physical labor for the welfare and benefit of an individual or the community. The concept and practice of *hawāck* have been one of the basic pillars of the ancient Baloch society. Help in plowing someone's fields or reaping of crops: help to build a house for a neighbor, or any other kind of physical labor for others came under the general definition of

hawāck. This was a dignified way of assisting another by offering personal services. As there was no hired labor in the tribal society, *hawāck* fulfilled a pressing need.

Slavery

Slavery was part of human social practices from the beginning. As observed by Black (2011), slavery was widespread as an institution throughout the ancient world. It was practiced by the people of every ancient civilization. It has also been mentioned in the codes of King Hamurabi way back to 1750 BC. Like other tribes, the ancient Baloch also kept slaves. The slaves were mostly war captives, or people purchased or kept as a slave for non-payment of debts or those sometimes sold by parents. They were considered personal belongings and could be sold and gifted to any person. Slavery was hereditary and perpetual. Female slaves were kept as concubines and servants. The owner did not forego the right of sexual access even after the slave woman was married to a slave man. A slave did not have the means to free himself but could get his liberty if he or she performed some extraordinary service for the owner. Sometimes slaves were freed when requested by him or her at the time of the owner's death.

According to Dashti (2020), slavery came into the Baloch social life after their movement from the Caspian region and settlement in areas that now constitute Balochistan. They kept local people as servile dependents. Apart from buying slaves, the Baloch obtain them after their periodic raids into enemy territory. But no Baloch was reduced to slavery from another Baloch tribe after their defeat in the battle. The Baloch were more human in treating their slaves as compared to most other peoples. They disapproved of inhuman torture to their slaves.

A slave in a bad condition or hungry or ill-dressed was considered to be an insult to his owner.

Lódi and doamb

Lódi or *doamb* are believed to be among thousands of entertainers brought from India by Sassanid Emperor Bahram Gur and distributed among various nations and tribes of his empire. The *doamb* or *lódi* had become an institution with a recognized place in the ancient Baloch society. He acted as a messenger in many important matters. In social events, he was ahead of all. He generally made all the arrangements during marriage ceremonies including musical concerts and feasting the guests. He also made arrangements for a variety of other ceremonies from birth to death. Later, some of the *doamb* also became professional workers. Their manual labor included making instruments or tools for agricultural use. They had certain economic and social privileges in society. They got contributions on various ceremonial occasions and times of harvests to meet their expenses. One of the privileges was that they were never harmed in times of war or peace.

Status of the woman

In the Baloch patriarchal set-up, a woman did not enjoy that much power as it was exercised mainly by their menfolk. Her position nevertheless had been one of respect and love, sharing to a great extent the man's burden in many ways. The ancient Baloch considered a woman a full partner in all social endeavors and accorded her a position of trust and favor. The woman was always taken into confidence in a time of grave emergency. If women intervened in the battle, the war was stopped, and negotiations began for settlement of the dispute. She had to perform many obligations as a member of the family

and as a mother. In the absence of close male members, the woman did enjoy the patriarchal powers as the guardian of the family and property. She, therefore, had recognized rights and privileges. Women generally did not take part in the battles alongside men, but the tribal wars were almost total in their character: and every person had to participate, if required, in the battle. Women, however, usually provided medical and civil assistance to the wounded. The women were always spared in wars and battles. The killing of a woman was considered an act of cowardice. It was a matter of honor that women were treated well and never harmed. There had been no system of segregation of sexes. To fulfill their social responsibilities, women always mixed up with menfolk.

Apart from the routine household work, the ancient Baloch women were also engaged in weaving and embroidery works. The making of carpets and making of other woolen garments were also done by the women. Cotton yarn was also spun by the women for use by men in the weaving of clothes. She was not only to do the household work but also take part in manly occupations such as grooming of horses, grazing of flocks, and assisting in cultivation.

The Baloch gave a substantial share to women in the property, although it was not equal to the male members of the family. It is perhaps because of the temporary status of the female in the family. After the marriage, her social rights rested not with her blood relations but with her husband. The husband was responsible for her every action. His family members only intervened if injustice was done to her by the family of her in-laws.

The faithfulness of a wife was of prime importance. Punishment of unfaithfulness was not less than death. It was

generally an accepted principle that the virginity of the bride was to be tested by displaying to close relations the blood-stained clothes after the first intercourse between husband and wife as a testimonial of her virginity. If she did not prove to be a virgin, she met the fate of an adulterous woman. But the punishment was given by the relative of the woman and not by the husband because the alleged crime was committed before she was married. In that eventuality, the husband immediately declared a divorce and sent the girl to her relatives who would punish her. The entire property or *labb* that was given to the bride by the husband and expenses incurred by him would be restored and paid back. After committing an act of adultery, or *siahkāri*, if the woman managed to escape instant punishment and reached the house of a *Sarṁār* or any elder, then she was saved. The husband would divorce her and get some compensation from her or her family. But the husband retained the right to retaliate against the adulterous man, the *siahkār*. The relative of a woman may also retaliate against the adulterous person responsible for bringing ill fame for them.

Dashti (2020) observed that while selecting a wife the ancient Baloch had great consideration for his match to be of equal social standing. Marriage with the low castes was always considered degrading. The wife was to be hospitable, responsible, and graceful. Moreover, she must have womanly qualities of modesty, faithfulness, and devotion. The beauty criteria were that she should have black and large eyes, small white teeth, thin lips, broad and open face; fair color, thin and high nose, tiny feet, thin and long fingers, a long neck, medium height, and long black hair. The Baloch considered an egg-shaped head for a woman (also for a man) very ugly. For them, the head should be round. For this, they would make a lot of

effort for shaping the head of the baby according to their wishes.

The position of a mother who bore great children was unique. Her position was further exalted when she became the mother of a son who was to be reared to shoulder the future responsibilities of the family, keeping the enemies at bay, and establishing the bonds of love with friends. Her daughter would have similar responsibilities and expected to be a lady of the highest qualities, being hospitable and faithful. In her lullabies, she praises her daughter for womanly qualities. She imagined that a noble would request her to grant him the hands of her beautiful and graceful daughter in marriage.

The ancient Baloch practiced polygamy, and there was no bar on the number of wives. The plurality of wives was a mark of distinction. It was a mark of honor and resourcefulness. Not necessarily every person married more than one wife; but the man who could pay *labb* (bride-price) and marriage expenses, and was in a position to maintain them, usually married more than one wife. Tribal *sarḳārs* married many women for political reasons as well. Keeping women as concubines by well-to-do was practiced by ancient Baloch. In the beginning, probably it was restricted at first instance to the Chiefs and war heroes or those who showed exemplary valor in the battle. Later in the Muslim era, it became a regular feature. The Arab and Central Asian tradition of homosexuality also crept and persisted in the Baloch society to some extent. Concubines always were from the low-caste or from amongst the slaves.

Among many ancient peoples, the sex element was not the only factor for polygamy, which was also true of the Baloch. A plurality of wives increased the probability of offspring who were considered assets. Children were economic incentives and

always desired by both men and women. A man's supply of labor increased substantially by his marrying more wives and bearing more children. In a tribal structure where there was no hired labor, this must have been an important consideration. Another important factor for polygamy had been the idea to absorb the surplus women: widows or virgins. Engaged in a constant struggle, women were always numerous compared to men because the latter were killed in battles in large numbers.

The Baloch preferred to marry within his clan or tribe. Cousins and close relatives were also preferred. There was great regard for blood relatives because they were considered more trustworthy and loyal.

The woman whose husband died or was killed on the battlefield was allowed to remarry. But the preference was given to the relatives of the husband in giving the hands of the widow in a second marriage because it was always pinching for the entire family that the wife of their brother or cousin should become the wife of another person not related to them. In cases of the remarriage of a widow, there was to be no ceremony. Remarriage was affected in a very simple and austere manner as a mark of respect to the deceased. Even if she married outside her ex-husband's family, the marriage ceremonies would be quite simple.

According to Dashti (2020), among the ancient Baloch, divorce was regarded as an insult. It was inconceivable that a lady who once was the wife of a gentleman may marry another person. In social ethos, it was always remembered with bad connotation for ex-husband and also for the new one. The divorcee was called *najan*, ex-wife of so and so even after many years of divorce and remarriage. Perhaps a very strong reason for social

disapproval of divorce and remarriage of a woman had its rationale from social problems which followed.

Barrenness or being a *sant*, for the women, was perhaps the most unfortunate event in her life. The blame was equally laid on man, but not so often. Barrenness on the part of women could have resulted in a second marriage by the husband or, in rare cases, led to a separation.

If a woman was divorced for her fault, the husband would claim the *labb* or bride gifts he had given to her. But if the marriage was to be dissolved for any other reason, he would forego the *labb*. There were instances when separation became necessary such as the impotence of man or the barrenness of wife. No formal ceremony was required for the annulment of marriage which was quite simple.

Prostitution among the Baloch was practically unknown. Lover relationship was completely voluntary. Gifts were exchanged between the lovers as symbols of their affection for each other. A woman had to be won through courageous acts of a promising man of high character. The Baloch women even in love could hardly transgress the social limits. She could not elope with the lover nor even contemplate it because that would bring ill-fame to her family, father, and glorious brother. Love affairs were extremely secret.

Inheritance

It was generally the eldest son who took up the administration and responsibility of the family at the death of his father. But he was not the only shareholder in his father's property. Other sons and daughters also, had the right to inherit. It appears that the ancient Baloch gave a lesser share to the daughter from her father's possessions; the bulk would go to the sons who must

have inherited proportionately. The eldest son got '*mirwandi*' that was an extra share apart from the normal share he was entitled to. It was not legally binding but was granted as a mark of courtesy. As regards the wife, she had most possibly received a reasonable share from the inheritance of her husband.

Usually, the father gave away a portion of his wealth, to the sons who attained maturity. The parents in certain cases might have retained the nominal property.

The father's close relatives had perhaps a share in the property because they had to shoulder certain responsibilities in connection with their deceased relative's children and the widow who had to marry some kinsman of her husband. Therefore, it is probable that to maintain that link, relatives had some vested right in the assets in certain eventualities.

The sons had no share in the articles used by mothers such as utensils, clothing, and jewelry. They were equally distributed among the daughters. The father's personal belongings were shared by the sons. Sons and daughters of concubines had no share. Similarly, adopted children accorded no right to inherit; but there was no bar on the father to give a portion of the property to an adopted son. If a woman remarried against the consent of her deceased husband's relatives, she would get no share from the property of her ex-husband.

If a person was dead without a male or female heir, his wealth passed on to his close blood relatives. If he had no such living relatives, the property was given to the wife. After the father's death, his son's grandfather or uncles assumed the charge of guardianship. If he had no blood relations surviving, the wife

and her relatives assumed those responsibilities until the sons attained full age.

The tradition of hospitality

Hospitality was one of the fundamental social practices of ancient Baloch. It held a prime place in social ethos. The guest was a mark of respect and held as almost sacred. Even the enemy, once entered the house, would get the treatment of an honored guest. The guest in a village was visited by all elders and also the ladies, enquiring traditionally, of his well-being and that of his relatives and friends.

The well-to-do persons had a separate house or tent for the guests. If a stranger approached a village, the inmates present would receive him with all courtesy and serve him with all kinds of available food. If any male member was not present, it was the duty of females to receive the guest. The guest could have stayed for as many days as he liked. On his desire to leave he was given necessary articles according to the distance he wished to travel if he did not possess any for the remaining journey.

This hospitality had its rationale not only in tribal traditions but also due to the geographical conditions of the vast land mass where the Baloch population was scattered. The distances were vast and means of communication limited. The travelers would have invariably suffered a lot of hardship without such hospitality. Without expecting such help, it would have become rather impossible for any person to travel long distances.

Sanctity of home

The home was considered a sacred place by the ancient Baloch. They never violated the sanctity of home under any

circumstances whatsoever. Even an offender who entered into the house premises of a Baloch was never pursued and apprehended because after entering the house, he was not only a guest but also a *bāhoat* (a person given protection or refuge) and would be protected by all means. The home of a Baloch *Sarṁār* or elder was a safe refuge and place of protection for all the offenders of law until the decision or resolution of the dispute.

Keeping the vows

Vows or *kaul/soagenṁ* had a prime place in the Baloch society. When a Baloch made a vow or swore to do or not to do certain acts, he would abide by that oath of honor. Sometimes such vows resulted in disastrous consequences. The Baloch always swore by the head of his father or his sword, or he simply took his beard in his hands and said the words he intended to do or not to do.

Protection of *bāhoat*

A person given protection was called a *bāhoat*. *Bāhoat* was implicit or explicit; a neighbor was always regarded as under protection. Defending a *bāhoat* was the prime duty of the Baloch who would never hesitate to take up arms to safeguard the life and property of a *bāhoat*. Theoretically, every person could ask for this protection, which was never refused whatever may be the risk involved. However, proclaimed offenders usually were not accorded the privilege. The simplest way of asking to be a *bāhoat* was to enter the house premises of a Baloch and then demand protection. The Baloch not only defended the *bāhoat* but even took to arms to restore any property already lost or compensate for an injustice already done to him/her.

The tradition of revenge (*Beirgiri*)

Dashti (2020) observed that a Baloch hated the enemy to the extreme but had the highest regard and affection for those he liked. *Mehr*, that is the deep devotion, and extreme possessive love was the guiding spirit and provided virtually a sound base for the social outlook of the ancient Baloch. His regard for his family and friends was profound. He was devoted to those who may have helped him in any manner. He never raised his hand on the person from whose house he had taken meals. However, to avenge aggression or injustice was among the fundamental social ethos. Revenge was a strong element among the ancient Baloch social practices. It would become the prime aim of a lifetime or more. The entire life of an ancient Baloch was reshaped and circled one goal- to avenge the blood of his kin. As long as his relative's blood remains unpaid and his *beir* or revenge is outstanding, he thinks of himself as a man waiting for an opportune moment to take revenge.

The mode of avenging the blood may differ and must be in the same proportion in which the first murder took place. If inhuman or insulting tactics were adopted in the killing, the revenge would be of the same nature. There was no leniency in this regard. If somebody was beaten to death he was avenged in the same manner. A Baloch never forgot to avenge the blood of his kin. Sometimes, the death ceremonies such as *pors*, which is a formal expression of grief over the death by the community, were postponed until the time when the blood was avenged.

Sometimes an unusual number of people were killed to avenge only one or a few persons. Head for a head was in the case of people of equal status. But while compensating for the death of a hero, chief of a tribe, or a man of higher status, this rule was

not followed. In such cases, more people from the offender's side were killed.

Blood was avenged mostly by close male relatives. In case there were no close relatives, it was generally, but not too often, avenged by clansmen or any member of the tribe. If the killer was a hired one or from low status, the motivator or conspirator was killed regardless of his position, after fully establishing that he was the cause of the perpetrated wrong. If the murderer was from low status, the blood was compensated by killing more persons from the culprit's family and relatives. Another tradition was that the Baloch usually forgave the blood shed by a person of low status because they considered it inappropriate to avenge on a person who was not of the deceased's equal status. Blood feuds once created could turn into a tribal conflict that would continue for decades, causing the murder of many people from either side.

Blood feuds among the tribes were settled by the elders who would go to the house of the aggrieved party with the relations of the offenders and theoretically accept the guilt and offer an unqualified apology. They would ask for the mercy of the victims' families following the traditions. Usually, the blood was forgiven after some formalities and exchanges of elderly advice. Among some tribes, the negotiators or *meid* offered some nominal compensation as a token of deep sympathy and regrets from the family or the clan who perpetrated the wrong which was generally accepted. In the Balochi social code, in normal circumstances, it was an insult to accept any payment for the dead relative. He would simply pardon the offender and agree to symbolic compensation as an indication of grief and sympathy for the aggrieved family. It was almost impossible for him to bargain with the enemy. Except for *meid* and asking

for forgiveness, there was no other way of settling blood disputes. If unsettled, the feud would continue from one generation to another. In a blood feud, regular debtor and creditor account were kept by both sides. Blood was never left unpaid. If there were no male relatives to avenge the blood, the female members sometimes took up arms to avenge their dead members.

Even after the settlement of a murder dispute, it was painful for the relatives of the deceased to carry on normal relations with the enemy. Sometimes, to settle the dispute permanently, the offender's relatives gave a lady in marriage to the aggrieved family. This was to be in the case where the offender held a superior or equal position in the social hierarchy. This was, however, resorted to minimize the chances of any future eruption of the enmity between the parties on some other pretexts. Once the case of blood feud was settled it would not be considered desirable to take revenge. The revenge then would be a grave deviation from normal practice. Therefore, such a feud could break out in some other shape because of persistent hatred between the parties.

In avenging blood, any method could be adopted which was considered necessary. However, it was a normal principle that before attacking, the victim was warned and reminded of his guilt because deceitful manners were generally considered below Baloch status.

Śegān

Baloch was expected to always behave in a respectable and honorable manner. His entire behavior was expected to be guided by a strict social code. Any weakness or action which was not following social ethos was scornfully rebutted by the

people. Such a rebuttal was considered a great insult. *Śegān* or taunting was an established factor in Baloch culture and a permanent check on its members (Dashti, 2020). It was a frank opinion of others about others. Everybody was conscious lest he was jibed at for any undesirable action not only of his own but of his family and friends. If inadvertently he committed a mistake or any step taken by his family members, it was promptly judged and decided upon and immediately ridiculed scornfully. Such scoff would usually be directed against the person at a social gathering, *ciwān*, or on ceremonial occasions. A person whose wife was suspected to be unfaithful would receive directly or indirectly the derisive contempt of others. If somebody failed to avenge the blood of his relative, he was always looked down upon with hatred and mocked. If anybody ran away from the battlefield, he was cursed and his action was remembered even after his death, and his sons received the appropriate taunting. The Baloch was never afraid of death but greatly abhorred to live a life of disgrace.

The principle of Lajj o Mayār

The term connoted a penetrating philosophical abstraction and meant Baloch adherence to his high principles in all matters. In its general sense, it was a comprehensive term having deep cogitative, metaphysical, social, and ethical standards. In other words, it was intelligent self-restraint on certain matters, and a vigorous and provocative force demanding the individual to act and behave in a manner prescribed by the tribal codes. It was the disciplinary inner strength of the individual regulating his entire conduct. While *lajj o mayār* connoted all the best qualities, *beilajj*, or a person devoid of *lajj*, had all the characteristics of a vicious and contemptible person of wicked nature. Figuratively, however, the very word, Baloch, or

Balochi meant *lajj o mayār*. It depicts the traditions of justice and equality, reasonableness and sobriety, bravery and courage, sagacity and wisdom, truthfulness and honesty, and hospitality and devotion.

Status of clergy

The role of the priests in the ancient Baloch society was insignificant, and it was limited only to mediation between the Baloch and gods and goddesses. The priest was also to invoke the gods' blessings for the tribe, tribal chief, and the success in the wars. Although the ancient Baloch did worship deities or supernatural powers or natural phenomena, nevertheless, as observed by Dashti (2020), the nature of political association in the ancient Baloch society was by no means religious.

Conclusion

The speakers of Indo-European languages known as Aryan people who migrated from Central Asia in ancient times and settled in the Iranian Plateau had their system of primitive governance, societal norms, and cultural behavior within the tribal settings. The ancient Baloch as part of these migrating tribes initially observed the same social and cultural norms. In the waves of migration beginning from Central Asia, their wandering in the Iranian Plateau and their encounters with powerful forces of history made their culture oriented around warfare, and they were very good at it. The individual Baloch was egoistic and extremely conscious of his exalted position. Like other Aryan people, the Baloch also called themselves the “noble ones” or the “superior ones.” He was proud of his toughness and battle skills. Perhaps this made the foundation of their society on the principle of complete social equality where every person had equal rights and privileges and recognized

social status. All were warriors and equally took part in the battle, but no one, not even the tribal chief, had more rights than the ordinary Baloch. No one could boast a superior status. The political system revolved around the *Sarṓāri* system that served as the institution which offered individual freedom to a Baloch as long as his interests did not contradict the interests of the community as a whole. There was no class of aristocracy or warrior distinguished from the ordinary Baloch nor was there any class of clergymen who could have any marked influence on political and military matters.

The society was based on the Baloch code of conduct and traditions which had a stronger influence than any statutory law. Even the *Sarṓār* could not act contrary to tribal principles evolved throughout centuries. He was to follow these principles in his public as well as his private life and to apply them to every member of the tribe. He was answerable in his action to the council which was the custodian of the tribal code. By the time, under the prevailing circumstance of perpetual conflicts, the tribal system evolved from a rudimentary one to a more sophisticated union of various tribes making a *rāj* and manifesting the tribal feelings of unity into an ethnic or national identity.

In the beginning, there was no concept of private property among the Baloch. Private ownership was largely confined to cattle, weapons of war, utensils, and ornaments. Agriculture and pasture lands were owned jointly by the tribes. One can observe that the economic system of the ancient Baloch was not much different from other agro-pastoralist societies of that time. Cattle breeding and some forms of agricultural activities were the only tools for their economic survival. Although much risky, *māljangi* was another activity that provided much-

needed financial requirements for the tribe. As the Baloch considered all other professions except warfare below his masterly status, he chose himself the task of warfare which was always regarded as a noble pursuit; his allied indigenous tribes engaged in other fields of tribal endeavor.

Living a life of continuous hostilities with other tribes and powers, personal bravery became an integral part of the ancient Baloch social traditions. Respect for the brave while despising the coward was an important social behavior. However, they fought their battles keeping in utmost regards the highest possible noble traditions regarding the enemy and the non-combatants. The sanctity of home was among the fundamentals of the Baloch war ethics. Protection of low castes, minstrels, and clergymen was part of cultural behavior. Harming non-combatants, old people, minors, and women were considered unethical. An injured foe was never put to death and a person who ran away from the battlefield was never pursued and killed. Expressing respect for a fallen hero, even belonging to the enemy was something unique among the Baloch.

The social practice of *lajj o mayār* was the disciplinary inner strength of the individual regulating his entire conduct. *Śegān* or taunting as an established factor in Baloch culture was a permanent check on its members. It played a major role in a person's life to keep it within the boundaries of prescribed social ethos. The social practice of giving asylum or protection when asked was although an essential part of an agro-pastoral or nomadic lifestyle, for a Baloch it was inconceivable to avoid the request for asylum or protection.

In many ways, the woman was accorded an exalted place in the ancient Baloch society. In return for this exalted position, the women were expected to be faithful. Adultery was also rare

perhaps because adulterers were punished with death. Perhaps as part of the principle of racial purity among the Aryans, the ancient Baloch never gave his woman to a racially inferior man whatever may be his economic position.

Although, personally avenging an insult or the blood of a relative was the basic pillar of the society but as a whole, justice delivery in the ancient tribal system of the Baloch was dealt with by the council of elders. It was swift and just according to the ethos of that period. The practice of sending *meid* and asking forgiveness was so entrenched in the justice traditions that it was very rare for a Baloch to disregard the plea of a person or a *meid* for forgiveness.

Dress code and many other cultural practices of the ancient Baloch such as attendance of *ḡiwān* as the center of learning, socialization, dispute resolution, and entertainment activities, and many others were similar to the Parthians, Medes, and Persians of that period.

In the greater schema of preserving the national identity of a people, one of the contributions of culture is to maintain and safeguard a community against external enemies and internal dissent and subversion. The socio-cultural codes developed in their long and tortuous historical journey were a powerful tool in the preservation of the distinct Baloch national identity despite the intrusions of powerful cultures of the great powers that ruled the Iranian Plateau for centuries.

Chapter Seven: **Religious beliefs of the ancient Baloch**

Introduction

Religion and mythology are among the basic constituents of human culture. They occur in the history of all human traditions. Religious ideas supplied men with an explanation of existence. Myths have helped modern man to understand the great ancient religions by providing a sound background to their beliefs. Therefore, a study of religious traditions could help in arriving at conclusions regarding the racial kinship of a particular people.

After they migrated from Central Asia, great pressure must have been brought on the Baloch religious and mythological outlook by the indigenous peoples with which they interacted. Their religions must invariably have had a great impact on Baloch religious outlook and cultural behavior. Therefore, any objective inquiry into the religion and mythologies of ancient Baloch cannot be regarded properly and helpful in a deeper understanding of it without a brief account of the religions of the Iranian Plateau and the surrounding regions. It is also important to ascertain the religious practices of non-Aryan or anaryan in the region. (In ancient Persian literature the Anaryan was used for those people in the Iranian Plateau who were not of Aryan origin).

Religion in context

Religious beliefs have been a part of human existence since time immemorable. There does not seem to have been a time when human beings did not believe in the existence of a

time, before the dominance of science, religion played an important role as it satisfied all spiritual needs of human beings, including his thirst for knowledge. According to Clayton (2017), myth is a basic constituent of religion and explains not only the national, social, cultural, and biological facts of a people; but it also in many ways, could be regarded as a complete history. It depicts the peoples' outlook besides answering questions regarding the origin of rituals and practices. In a way, economic, cultural, and political outlook, and religious beliefs lead to conclusions about the history of an ethnic group.

In a historical context, every religion has its conception of the world. Boyer (2001), believed that with a particular conception, a particular religion either weaved together or rejected all other ideas and theories of that age. The quest for immortality among ancient human beings created myths of spirits and living souls. The ancient saint- heroes of Greek religion, for example, ultimately led to the idea that the mighty dead continued to live even after their death, as strong spiritual powers. Beliefs in kings having super-natural powers have led to many other social beliefs, permanent institutions, and powerful cultural taboos. Historical heroes acquire supernatural attributes. They became the symbols and standard-bearers of national goals and objectives.

Being self-conscious is an important quality of the human brain. With this quality of the brain, they are interested in themselves. With the development of quality of thinking, they wanted to know about things and natural phenomena affecting them. Questions about the universe, how it came into being, is somebody out there in the skies who made the universe, and what happens after the death puzzled the primitive men.

However, these questions and their simple answers made the foundations for the perception of gods and other religious beliefs. According to Rice (1904), the desire to become immortal became an integral part of human mythological beliefs, giving rise to the perception of life after death. They figured that their spirit must have left their dead bodies and gone somewhere else. From this primitive concept of life after death arose the perception of good and evil or crime and punishment in the afterlife.

The primitive men made the answer to complex questions very simple by guesswork. They figured out that the universe is created by a power that is beyond anything, almighty and omnipotent. They gave this the name of God. Bevan (1930) pointed out that gods and their associates who were beyond the natural dimensions of the universe gave rise to the perception of supernatural existence. This creator god is continuously interested and involved in the affairs of its creation. Although the power, form, and character of this creator god differ from religion to religion, all religious faiths agree with its existence in some form or other. The believers in the existence of one supreme god were called monotheists while people who believed in many supreme or subordinate gods were called polytheists. A significant number of people venerated natural phenomena. They were in the belief that natural processes and objects are the powers that were responsible for the continuity of the universe. They were called nature worshipers.

Boyer (2001) observed that most accounts of the origin of religion emphasize one of the following suggestions: human minds demand explanations, human hearts seek comfort, human society requires order, and human intellect is illusion-prone. Religion explains puzzling natural phenomena, it

explains puzzling experiences such as dreams, prescience, etc. It explains the origin of things and explains why there is evil and suffering. It also makes mortality less unbearable and allays anxiety and makes for a comfortable world. For religious people, it holds society together, perpetuates a particular social order, and supports morality. However, many believe that religion is a cognitive illusion. According to Dashti (2020), religion is a commitment to a kind or quality of life recognizing a supernatural source and involving a wide range of human behavior with the combination of certain intrinsic feelings and emotions such as wonder, fear, and reverence. It tends to show a deep concern for self-imposed values and morals. The custodians of religion always seek appropriate action embodying those values which they consider necessary. They characterize a human being and his conduct as good or bad, holy, or unholy, virtuous, or unvirtuous, godly, or ungodly.

As God or a supernatural being is fundamental for any religious belief, in organized religions, the concept of a messenger of God or the prophet is also the main ingredient of the faith. Aune (1983), observed that some persons in primitive societies claimed that in their waking hours they have encountered supernatural beings or gods. They shared the happenings during these encounters with their fellow human beings. With the analysis of conversations with supernatural entities, they prophesied future events. They were called prophets or messengers of gods.

With the concept of a supernatural or creator god came the practice of worship and sacrifice. According to Fergusson (2008), worship is a service to the transcendent reality aimed at enriching and renewing closer relations with the god, upon which man feels hopeless and dependent. In essence, the

practice of sacrifice is to appease the almighty entity to get favors. Worship and sacrifice have been the main phenomenon in the religious history of mankind, centering around the basic idea of human salvation. In its earliest form, worship might have been to forge a close spiritual relationship with the supreme power. This forging of close relationship was to ensure safety for the human being and his deliverance or redemption from negative or disabling conditions such as death or misery, conditions that had been viewed to be the result of the wrath of the supernatural power.

Religion and mythology cannot be separated from primitive culture. They had a tremendous influence on a wide range of man's social conduct. Many religious beliefs became the basis of most social practices. For example, belief in the supernatural power of the ruler caused him to be viewed as the protector of his subject and the viceroy of gods on earth. Rulers, kings, and emperors consequently became the final authority in all matters about their subject people.

In ancient times, climatic conditions and certain other features of the region had often led to more subtle adaptations of cultural life, and in fact, have been the principal factors in shaping the religious belief of primitive peoples. That is why certain religions in certain areas may have many points in common, while there are great deals of differences in the religions of the people who live in geographically different locations.

Religion, however, very often acted as a retarding factor in human material development because, whenever confronted with novelty, it always became rigid and opposed social and cultural progress. Religions have also been used for political purposes throughout history. Holy wars were fought which led to genocide and massacre of people in the name of one or

another religious faith. The followers of contemporary organized religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam employed violent methods including massacres to impose their beliefs over others whom they called infidels or followers of wrong religions.

Ancient religions around the Iranian Plateau

It has been established that peoples of the Iranian Plateau and the surrounding regions in ancient times were either followers of Zoroastrianism, Judeo-Christian beliefs, Hinduism, or were practicing many natural phenomena. Some people worshiped the ancient gods of Babylon and Assyria. With the collapse of the Sassanid Empire, the new religion of Islam became dominant in the Iranian Plateau within a short period.

1. Zoroastrianism

The great Iranian religion of Zoroastrianism was based on the two primary spirits, Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. Ahura Mazda was the supreme divinity and Angra Manyu was the bad divinity that was later named Ahriman. Dualism (the good and bad or truth and lie) was the basic concept of Zoroastrianism (Boyd, 1979). With the development of that ideological aspect, in a later period, Ahura Mazda that created the world was considered the opponent of Ahriman. Zoroastrianism was propagated by Prophet Zoroaster (Zarthusht).

Although the time of Zarthusht cannot be ascertained with certainty he is believed to spreading the message of God Ahura Mazda during the Peshdadian period and in the early Achaemenid era. (The exact time of Zarthusht is controversial as many researchers believe that the term is merely an honorific title and there are many Zarthusht in Zoroastrian history). Zarthusht, the founder of the Iranian religion, was the son of

Purushasp. He is also known as Zoroaster, Zarathushtra, or Zaradushth. Born in western Iran, his period has been mentioned variously but most probably Zarthusht entered the social and religious scene of Iran 2000 years before the birth of Christ. He was reported to become the Chief priest of Emperor Vishtaspa of the Peshdadian era. He was reportedly killed in Balkh where the Iranians and the Turks were engaged in a bloody battle for the control of eastern Iran.

Zoroaster's encounter with the supreme god Ahura Mazda is not much different from encounters of other prophets with their respective gods. It is said that while he came out after immersing himself in a river in western Iran, he was encircled by the luminous light of God, and divine revelations came into his mind. Later, he witnessed many visions and had many other encounters with the god during his ministry as the prophet of the god. It was believed by his followers that the body of Zoroaster dwelt with the Archangel of the God Ahura Mazda for three thousand years before his physical appearance in the world. His prophetic teachings focussed mainly on God Ahura Mazda (the wise lord) as the only creator god that is engaged in the eternal battle with the evil, Ahriman.

Zarthusht was a monotheist. He discarded ancient deities of Aryan tribes. He denied the perception that Goddess Anahita and God Mehr are the lieutenants of the supreme god Ormazd or Ahura Mazda (Noss, D & Grangaard, B, 2016). As the sole God, Ahura Mazda was attributed with the good thought, piety, and love while his opponent Ahriman, in the malignancy of his cunning, had engaged in creating heresy and demon worship. Some of the earlier followers of the Zoroastrian religion believed that God Ahura Mazda and Ahriman were the non-identical twins of the almighty God Zurvan (Parpola, 2015)).

According to this belief, Zurvan allowed each of them to choose his path. One chose goodness and the other chose evil. One chose truth and the other lie. This perception was called Zurvanism. Another group of Zoroastrians believed that the evil was derived from an unrighteous thought in the mind of Ahura Mazda himself, who once wondered whether it would be possible for him to have an opponent, and what he would be like. Believers in this theory were called Gayomartian (Frye, 1996).

Zoroaster tried to find out answers to how goodness and badness entered the world. He wanted to know why for humans, life is a battle for survival not only against the elements but also against their fellow human beings many of whom were cruel and indifferent to the pain they inflicted on their fellows. He tried to find out how those who suffered will be compensated and how those who made fellow humans suffer will be punished. He preached that one's conscience, whether of righteous or liar, will determine his future reward. As observed by Hintze (2013), Zoroaster described human life as a series of battles against good and evil and truth and lies. The crux of Zoroaster's teaching was that there will be a final reckoning in which goodwill prevails upon evil. He postulated that the Wise Lord Ahura Mazda would send a savior or *soashyant* and with his agency evil will finally be destroyed, the world would be renewed, and goodness and justice would prevail.

One of the fundamental elements in the Zoroastrian religion was that although the god Ahura Mazda has given the human being the freedom to choose between good and evil, He is not indifferent to the choices made by human beings (Boyce, 1975). Each choice made by them will help to form their

character. There will be a Judgment Day and humans will be judged on the kind of person they have made of themselves. There will be tragic consequences for those who chose evil by not looking far enough to see the consequences of their action. There will be rewards in the afterlife for those who choose goodness. On the Day of Judgment, Ahura Mazda will separate the wise from the unwise. Then Zoroaster as the prophet of God will lead them to the bridge. Each soul will cross the Chinvat Bridge (Chinwad Puhl or the Bridge of Separation) into his/her chosen destiny (Dawson, (2005). The bridge was believed to be as narrow as a razor. On the other side of the bridge was paradise and below was hell. The good ones will be able to cross the bridge while the evils will go down with the heavy weight of their evil doings and suffer in hell. The righteous after crossing the bridge will enjoy the eternal joys of paradise while the wicked and foolish unable to cross the bridge will suffer in the house of lies of hell where there will be miseries, darkness, foul food, and cries of woes.

Zoroastrians considered fire to possess divine power and were also called the “fire-worshippers”. Fire was considered the fourth basic element of the world. Earth, air, and water were other sacred elements. According to the teachings of prophet Zoroaster, humans and animals need air to breathe, water to drink, fire to cook food, and earth to grow plants for their survival. He stressed that to till the field and raise cattle are parts of one's religious requirements. Habashi (2000), observed that fire, on the other hand, had a more complex significance. It was the symbol of divinity. It was the radiation of the eternal light, the place of God Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda). The fire was also considered the main source of life. At the end of the world, it would melt all the metal in the universe and souls would

undergo the test of fire. During the Achaemenid and Sassanid periods, three magnificent sacred fire temples were built in three main regions of Iran (Boyce, 1975). The Fire of Stallion was in Media, the Fire of Farr was in Persia while the Fire of the Great Mehr was in Parthia. These were believed to be lighted by the supreme god Ahura Mazda himself as three lights watching the world.

In Zoroastrianism, the origin of good was distinct from evil. That which was good, luminous, and attractive attributed to the source of goodness, while that which was foul, dark, and the base was attributed to the source of evil. Zoroastrian faith saw the duty of man to battle dishonesty, foulness, and base, keeping them in check. In the battle between good and evil, it was incumbent on man to aid the element of good.

Duchesne-Guillemin (2006), observed that Zoroaster's religious thoughts hugely influenced other religions in the region and many tenets of Zoroastrian religion were taken by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These religions are indebted to Zoroastrianism for ideas such as the practice of daily prayers, the concept of reward and punishment in the afterlife, the concept of heaven and hell, and Chinwad Puhl (Chinvat bridge that separates good and evil human beings in the Day of Judgment).

Zoroaster's teachings were collected in the sacred book of Avesta. The religion of Zoroaster and the power of almighty Ahura Mazda as the supreme and creative god endured for centuries in Iran and Central Asia. Zoroastrianism was at its peak when it became the official religion of the Persian empires. Achaemenid emperors Cyrus and Darius made Ahura Mazda the official god and Zoroastrianism the official religion

of their empire. Many Sassanid emperors were religious zealots and they tried to forcefully convert people into Zoroastrianism. Alexander the Great dealt a heavy blow to Zoroastrianism when the conquering Greeks and Macedonian soldiers destroyed temples and massacred Zoroastrian priests. But later during the Parthian and Sassanid supremacy of Iran, the religion of Ahura Mazda or Zoroastrianism regained its lost ground. The final and fatal blow to the religion of Zoroaster came from the Arabs when the last of Persian empires, the Sassanid collapsed in the 7th century. The Arabs not only massacred the Zoroastrian religious elite but also carried out a thorough search throughout Iran, confiscated the copies of the Zoroastrian sacred book of Avesta, and destroyed them. Nearly all temples in the Iranian Plateau which were related to the Zoroastrian religion were demolished by the conquering Arab armies.

In many ways, Zoroastrianism is closest to the Vedic religion. As some of its beliefs can be traced back to the culture and beliefs of Aryan people before their migrations and becoming distinct peoples as Indo-Aryans and Iranians (Robinson, 2008). During the Sassanid era, dissent and dissensions erupted in the Zoroastrian faith. Two sects appeared among the Zoroastrian clergy: Manicheanism and Mazdakism.

Manicheanism

Manicheanism was among the first of heresies clashing with the orthodox beliefs of major organized religions of ancient times. Mani (214-277 A.D), a Zoroastrian priest from one of the Parthian tribes, tried to combine the doctrine of four great religions: Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity into one to create a new and more workable religion (Bevan, 1930). According to Geo (1946), many elements of Chaldean,

and Mesopotamian religious beliefs and Gnostic ideologies can also be found in the Mani doctrine. With his travels in the east, he also became familiar with Buddhism and took some of the ingredients from the Buddhist doctrine. Mani's doctrine was essentially based on dualism which was a struggle between a good spiritual world of light, and an evil material world of darkness. Foltz (2010) observed that the essence of Manicheanism is that God was opposed by the eternal evil power or devil. In Manicheanism, humanity, the world, and the soul are seen as the by-product of the battle between God's proxy, Primal Man, and the devil. The human person is seen as a battleground for these powers: the soul defines the person, but it is under the influence of both light and dark. Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity, created light but also darkness. Mani proclaimed himself as the last and final prophet. The followers of Mani observed prayers many times a day. Various sources mentioned daily prayers for 3 to 7 times. Prayer timings were mentioned as dawn and sunrise, afternoon, mid-afternoon, just after sunset, and nightfall.

For a while, Mani's teaching attracted a wide range of followers. During the period starting with the end of the fifth century AD and continuing to the first quarter of the sixth century, Manichaeans were not only influential in the Persian Empire but in the same period, they also wielded a great deal of influence in the Byzantine Empire. With the gaining of popular support by Mani, the orthodox Zoroastrian clergy became alarmed. The court priests of the Sassanid Empire considered Mani as a challenge to their unopposed authority. As the ideas propagated by Mani were basically taken from Zoroastrianism and not much different from the orthodox Zoroastrian beliefs, it was declared as a renegade sect of

Zoroastrianism. Mani was termed as a heretic and his ideas as heresy.

Initially, Sassanid emperors did not interfere in the dispute of orthodox Zoroastrian clergy and Mani, but when the Manichaean religion was accepted by many in the Persian Empire, the orthodox clergy prevailed upon emperor Bahram I to persecute him. Mani was tried as a renegade, convicted, and imprisoned. He died in the prison in 277 AD (Welburn, 1998). His followers were persecuted not only by the Sassanids, but Romans and Chinese emperors also banned Manicheism in their respective empires. Abbassid caliphs also persecuted the followers of the Manichean faith and played a part in the extinction of the once-popular religious sect. The writings and preaching of Mani were destroyed and only remnants of his works were preserved by his dedicated followers.

Mazdakism

After crushing the Mani sect, the orthodox Zoroastrian clergy was to battle with another so-called heretic. Mazdak, a very learned priest of Zoroastrian faith began to interpret the basic tenets of the Zoroastrian religion differently from the orthodox meanings. He brought something novel to the existence of evil and suffering. Mazdak preached that all evil and sufferings originate from three demons: envy, wrath, and greed. According to him, the power and mastery of the demons are destructive and vitiated human equality, a value that the god Ahura Mazda had decried and desired. He, therefore, opined that until the demons that made humanity envious, wrathful, and greedy were not eliminated, the fairness and equality Ahura Mazda ordained would never appear in the world. He championed the sharing of wealth so that wrath and greed could be contained.

According to Boyce (2001), the main principle of Mazdak's teachings was that God created the means of making a living on earth so that his servants, the human beings, would divide them equally among themselves. He preached that it is the will of the supreme god, Ahura Mazda that resources being held by the rich should be taken from them to help the poor, giving those with meager resources what they took from those with surplus resources. Those who had more than their requirements had no more legal or moral rights of possession over them than any other person. Fryer (1983) observed that the poor section of the populace and the subjugated nationalities in Iran believed this and considered Mazdak as their Messiah. Mazdak was also an ardent supporter of women's rights and equality. He preached peace and opposed acts of violence. He was even against the slaughtering of animals. Daryaei (2014) opined that as Emperor Kavad supported the doctrine put forward by Mazdak, his followers and the number of his enthusiastic supporters increased exponentially. This began a series of conspiracies organized by the orthodox clergy in the courts of various Sassanid emperors. It is believed that after the death of Kavad, Mazdak sided with Kavad in the struggle for the Sassanid throne. Kavad was unable to hold the throne and Khusrau I (Anushirvan) became the emperor. Besides the conspiracies of the clergy, Emperor Anushirvan himself wanted to teach a lesson to those who opposed his nomination as the emperor. Ultimately, Mazdakism was declared as heresy. Mazdak was declared a heretic, imprisoned, executed, and crucified. His followers were also persecuted by Anushirvan (Khusrau I) and Shahpur II. Many ethnic groups and ordinary people rebelled after the murder of Mazdak (Daryaei, 2014). Although, the resistance of his followers mercilessly crushed and they were massacred, nevertheless, various Arabic authors

mentioned the presence of Mazdakite in a wide area from the Armenian mountains to Ahwaz in the south of Iran during the last decades of the Sassanid era.

Mazdakite teachings introduced new ideas in the Zoroastrian religion. Mazdak was a radical reformer of Zoroastrianism. The social, political, and doctrinal ramifications of Mazdakite doctrine were threatening to the status quo of the Sassanid Empire. It was not only challenging the existing class structure of the Iranian society but also threatening the unquestioned authority of orthodox clergy. As an ideology, it has long-lasting effects. Its power to attract subjugated ethnic groups and downtrodden sections of the Iranian population cannot be ignored while investigating the religious beliefs of the people of the Iranian Plateau in ancient times.

2. Hellenism

The religion of ancient Greeks was called Hellenism which represented the totality of Hellenic culture. Centered around the worship of Hellenic deities, it was firmly associated with the language, culture, and values of Hellenes or ancient Greek people.

Greek religion was based on the worship of Twelve Olympian Gods headed by the supreme God Zeus (Warrior, 2009). The dreadful monsters, the Hecaton Cheires, Phocys, the Gorgons, Typhon, Dragons, Gentaurs, Brazen Bulls, Harpies, had contested the authority of Olympian gods. But in the contest, the monsters were almost always defeated, and the Olympian gods stood as a defensive bulwark between such monsters and men. Osborne (2017) observed that the religious myths of Hellenism were mostly concerned with gods and goddesses. They also included cosmological tales of the genesis of gods

and the world. Many stories have accounts of the successful struggle of various deities which culminated in the supremacy of Zeus, the supreme God of Olympia.

There were worship houses or temples for each god in every Greek city and many festivals and ritual ceremonies were held in honor of these gods throughout the year. Contact with the gods or divinities was made through oracles that would allow people to determine divine will in the rustle of leaves; the shape of flame and smoke on an altar; the flight of birds; the noises made by a spring; or in the entrails of an animal.

With the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek culture spread widely and came into much closer contact with the civilizations of the Near East and Egypt; the Hellenistic mythological beliefs were diluted. With the rise of the Roman Empire, there was a marked decline in the Hellenistic religious followers; nevertheless, most of the Greeks continued to worship their traditional gods with the same sacrifices, dedications, and festivals as in the times of Greek city-states. Only a minority of the Greeks abandoned their traditional gods and adopted new religions with which they came into contact. However, with the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire as the state religion, the Hellenistic religion became irrelevant within a few decades.

3. Christianity

Initially, it began as a Jewish sect with a reformist agenda in the practices of Judaism in the Roman province of Judea in the 1st century, but after being declared as the state religion of the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great around 330 AD, Christianity became one of the major religions of the world. It is based on the teaching and life events of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus belonged to that renegade sect of Judaism that propagated extreme piety and asceticism in Jewish society (Carroll, 1985). Based in Nazareth, this sect was against the mundane practices of the Jewish clergy of that time.

Jesus was accused by the orthodox Jewish clergy of heresy. He was also accused of insulting the respectable and recognized religious leaders of the Jewish faith. These actions were punishable by death according to the laws of the Roman Empire which guaranteed the protection of the religious beliefs of its subject. Jesus was tried in a Roman Court, convicted, and crucified to death. The deeds and sayings of Jesus were written by some of his disciples in four canonical gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John, collected in the New Testament.

Christians believe that Jesus is Christ. They believe that the coming of Christ as the savior or Messiah was prophesied in the Old Testament. In a way, the whole Christian doctrine is based on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Boyce, 1987). Christian believed that Jesus was crucified, died a physical death, was buried within a tomb, and rose from the dead three days later, before ascending to heaven. It is being seen by them as the demonstration of the power that Jesus exercised over life and death and therefore has the authority and power to give people salvation or eternal life.

Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God from the Virgin Mary through immaculate inception. Trinity refers to the teaching that the one God comprises three distinct, eternally co-existing persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God. Together, these three persons are sometimes called the Godhead. The sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of humankind,

the Trinity, and the second coming of Jesus are basic pillars of the Christian faith. Christians believe that God sent his son Jesus, the Messiah, to save the world. They believe Jesus was crucified on a cross to offer the forgiveness of sins committed by humanity. Christians contend that Jesus will return to earth again in what's known as the Second Coming.

In the contemporary world, Christianity is divided into many branches and sects into philosophical and doctrinal grounds. Main branches include Catholic Church, Protestant Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, and Oriental Orthodox Church. Apart from the main branches, there are thousands of smaller church communities.

Christianity in ancient Iran

Colless (1946) observed that the presence of Christian communities was a fact in the Sassanid Empire. It is believed that in Iranian Plateau, early converts to Christianity were those Jews who settled there during Parthian rule.

During the Sassanid period, the presence of a Christian church has been mentioned in Sistan and the west of Iranian provinces like Armenia, Georgia, Albania, and Balāśagān (Brock, 1982). The Christians in Sistan and other eastern regions of Iran during the Sassanid times belonged to the Nestorian sect of the Christians. However, the main body of Christians was assumed to have been in northern Mesopotamia: Syriac-speaking Adiabene and Osrhoene. Like Jews, the Christians remained as subordinate religious communities in Iran but were supposed to be protected by the Sassanid Empire in their religious practices.

Christian writers in the late 6th century recorded twenty bishops in the western regions of the Sassanid Empire including Parthia, Media, Kashan, and Pars. Wigram (2004) mentioned

that six provinces were listed as Christian jurisdictions, including Ray and Abarshahr. In Marv and Herat, the presence of Christian communities was already centuries old. There was a large and important Christian community in Sogdia. Nestorian presence in Samarkand has also been established during the early Sassanid era.

The conversion of Constantine to Christianity, and the adoption of the faith as the state religion of the Roman Empire early in the fourth century, placed Christians in Iran in an underprivileged situation. Persia was engaged in a bloody and protracted war with the Romans and the loyalties of Christians to the Sassanid Empire came under question. Shahpur 11 among his persecutions also included Christians of Armenia and other western regions of his empire. For this reason, it is believed that Christians in Iran sided with the invading Arabs in the campaign to dismantle the Sassanid Empire in the 7th century. In the reign of K̄osrow II, Armenia had come to be seen as a stable province of the Empire; so, the Sassanids accorded some favor toward the Armenian Church and for a while, the Sassanids conceded religious liberty to Armenia according to terms agreed in the 484 Treaty of Nuarsak. However, a new wave of persecution of Christians, and renewed resistance under Vardan II flared up in 570 AD.

4. Hinduism

Hinduism also called the eternal way of life or the religion of Vedas is believed to be the oldest religion in the world. Contrary to major world religions, Hinduism is not a definite dogmatic creed but a vast and complex set of religious ideas including rituals, and pilgrimages. It has no founder, no holy writ, save the literary sources, Rig Veda. Rig Veda is the hymns

that were composed over the last two or three centuries of the second millennium B.C.

Hinduism, in its present form, is the result of constant historical development and primarily the outcome of Indus Valley civilization and the Vedic culture (Dashti, 2020; Thapar, 2004). It has been established that there are definite links on a cultural and religious plane between Indus Valley civilization and Vedic culture. The mythological beliefs of migrating Aryan people witnessed great changes after they encountered the remnants of the Indus Valley civilization whose people appear to have worshipped different deities. For instance, the Hindu concept of non-violence, and image worship were non-Vedic but adapted by the Aryans through the course of history and established ultimately as an accepted religious norm. After centuries of interactions, the Vedic and non-Vedic forms of cultures combined or influenced each other to produce a new cultural pattern. It is difficult to fix a date for such cultural combination and growth, but it can be presumed that it surfaced around 2000 B.C.

Hinduism is based on six fundamental philosophical pillars which are ethics or duties of a person, work or worthiness, action and intent of a person, desire and passions, and cycle of death and rebirth, liberation or salvation from the cycle of death and rebirth (Zaehner, 1992). One of the fundamental beliefs in Hinduism is the cycle of *samsara* that means that all life goes through birth, life, death, and rebirth. According to this belief, all living things have an *atman* (spirit or soul). It is the *atman* that moves on into a new body after death. Honesty, non-violence, forbearance, self-restraint, and compassion are the virtues that a Hindu is supposed to adhere to. Worship included

recitations from the holy text, meditation, and pilgrimages to holy places.

Hinduism is a polytheistic religion. Hindus worship a variety of gods; however, three gods are considered to be supreme which are Brahma- the creator god, Vishnu-the maintainer of order and harmony in the universe, Shiva- the destroyer of the universe to renew it at the end of each cycle (Smith, 1998). Apart from this trinity of almighty gods, there are many other gods and goddesses like Ganapati, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Durga, and Indira. Rama and Krishna are believed to be of divine descent from God Vishnu. Vedas or holy texts of Hindu religion included the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Agamas.

Before the advent of Buddhism and the Arab invasion of India, the followers of the Hindu religion were living in a large region of south-central Asia. During the 8th, 9th, and 10th century AD, the invading armies from West and Central Asia came to India for plunder, and being the followers of the new religion of Islam, they forcefully converted a significant number of Hindus into Islam.

5. Islam

Islam is the religion of those who believe that Allah is the supreme and the only God and Muhammad (PBUH) is the prophet or messenger of Allah. Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (570-632 A.D) in 610 A.D. He was the grandson of Abdul Motalib who was the chief of the Banu Hashim clan of Quraish, At the age of 25 years, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) married a wealthy widow Khadija in Mecca. After fifteen years of living a life of meditation and keeping a low profile, at the age of 40 years, one morning he

declared before a gathering of Meccan people that during the night, through angel Gabriel, Allah spoke to his soul and asked him to rise and preach to his people. He also disclosed that Allah was appointed him as his messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. He announced that on the orders of Allah from now onward his life will be devoted to the task of raising the people of Quraish from their degradation; making them give up their evil ways and teaching them their duty to their fellow beings. His new faith was named Islam and the faithful were called Muslims.

The message of the new religion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called for equality, goodness, and brotherhood among the Arabs. It proscribed idolatry, deceit, cruelty, and injustice. It renounced paganism and called for the worship of one almighty god Allah and called for the redundancy of a multitude of gods and goddesses which the people of Arabia were worshipping at that period. He declared redundant everything that had preceded his revelations as the last prophet, and in this way, Islam is to replace Paganism, Christianity, and Judaism in the Arabian Peninsula.

Islamic doctrine, law, and thinking, in general, are based upon two sources, or fundamental principles which are the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an is regarded as the verbatim word, or speech, of Allah, delivered to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through archangel Gabriel. While Sunnah means the example of the Prophet—i.e., his words and deeds as recorded in compilations known as the Hadith.

According to the doctrine of Islam, the creator god Allah is one and unique; he has no partner and no equal. Through its uncompromising monotheism, it rejected all forms of idolatry. After the conquest of Mecca, within a few years, it eliminated

all gods and divinities that the Arabs worshipped for thousands of years.

The Muslims believe in the Qur'anic verse which tells us that Allah created two parallel species of creatures, human beings, and jinn: the one from clay and the other from fire. Among the Jinn, Iblis became the chief rival of Allah. The work of Iblis has been to beguile human beings into error and sin. Iblis also endeavors to instigate human beings for acts of disobedience to Allah and its machinations will cease only on the Last Day. In Islamic doctrine, on the Last Day, when the world will come to an end, the dead will be resurrected, and a judgment will be pronounced on every person after considering his/her deeds. Those condemned will burn in hellfire, and those who are saved will enjoy the abiding joys of paradise.

Certain basic features of the religious-social organization of Islam were singled out as the "Pillars of Islam." These Six Pillars consist of *Shahadah* which is sincerely reciting the Muslim profession of faith; *Salat* which is properly performing ritual prayers five times each day; *Zakat* which is paying tax to benefit the poor and the needy; *Sawm* which is fasting during the Arabic month of Ramadan; Hajj which is the pilgrimage to Mecca (Once in a lifetime); and *Jihad* which is the struggle for the conversion of infidels to the Islamic faith.

In the beginning, the mission of the Prophet was purely religious and reformative. His real political career began after he migrated from Mecca to Medina, and with this Islam assumed a wider perspective. The Prophet's political successes in later years not only changed his religious ideas but his entire political outlook.

With the victories over powerful Roman and Sassanid empires, within a short period, Islam became the dominant religion in the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa. It came out from its original Arabian character and was proclaimed to be a religion for the entire world. Allah replaced powerful gods Ahura Mazda and Yahweh of Iranian and Byzantine empires respectively.

Victories over powerful empires by Bedouins in a few decades validated the call of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to his new message for the glory and salvation of the Arab people. In regions that were occupied by them, Islam's essential egalitarianism within the community of the faithful and its official discrimination against the followers of other religions won rapid converts. Non-converts or infidels were required to pay a per capita tax called *jizyah*. On refusing to convert to Islam or payment of *jizyah*, they became vulnerable to getting the death penalty.

The conflict between the tribe of Banu Hashim and the powerful Banu Ummaya, beginning as the political fight for the rulership of the Arab Empire soon after the death of the Prophet, finally caused the division of Islam into two distinct groups of philosophical and political thoughts: the Shiism and Sunnism. In the contemporary world, Shia and Sunnis are further divided into many sects.

Religious beliefs of the ancient Baloch

The Baloch religious and mythological beliefs developed in ancient times were the results of great cultural changes since their movement from Central Asia into the Caspian region. They encountered indigenous ideas. The Iranian religion of

Zoroastrianism had its influences; so also, Judaism and Christianity, and Islam, in a much later period.

Initially, central to both groups of Indo-Iranian tribes who settled in the Iranian Plateau or north India, was the sacrificial worship of various gods called daevas. Famous among these deities were Mithra, Vayu, Anahita, Indra, Bahram, Atar (fire god), etc. Some of the vague and complex beliefs about the soul, death, and an afterlife at a later stage became part of the established Zoroastrian religion. These included such beliefs as Ruwan (urwān) that was the individual's soul, which survived death and went to the other world. At death, when the breath of life (urwān) departed from the body (jān), the soul hovered near the corpse for three days before journeying to Chinvat Bridge (Chinwad Puhl). They had a unique conception of the universe which they believed was peopled by a large variety of celestial beings of different shapes and varied descriptions. The universe itself was believed to have emerged from nothingness.

The original mythological beliefs of the pastoral Baloch tribes were based on their stress of direct communication with the gods through sacrifices, hymns, etc. The ancient Baloch believed that life should be enjoyed ostensibly according to fixed principles evolved by their mighty ancestors because any deviation would be degrading to their great dead ancestors and the next generations. It may be presumed, however, that the concept of nature as a totality was perhaps unknown. Only individual natural phenomena such as stars, animals, plants, water, and fire were considered forces that could have immense power to affect human life. These were thus respected and revered.

Animal sacrifice was practiced among the agro-pastoralist communities of ancient times. Dashti (2020) observed that it

would not be incorrect to assume that the present practice of animal sacrifice is the continuation of practice observed by the Baloch in ancient times. Though the sacrifice in its present shape must have been altered or diluted by later religious and cultural stimulations especially after the Arab intrusion in the region. The ancient communities sacrificed animals not only to ward off the evil forces of nature which were believed to be in abundance, but also to please the Divine, and through his pleasure, save themselves. Apart from being appeasement to supernatural powers or deities, sacrifice was also to thwart an impending calamity, disease, or danger, as a good luck charm before going to battle or after victory. Blood of the sacrificed animal was to be poured in that place. Sacrifice was also offered of the dearest thing. Beard sacrifices were the most peculiar, that is the beards were cut shorter or shaved.

Ancestor and hero-worship among the ancient Baloch

Veneration of ancestors or heroes was also part of the religious traditions of ancient Baloch. He swore by the head of the deceased tribal or family hero or by the head of his father. Dead people were considered mighty and believed to possess supernatural powers. The dead were to be revered because they were the harbingers of unknown existence. They believed that the deceased may be living in other forms and affecting individuals. In their beliefs, the mighty dead expected the living people to behave in a particular manner. Any deviation from the accepted norms of the society was considered improper. It was against the Baloch sense of honor to have any shameful effect of the living man's action on the spirit of his departed ancestors. The dead ancestors should be in a state of perpetual pride which was possible only if the living members or relatives behaved in a manner that may console his departed soul. The

ancient Baloch tradition of *Murṣagāni śām* (Dinner of the dead), in a way, was to appease the souls of the dead ancestors. Returning of the spirit of a dead or the phenomenon of the ghost were extensively believed by the ancient Baloch. Dead spirits, however, appear in dreams, approving or disapproving certain steps taken or contemplated to be taken by a living relative. According to Dashti (2020), the belief among the Baloch of the great power of the ancestral spirits was widespread and was perhaps the strongest force for social control and discipline. In social life, they followed certain set principles and remained cautious of any deviation from norms. Ancient Baloch believed that deviation from agreed principles would cause displeasure to their revered and mighty dead. They believed that any feat of valor or courageous enterprise would not only renew the past glory but also invoke the pleasure of the spirits of respected heroes. Such heroes had become status symbols, and in a way were the nucleus of many superstitions among the ancient Baloch.

Priesthood among the ancient Baloch

The priesthood is a cultic institution in all religions. The primary role of the priest was that of a ritual expert who was supposed to possess special sacred knowledge and techniques of worship. His significance was generally based on alleged deeds and qualities which he possessed. This was because of the priest's special association with gods or divinities. There are least traces of any religious institution like priesthood separately functioning or influencing the ancient Baloch society in any way. Certain personal requirements for a member of a priesthood, such as celibacy or asceticism as prevalent in various religious or cultic groups had no place in Baloch religious practices. It appears that the chief of the tribe

or elder of a clan was also acting as a religious leader in the ancient Baloch society. In the absence of an organized priesthood, the Baloch had also no definite and complex system of worship in ancient times.

Superstitious beliefs among the ancient Baloch

Calamities were considered by the ancient Baloch as the working of supernatural forces. They never doubted the existence of supernatural beings such as ghosts, fairies, and monsters. Belief in evil spirits was another innovation to this superstition. The concept of an evil spirit found its extended rationale in the widespread belief in sorcery. It was the human enduring mental and physical strength which made it possible to acquire tremendous spiritual strength that could enable someone to control the evil spirit and employ them to the individual's advantage. The act of sorcery depended on verbal formulations and the magical strength of words, which were considered most important. The Baloch thought that such formulations or *mant'ar* (abracadabra) were fixed and had specified strength. It was said that evil spirits were usually at work at a particular time of night and could harm the reciter of magical phrases if he showed a little sign of mental and spiritual weakness. This practice was continued according to the magical effect one wanted to derive. If unharmed, the individual would acquire the control of some evil spirits which would serve him as a guard and an evil agent who could bring disaster to anyone desired by his master.

The ancient Baloch thought that certain garments or jewelry could ward off evil and protect persons from vicious elements. Such beliefs also existed among most other peoples of Central Asia in ancient times. The Baloch believed that some evil forces who were in search of an opportunity to harm human

beings could be checked using jewelry or some metallic articles. The bridegroom beside his usual ornaments, such as a sword, had some hidden object on his person during the marriage ceremony, at least, the first night of the marriage.

The belief in sorcery was an affirmation of human control of supernatural force through spirit agencies and the compulsive power of words. It employed symbols, images, and idols for individual manipulation and interests. Sorcerers were feared by the Baloch who believed that they possessed extraordinary destructive powers through evil agents. Such agents at the command of sorcerers could inspire love or hatred, avert impending disasters, guard anyone against the enemy, and could easily harm the opponents. The Baloch belief in the power of spoken words may have perhaps its roots in the ancient belief that words or formulations persistently repeated will invariably bring a response. The primary conviction in sorcery, however, must have been strengthened when Baloch encountered other peoples in Iran. The Baloch magical traditions appear to be of Aryan origin with considerable variations necessitated perhaps due to changes in circumstances.

The ancient Baloch associated certain animals with sorcerers. They thought that the animal spirit could be bound up to that of the sorcerer who could assume any animal form or any other shape he liked. The sorcerer or *Jā'ū/Jā'tig* perhaps always rode the hyena (*ap'tār*) and believed to have intercourse with these animals. They were believed to be able to travel hundreds of miles in a short period. It was believed that the sorcerer or *Jā'ū/Jā'tig* usually ate human "heart", by first dislocating it and then pulling it out from the human body. This was perhaps one of their most feared actions. They mostly attempt to eat the

heart of a sick person. Although, having supernatural powers, however, if a *Jāṭig* was apprehended and a portion of the hair or one of her or his teeth was cut, the magical power on the affected person was believed to come to an end, and the victim was relieved from evil consequences.

The ancient Baloch believed that persons having magical powers could secure strayed cattle from the wild animals during night or day. The magical effect called, “*ampās*” literally meaning protection, could be constructed and wolves or other beasts could not eat the un-shepherd or strayed animals in the jungle. A similar verbal formulation could cause harm to a man’s sexual potency or render a weapon effectless.

The prediction of the future by the interpretation of dreams was a primitive belief and, in many cultures, dreams were invariably considered true. The ancient Baloch believed in dreams. Dreams were a peculiar phenomenon and an extreme curiosity for the Baloch whose mind had always been preoccupied with monsters and superhuman beings who lived in dangerous lands far from human reach and usually appear in nightmares. As the monsters were good as well as bad, the dreams must have certain indications: either good or bad for the individual. According to Dashti (2020), what was, however, peculiarly interesting is the fact that not all the dreams of ordinary men were considered significant which might have required exposition especially on the matters of collective importance. The individual dream may be of some relevance to oneself. But matters of common importance such as war, calamities, or matters having some impact on the tribe, must have been dreamt by the tribal elders and the chiefs who immediately called for interpreters, and in some cases, proper precaution was taken. Certain matters implied in the dreams were kept a

secret, while others could be explained in public. The Baloch even offered sacrifice as the only appropriate measure to ward off dangers after having dreamt to that effect.

The ancient Baloch believed that certain happenings on the earth were the result of stars or some other heavenly agents. The changes in the location of certain stars in certain periods of the year were the subject of their forecast regarding the social, economic problems of their people. Rain or calamities could be forecast by the keen observers of stars. They considered sun or moon eclipses as bad omens and offered sacrifices on these occasions. As the ancient Baloch regarded these heavenly bodies with sanctity, they considered such eclipses to be the result of some extraordinary happenings brought about by some deep celestial conflicts. Therefore, their impact on humans was inevitable. During such eclipses, the pregnant women were neither allowed to see the eclipse nor were they required to move in the open for fear of the bad impact on the child in the womb.

The ancient Baloch considered certain animals, such as sheep or cows as virtuous. Lizard and Garter snake (æhkānmār) was never killed out of respect. Among plants, the fig tree was considered sacred. It was believed that if one could obtain fig flower and put it in anything, the quantity of that thing would increase two-fold.

Finding a religion for the ancient Baloch

The ancient Baloch were living in a region where many strong religious beliefs were being practiced by the people. Some of these beliefs were declared as official religions of many empires. The major organized religion in the Iranian Plateau was Zoroastrianism. However, the presence of the Christian

church has also been mentioned in various parts of the Iranian Plateau. In the east and west of the Iranian Plateau, there were well-established Hindu and Judaic religions while some of the people were still practicing the worship of old gods and goddesses of migrating Aryan tribes. During the Greek presence in the region which lasted for more than 150 years, being the religion of the rulers, Hellenic mythological beliefs were natural to penetrate among the populace. In this context, we cannot rule out the Greek cultural impact on the region where the ancient Baloch were living. However, it is difficult to strictly judge the degree of influences of Greek civilization on the Baloch as one cannot be sure of the exact locations and settlements of the Baloch tribes at the time of Greek power in the region. No aspect of the ancient Greek religious outlook is depicted in the Baloch culture and mythological beliefs.

According to Persian sources, during the reign of Khosrow 11, the catholicos of Iberia and Albania, Gregory, attempted to convert the pagan people and Zoroastrian people of Balāśagān to Christianity. In 800 AD, bishop Eliya, who was sent as a missionary to the area, reports of inhabitants worshipping a god named Yazd, who lived in an oak tree called "king of the forest"; the bushes that encircled the tree were called "children of Yazd" (Yazd was a name of God Ahura Mazda). The people there were worshipping Yazd as their ancestors did. Perhaps the presence of a Yazidi sect among the Kurds is the continuation of this belief but it is hard to conclude that ancient Baloch in the region were in any way followers of this sect.

Adontz (1970), quoting different ancient historians, observed that there were two attempts at the conversion of Balāśagān to Christianity: first, that of Gregory, which must have ended in his martyrdom, then that of Saint Mesrob. It is not certain

whether the population was converted and to which extent; however, in the third quarter of the sixth century, a bishop of Balāśagān by the name of Timothy was figured with the other bishops, among those named in a letter addressed by the catholicos John II of Armenia to the catholicos of Albania (Movses, 1961). Although Christian missionaries were preaching gospels in Western Iranian regions there is no concrete evidence that the Baloch living in Balāśagān in ancient times were the followers of the Christian faith. Among the Baloch traditional beliefs, one cannot find any resemblance with the Christian belief of the Trinity.

The same is the case with Judaism or Hinduism as we cannot find any evidence of the Baloch religious and mythological belief associated with Judeo-Christian traditions of ancient times. Considering the social, linguistic, and cultural behavior of the Baloch, neither, Hellenistic, Christian, or Hindu mythological beliefs can be considered as been adopted by the Baloch as their religious beliefs. Judaism was an important religion in the west of the Iranian Plateau but because of its exclusiveness for the offspring of Abraham, it might not have been an influencing factor for the religious beliefs of the ancient Baloch and other people living on the Iranian Plateau at that time.

As part of the Sassanid empire which was keeping a suspicious eye on the Christians in the Iranian Plateau, it is not conceivable that the Baloch or other national entities could have ventured to abandon the state religion of the Sassanid Empire and adopt a relatively non-significant hostile religion in the given political and geographical milieu of that period where the Romans and Persians were engaged in a war of attrition. Christianity was a newly introduced religion in the region and the Sassanid

emperors were not extending any privilege to the converts to Christianity; rather they were persecuted on many occasions, it is not a conceivable theory that the Baloch have changed their ancestral religion and converted to an underprivileged religious faith. Although, the policy of the Achaemenid Empire towards religious beliefs was one of tolerance, nevertheless, it can be deduced with certainty that when the great Achaemenid emperors like Cyrus and Darius were ruling the region, the best course for their subject population was to follow the official line in their religious matters.

The question of following Zoroastrianism by various ethnic groups in the Iranian Plateau is difficult to be answered. Some of the Greek writers sparingly mentioned the presence of Magi (Zoroastrian priest) among the Medes. The power that the Magi enjoyed in western Iran during the Median rule is indicated by further statements of Herodotus concerning the pervasive presence of this priesthood in religious matters. It was the period when the Baloch were living in the western Iranian region of *Balāsagān*.

Dashti (2020), observed that the Baloch concept of good and evil is very near to the Zoroastrian doctrine of a perpetual fight between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. For all practical purposes, the ancient Baloch was always engaged in combat against forces of evil with an uncompromising determination. This is more crystallized in their folk stories. The Baloch often lit fire soon after sighting the first moon of the month which may indicate their respect for the fire which they revered due to their attachment to the Zoroastrian religion. He never spat into the fire, and some of the Baloch tribes even swore by the fire.

Looking into the broader picture of various religious beliefs practiced at that time in the Iranian Plateau and surrounding

regions, the logical conclusion can be drawn that the Baloch were the followers of the Zoroastrian religious beliefs. With the adoption of the Zoroastrian religion, the concept of God and Demon also crept into the Baloch thinking. The concept of good spirits or bad spirits certainly came from the dualism of Zoroastrianism.

The theory that the ancient Baloch being the followers of the heretic clergy Mazdak who established his sect of Zoroastrianism in the Sassanid Empire appears to have much credibility. The adoption of the Mazdaki sect by the Baloch was perhaps logical. The revolutionary doctrine of human equality, sharing of water, pasture, and wealth were the elements of Mazdakism that attracted many agro-pastoralist communities towards the Mazdak including the Baloch. The theory of Baloch being the Mazdakite in ancient times is most probable if we take into consideration the sectarianism of the Sassanid era. While considering the Baloch conflict with emperors Anusherwan and Shahpur on religious grounds, it is also most probable that the Baloch were the followers of a renegade but the revolutionary prophet Mazdak and his teachings of equality and justice for all.

After the fall of the Sassanid Empire, the new religion of Islam became dominant in the region and the Baloch like many other national entities of the time having no option except to convert to Islam.

Conclusion

Every culture has developed a stock of myths and religious beliefs which still largely represent the genius of a people, their literature, and folk traditions. Religious and mythological beliefs became important in shaping ancient societies in various

ways. Religious beliefs like gods, prophets, and judgment days became inseparable parts of the cultural beliefs of many societies of the world. From time to time, with the changes in human thought coupled with socio-economic and political development, the entire realm of religious outlook witnessed transformation; and the process is continuing.

The people speaking Indo-European languages before migrating to India and Iran and dividing into two distinct groups not only spoke a similar language but also cherished similar myths and legends and offered worship to the same gods and goddesses. They believed in a variety of deities and supernatural phenomena. The sun, moon, water, fire, wind, etc., were believed to have powers over humans and nature. Among the deities these polytheist tribes venerated, Mithra, Anahita, and Indra were the most powerful of the ancient Aryan gods.

With the intermingling of the Aryan tribes and the indigenous population of the Iranian Plateau, new religious beliefs appeared. The concepts prevailing in Babylon and Assyria had certainly played a part in the development of the religious beliefs of these people. The admixture of Indo-Iranian mythologies and native cults produced Iranian religion which later on developed and refined in the form of Zoroastrianism, in the same manner as the Vedic and non-Vedic cultures in the Indian subcontinent were combined to form Hindu religion and culture. Ultimately, Ahura Mazda, as the supreme god replaced a multitude of deities of migrating Aryans and an organized religion of Zoroastrianism became the dominant faith in the Iranian Plateau.

One cannot describe with certainty the religious and mythological beliefs of the Baloch in ancient times. As the ancient history of the Baloch is not well documented so is the

case regarding their religious beliefs. As part of the migrating Aryan tribes, in the beginning, the ancient Baloch were certainly polytheists whose religious beliefs and practices have close resemblance with other Indo-Iranian and Indo-European groups at the same stage of history. They have also brought from Central Asia their primitive cult with the worship of the natural forces. Apart from worshipping the forces of nature, it is also established that these tribes most likely worshipped their ancestors to whose images they attached supernatural power.

Religion was something essential in all primitive peoples. As part of Indo-Iranian tribes, the ancient Baloch believed in a variety of deities and gods. Although, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism had their followings in the Iranian Plateau the only organized religion that had the backing of various Persian empires was Zoroastrianism. It is important to remember that beginning from the Achaemenid period, Ahura Mazda was generally believed to be the god of the Aryan people in the Iranian Plateau.

The influences of Greek culture and civilization on the subcontinent and Iranian Plateau after Alexander's invasion cannot be discounted. The entire culture which blended Greek and Eastern traditions no doubt exercised a tremendous influence on peoples of the Iranian Plateau, the Indian Subcontinent, and Central Asia. The Baloch people also must have got their share of this cultural pressure. However, no aspect of Greek religious beliefs is significantly depicted in the Baloch religious outlook or cultural traditions.

Considering the social, linguistic, and cultural behavior of the Baloch, neither, Hellenistic, Christian, or Hindu mythological beliefs can be considered as been adopted by the Baloch as their religious beliefs. Judaism was an important religion in the west

of the Iranian Plateau but because of its exclusiveness for the offspring of Abraham, it might not have been an influencing factor for the religious beliefs of the ancient Baloch and other people living on the Iranian Plateau at that time. However, as it was adopted by powerful Achaemenid emperors as their religious belief and later it became the state religion of the Sassanid empire, Zoroastrianism is the most probable religious influence among the ancient Baloch. The theory that the ancient Baloch being the followers of the heretic clergy Mazdak who established his sect of Zoroastrianism in the Sassanid Empire appears to have credibility. The adoption of the Mazdaki sect was perhaps because the doctrine of human equality, sharing of water, pasture, and wealth were the elements of Mazdakism that attracted many agro-pastoralist communities towards the Mazdakian doctrine including the Baloch. While considering the Baloch conflict with emperors Anusherwan and Shahpur on religious grounds, it is also most probable that the Baloch were the followers of the heretic prophet Mazdak.

Islam as a religious-political phenomenon was the greatest revolutionary fervor in the Middle East during the 7th century. It had its influence on a significant number of nations throughout the region where the Baloch were living. The conversion of the Baloch into Islam along with other ethnic groups in Iran was the result of unexpected and perhaps unavoidable historical events in the region during that period.

Epilogue

In a case, where the history of a people has been lost in the dust of history, cultural, linguistic, and social traditions are important to be considered while we inquire into the origin of such an ethnic group. A logical conclusion in this regard is only possible after an objective study on scientific lines is conducted; a study that should include the geographical considerations; folklore and literature; religion and mythologies; social and political institutions and linguistic and cultural affiliations with other ancient peoples, keeping in view the general characteristics of societies at that period of history.

Finding straight answers to the puzzling questions regarding the Baloch in ancient times is difficult because their mention in historical accounts can only be found from the writings of those who belonged to those nations with whom the Baloch were in constant conflict. The Persians and Arab writers of medieval times described the Baloch as unruly, predatory, and highway robbers. These writers were also very much disturbed by the non-conformist behavior of the Baloch regarding religious matters. They portrayed them as least enthusiastic about their religious obligations be it Zoroastrianism or Islam. Despite their oblique perspective on the history of the Baloch, their accounts are of enormous importance in the sense that we can read between the lines from their narratives. As the Baloch were facing the genocidal acts of Persians and the Arabs, one cannot expect neutral accounts of the events from the historians of these conquering nations. Although they tell us about the encounter of a hostile “ethnic group”; they offered a macro-historical version of the events which are indeed a version of

the triumphant and victorious sides and the credibility of each of these narratives, thus, must be judged on its merit. Lack of any neutral historical account, regarding the Baloch, during the early Arab period in Iran and because of the Arab and Persian authors' characteristic prejudice against the Baloch, the truth can only be found by identifying discrepancies in their description of the events in which the Baloch were involved in ancient times.

The paucity of documented historical and anthropological data had given rise to innumerable speculations and absurd theories concerning the origin of the Baloch. Earlier researchers on the origin of the Baloch deliberated on various theories and tried to align the Baloch with different racial entities of the region. Speculations were mainly focused on the lines that whether Baloch belongs to the Aryan, Semitic, or Turanian group of tribes. Pottinger an intelligence officer of British India, who later collected his memoirs as the history of the region believed that the Baloch had Turkmen ethnic origins. Rawlinson was in favor of a Chaldean (Semitic) origin of the Baloch. Bellew aligned them with the Indian Rajput tribes. Dames, another British intelligence officer, considered them as from the Aryan groups of tribes.

Linguistically, culturally, and geographically, there are no logical grounds to believe several theories that have been put forward by various writers that Baloch is the indigenous inhabitants of present-day Balochistan; or the Baloch are Semitic. The racial origin of the Baloch is now logically and academically well established that of coming from the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian tribes. On linguistic and cultural grounds, it is now commonly believed that the ancient Baloch belonged either from the Median, Parthian, or Persian groups

of tribes. Studies on the roots of the Balochi language have provided very strong evidence for this opinion as it has been established that Balochi had inseparable bondages with the Pahlavi, Kurdish and Persian languages. Like other Aryan people, the Baloch society was based on tribalism and had a clan system. The tribes were organized as patriarchal groups. Taking into consideration, linguistic, cultural, and geographical factors, it can be postulated that the ancient Baloch were either part of or associated with the Parthians, Medes, and Persians group of tribes who settled in ancient Iran.

The Indo-Iranian group of Aryan tribes before separating and migrating into different regions lived together for centuries, shared the same language and religious beliefs. Perhaps under unfavorable circumstances, some of these agro-pastoralist tribes moved further southward in search of fresh pastures or a more favorable political atmosphere. Some of them took the route through present-day Afghanistan to India, overwhelming the Dravidian inhabitants of north and northwest India culturally and politically, while many other tribes settled in the landmass stretching between the Middle East and India. Within a few centuries, the cultural and socio-political domination of Indo-Iranians over the indigenous population of that region was so overwhelming that the whole region became known as Iran (the land of Aryans).

After going through the ancient history of the Baloch to find logical answers to the ever-puzzling questions regarding their origin, from the analysis of available documents and comparing the cultural and linguistic traits of nations and people in ancient Iran, we can conclude that the origin of the Baloch can be traced from the migrations of a group of Indo-European tribes from Central Asia. As part of Indo-Iranian tribes, the Baloch

migrated along with other migrating tribes from Central Asia toward the Caspian Sea region of the Iranian Plateau, most probably around 2000 BC. It has also been established that they first settled in northern Persia near the Caspian Sea and in and around the Alborz Mountain. Here, they were called *Balāścik/Balāścuk*. The area of their abode had the name of *Balāškān/Balāśagān*. It was established from the rock inscriptions of Emperor Darius of Achaemenid dynasty and Emperor Shahpur of the Sassanid dynasty, where it is mentioned that an ethnic group called *Balāścik* was living in a region called *Balāśagān*. This province of the Persian Empire was somewhere between the Caspian Sea and Lake Van.

Although, it is still debatable whether *Balāśagān* got its name after the settlement of the *Balāścik* tribes there or the *Balāścik* people got their name after the region of *Balāśagān*, however, it is established that the Baloch is the later transformation of *Balāścik*. In *Balāśagān*, the *Balāścik* were living with other tribes like Cyrtii (Kurds), Cadusii, Caspians, and Mardis, forming alliances and making affiliations with them. It was also the period in which the Baloch distinguished themselves as a separate ethnic entity among other pastoralists nomadic Indo-Iranian tribes in the north-western region of the Caspian Sea. Probably, the Balochi language which was called *Balāściki* at that time began to shape its distinguishing features from other north-western Iranian languages at that time.

From the Persian historical accounts, it can be observed that the ancient Baloch were in a love and hate relationship with the Persian empires of the past. We can find from their accounts that the Baloch were part of the military forces of many Persian emperors including Emperor Cyrus, Xerxes, and Cambyses of the Achaemenid Dynasty. They were also part of some of the

Sassanid armies. However, it is this same period when the persecution of the Baloch by Persian rulers began on various pretexts, and they migrated en masse or were deported to other parts of the Iranian Plateau. At the end of this period, the *Balāścik* and *Balāśagān* vanished from the historical accounts for sometimes. Nevertheless, after a short intermission, the *Balāścik* re-emerged with the new and transformed identity of the Baloch into the eastern regions of the Iranian Plateau.

From a historical, cultural, and linguistic perspective, it has been established that a group of tribes called Brahui are indeed among those Baloch tribes who were living in the Barez mountains of Kerman and migrated to present-day Central Balochistan in medieval times. It is most probable that they got their present name of Brahui after first being called Barezui as they descended from their mountain abodes and began their en masse migration toward eastern Balochistan. By the time they settled in their present abode in the Jhalawan and Sarawan (Turan) regions of Balochistan, they became known as Brahui from being Barezui. With the admixture of some Turkish and Dravidian words, they developed a distinct Balochi dialect of Brahui. However, in line with the divide and rule policy of the colonial rulers, beginning from the British advent in the region, for political purposes, concerted literary efforts were made by subjugating powers to give a separate national identity to Baloch tribes living in Central Balochistan.

To summarize, the historical journey of the ancient Baloch comprised many phases or periods. In the first phase, they migrated from Central Asia along with other Indo-European tribes and as part of Indo-Iranian groups of tribes settled in *Balāśkān* or *Balāśagān*. It is hard to visualize a clear picture of the Baloch at that time. However, there is no doubt that they

were pastoralists, herding sheep and goats, and that, like other pastoralists of Central Asia, they were highly mobile, if not entirely nomadic, and were living in tribal communities. Like other Indo-Iranian tribes, they worshiped a variety of gods and goddesses and perhaps some natural phenomenon also.

While in *Balāśagān*, they faced persecution, genocide, deportation, or dispersion. The exact model of their exit from *Balāśagān* could not be ascertained but several logical conclusions can be derived. As part of a state policy, the Achaemenid and Sassanid emperors relocated many unfriendly ethnic groups and tribes in the remote areas of their empire to dilute the hostility against their rule and this phenomenon cannot be ignored in the total ouster of the Baloch tribes from *Balāśagān*. In the vanishing of the ancient Baloch from *Balāśagān*, the strong element of religious intolerance or fanaticism shown by Sassanid emperors Shahpur and Anusherwan also cannot be ruled out. As the followers of the Mazdakian sect of the Zoroastrian religion, the Baloch might probably have been caught in sectarian conflicts during the Sassanid period. Consequently, they faced genocide as mentioned in Persian accounts written in medieval times. Anusherwan has been quoted to vow that he will wipe out the Baloch from the face of the earth. Voluntary migration of the Baloch because of unfavorable political and economic conditions might be one of the causes for the en masse migration of the Baloch from *Balāśagān*. In this context, there are two logical possibilities for their exit from *Balāśagān* during the last decades of the Sassanid Empire; either they were forcefully expelled from the region or because of unfavorable circumstances, they moved out of the region to be settled in safer places.

The second period in the history of the ancient Baloch is their re-emergence in Deylam, Gilan, Kerman, Sistan, and Ɔaśť. This period is marked with their transformation from *Balāścik* to the

Baloch (In some historical accounts of medieval times, they were also mentioned as Koch o Baloch). Here the *Balāściki* language transformed to be the Balochi of modern times. During the prolonged Perso-Arab conflict which culminated in the unceremonious collapse of the Sassanid Empire, Baloch in these regions came into contact with the Arabs. They developed a love and hate relationship with the Arabs and subsequently faced persecution and deportations. The Arab invasion of Iran and the final collapse of the Sassanid Empire changed the social, religious, and political atmosphere of the region drastically and forever. It also changed the destiny of many ethnic entities and their languages. It took Arabs nearly 25 years to destroy the Persian Empire altogether and the Baloch tribes were divided in this protracted war of attrition. Some of them defected to the Arabs while others became part of the resistance against the Arab invasion. The division caused by the defection of some of the Baloch tribes to Arabs is one of the legacies of that era and perhaps the beginning of a never-ending phenomenon of division among the Baloch tribes.

The inherent hatred between various Arab tribes came on the surface soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). By default, the Baloch also became involved in the bloody power struggle between various Arab factions and suffered heavily. The civil war between the Ummayyad and Hashimite clans and the civil war between the northern and southern Arab tribes brought tremendous miseries for the Baloch. The defection of some of the Baloch tribes to Arabs proved to be futile. A significant number of the Baloch who defected to Arabs were massacred by powerful and ruthless Ummayyad governor of Iraq, Hajjaj bin Yusuf, while many were deported to Syria. They were kept in the Aleppo region for a long time

and released only after the collapse of the Ummayyad dynasty. The Baloch living in Sistan and Kerman also became involved in the bloody conflict of Kharijite Amir Hamza with Ummayyad and early Abbassids. The net result of the Arab advent in Iran for the Baloch was that, in the end, they faced persecution, humiliation, and deportations into various regions under the new rulers of Iran.

The third period of the Baloch history in ancient times is the story of their conflicts with various regional powers in the Iranian Plateau. After 150 years of effective rule, the authority of the Caliphate in Baghdad eclipsed and with this, the Arab domination of the region ended. Several regional powers emerged and exerted their rule over Iran. But the miseries of the Baloch did not end with the end of Arab rule as they became involved in constant conflicts with various regional powers. In the process, they faced persecution and acts of genocide. This period can easily be termed as one of the darkest times for the Baloch as an ethnic entity. Saffarids, Buyids, and the Ghaznavids dealt heavy blows to the Baloch, sometimes adopting inhuman tactics; the effects of these conflicts were so devastating that it took many centuries for the Baloch to assert themselves as a significant political or social entity in the regions which, today, form the landmass of Balochistan. During this period, the Baloch in Kerman and Sistan suffered the worst of atrocities which became instrumental in the mass movement of Koch o Baloch from Kerman and northern parts of Sistan towards Makuran, Turan, and perhaps further east into Sindh and Punjab. This was the period during which almost total evacuation of the Brahui (Barezui) group of Baloch tribes occurred from eastern Kerman and their settlement in Turan began.

The bloody conflicts of the Baloch with the regional dynasties in Iran were not because of what the authors of the victorious powers called the continual harassment of the settled population by nomadic Baloch tribes. It was rather a reaction from the Baloch against encroachments on their traditional way of living a life independent of any state or organized authority. The religious element also played a significant role in the campaigns against the Baloch. Some of the rulers of these dynastic empires were known for their religious fundamentalism and fanaticism and many of them used the religion of Islam as a tool in the subjugation of people and nations in the region. Although they professed Islam as it became inevitable perhaps their slowness in becoming "good Muslims" might have been one of the causes of the Baloch suffering in the Iranian Plateau which was being ruled by Persian and Turkish dynasties.

The development of socio-cultural traditions of a particular people is dependent on the natural and political environment of the region which encourages or even prohibits certain cultural traits. The ancient Baloch society was based on tribe and lineage as was the case with other tribal societies in ancient Central Asia. The Baloch culture which is the main criterion in closely examining the lost relationship of its language and people with other groups has its roots in socio-political and religious systems inherited from their ancestors who belong to the Indo-Iranian group of Aryan tribes.

As there has been a considerable mingling of various peoples through the centuries, the racial purity of the ancient Baloch in the early medieval times has now become doubtful in many cases. In their long and tortuous periods of migrations from Central Asia and then from different regions of the Iranian

Plateau, the Baloch had been assimilating vast segments of other ethnic groups and cultural and linguistic influences. It has been established that the Baloch were the ancient inhabitants of the Balāśagān region of the Iranian Plateau and part of the Indo-Iranian Aryan tribes, however, it will be simplistic to state that the people who called themselves Baloch in the medieval period belong to a homogenous racial entity.

Socio-cultural traditions are shaped or modified by social, political, and geographical factors. In ancient societies like the Baloch, kinship played an important role in regulating and systemizing individual behavior which in turn influenced the formation and sustenance of the socio-political organization of the entire tribe. Over a period encompassing thousands of years, the Baloch identity has undergone many transformations, and eventually, at the end of the 11th and beginning of 12th centuries, it got a definite construct which can be defined as a collective feeling of a people evolved from the experiences of historical events they witnessed and the sufferings they faced in their tortuous historical journey. Observance of similar cultural traditions is one of the factors that cemented that feeling of national identity. While in *Balāśagān*, the ancient Baloch or *Balāścik* made strong linguistic and cultural connections with Median, Persians, and Parthian groups of tribes. The admixture with other people such as Scythians, Saka, Kushans, Huns, Turks, and many others can also be observed in the Balochi language and cultural behavior. During this phase of their historical journey in ancient times, they took linguistic and cultural influences from Armenians, Arabs, Turkmens, Dravidians, and many other ethnic groups. In many ways, the feeling of being a Baloch developed in this period became so overwhelming that it dominated kinship and

tribal bonds, religious and linguistic affiliations, local and regional ties, and other communal allegiances.

Many mythological beliefs and socio-cultural traditions of the Aryan people who finally settled in the Iranian Plateau became integral parts of the languages of people who later distinguished themselves as different national entities in Iran. Many religious terminologies and names of deities in the present languages were inherited from the original languages of the Aryan people. The mode of worship in early polytheist Aryans was based mostly on sacrifices. Their main concern was nature. This can be deduced from the fact that most of the Vedic gods were forces of nature, like the sun, the moon, fire, storm, and so on. Their fundamental religious ideas were those of primitive animism where the force which could not be controlled or understood was invested with divinity and personified as male or female gods.

Myths, legends, and tales are shaped and reshaped by social, political, and geographical factors. Like other aspects of ancient Baloch history, it is also hard to find logical conclusions regarding their religious beliefs. But one can make assumptions regarding their religious and mythological beliefs based on the study of ancient religious practices in the Iranian Plateau. Like other migrating Indo-Iranian tribes, the ancient Baloch believed in a variety of deities and old Aryan gods; however, there were neither any rules for worship nor the presence of any priest during ceremonies was essential. In a later stage of their settlement in the Iranian Plateau, beginning from the Achaemenid period, the Baloch also adopted Zoroastrianism and began to worship the god Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrianism became the religion of various ethnic groups in the Iranian Plateau during the Achaemenid era and perhaps before the

advent of the Achaemenid Empire. It can be assumed that when the great Achaemenid emperors like Cyrus and Darius were ruling the region, the best course for their subject population was to follow the official line and that was to adopt the Zoroastrian religion. In this context, the adoption of the Zoroastrian religion by the Baloch of *Balāsagān* is understandable. This theory is further augmented when we see no evidence of religious or mythological doctrines of the prevailing powerful and organized religions in the region like Christianity or Hinduism having any significant presence in the Baloch socio-cultural traditions. While we can find a lot of similarities in the religious and mythological traditions of Zoroastrianism and the Baloch concepts on various issues concerning the gods, universe, and supernatural phenomena. The theory of the ancient Baloch being the followers of Zoroastrianism, if they were not irreligious at all, appears most plausible. There are also strong indications that the ancient Baloch were the followers of the heretic Zoroastrian priest Mazdak. Perhaps sharing of water and pasture lands and the principles of equality preached by Mazdak was attractive to many agro-pastoralist communities and pushed them to support the Mazdakian doctrine.

The historical journey of the ancient Baloch appears not to be a pleasant one. It was rather a tale of miseries, migrations, persecution, genocide, deportation, and struggle for survival. Political, religious, and perhaps natural circumstances forced *Balāścik* to migrate from *Balāsagān*/*Balāškān* en masse. After their dispersal from *Balāsagān*, they resurfaced in Gilan, Sistan, and Kerman during the final decades of the Sassanid Empire and transformed from *Balāścik* to Baloch and their language from *Balāściki* to Balochi. While aboding in these

regions, they came into conflict with Arabs, Buyids, and other regional powers. These bloody and uneven conflicts caused their migration further east into Makuran, Raxsān, and Turan regions of present-day Balochistan during the 9th to 12th centuries. To survive physically against all odds and preserving the ethnic identity and upholding cultural values at times of tragedies and misfortunes is extraordinary and shows the resilience and survival skills of the ancient Baloch.

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