

The Baloch People: Their Early Migrations to the Subcontinent and Their Principalities

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No written record is available on the origin of the Baloch people or on the chronology of their migrations. The indirect evidence comes partly from the later day histories but mainly from the Baloch ethnography and their oral tradition particularly as it is embodied in their classical poetry.

As remnants of an ancient race, the Baloch may be the Chaldean/Kaldian descendants of the Kushites, a Syro-Arab people of Babylonia.¹ Their pre-historic migrations from Babylonia to Media, and from there to Southern Iran eventually brought them into the limelight of history when they got settled in the vast barren regions of Sīstān and Kirman. Their first migration towards Makran, Balochistan and the Indus valley took place in the second century A.D. under pressure from the Scythians who later followed the trail of the Baloch stocks and stamped their own name (like 'Sīstān'), on 'Sīwā' (Kalat), 'Sīwī' (Sibi) and 'Sīwhan'/'Sīwistān' (Sind).

The early Baloch migrants had assimilated and absorbed the scanty indigenous Dravidian (Brāhūṭī) speaking communities in the hilly regions of Jhālāwān, and the Jutt (Zutt) communities in the coastal marshes of Makran and in the Indus valley. Their second phase of migration began under heavy onslaughts of the Sassanid forces of Khusraw Nawshirwan in the 6th century,² compelling them to move further onwards to the southern regions of Sistan and Kirman, where they accepted Islam *en bloc* and joined hands with the Muslim Arabs

against the Sassanians. Consequently, they later suffered heavily under the overzealous Buwayhid rulers of Iran, such as Rukn al-Dawla (936 A.D.) and 'Aḍad al-Dawla (970/71 A.D.).³

By that time, the heterogenous ethnic stocks of the race (known by their different names such as Balos/Balōch, Qufs/Kōch, Siyābājah/Siyāhpād, Khwāshkiya/Jāshkiya, Khurramī, Zutt) had come more to be concentrated in the coastal regions of Tīz and Makran. Contemporary observations by Istakhrī, Ibn Khurdādhbih and Muqaddisī indicate their distinctive ethnicity and speech. Their language 'Mukrī' (Makrānī/Balōchī) was being spoken in that region along with Persian.⁴ As a reaction to their persecution by the Buwayhids, the possibility of their joining hands with the Khārjites and becoming instrumental in establishing and strengthening the Banū Ma'dān dynasty of Makran cannot be ruled out.

The last phase of substantial Baloch migrations from the Makran-Kirman region took place by the turn of the 12th century,⁵ and continued on in the wake of the upheavals caused by the Turko-Mongal invasions from Central Asia. According to the time honoured tradition, by the 7th/13th century their forty-four clans (*bolaks*) had moved and migrated from Sīstān and Kirman. In effect, this was an *en masse* exodus which led to their overconcentration in Makran. This enormous Baloch strength there, on the one hand, served as the backbone of the Sultanate of Makran, and on the other, opened new vistas for their further massive migration to the south-east. According to the tradition, five main sub-stocks from the progeny of Jalāl Khan, namely Rind, Lāshārī, Korā'ī, Hoat and Jatō'ī, became identifiable at this stage, and from their power base of the Sultanate of Makran they moved confidently onwards seeking new pastures and new horizons commensurate with their power, prestige and turbulent ethnicity.

The Sultanate of Makran

Its foundation was laid by *Malik* Hasan early in the 6th/12th century. Being a Sayyid (descended from the Prophet's family), he was accepted by the Balochs as their ruler. With its capital at Kēj (Kēch), this new State of Makran comprised the two former kingdoms of Qusdār and Makran. It was mainly inhabited by Baloch population, which had been using Mukrī (the Balochi speech of Makran) as their *lingua franca* since tenth century A.D. The strong Baloch ethnic stock of the country enabled the Sultanate to successfully repulse the frequent onslaughts of the Guzz hordes from the north-east. The two sons of *Malik* Hasan,

Sultan Tāju'ddīn and Sultan Nusratu'ddīn, were the illustrious rulers whose descendants continued to rule Makran for the next two centuries up to the 8th/14th century.⁶

Principality of Kalmat

The Hoat who left first, had a twofold movement. Those who went southward along the coastal belt established their principality in the central littoral region with Kalmat as their capital. They participated in sea trade actively. Consequently, Kalmat became a prosperous state which served as a supporting base for the onward advance of the later Kalmati group to the Habb and the Indus valleys.⁷ Hamal son of Jī'and was the last ruler of Kalmat who fought a naval battle against the Portuguese sometime in 1556 A.D.,⁸ but was defeated.

Principalities of the Dērajāt

The other Hoat sub-stocks of Dōdā'īs and Chāndiyas, as also Korā'īs and Jatō'īs, migrated north-eastward, and avoiding the colder highlands of Kalat descended from the Mullah Pass into the plains of Kachchī-Gandāvā and from Harbab and other southern passes (*lukks*) into the Indus valley. The Dōdā'īs, migrating further north, eventually reached and occupied the eastern slopes of the Sulaymān mountains. By the end of the fifteenth century, under their chief, Suhrāb Khān Dōdā'ī, they were powerful enough to constitute the core of the military power of the Lāngāh Sultanate of Multan.⁹ Also, they vigorously developed their settled areas and founded the flourishing market towns of Dera Ghāzi Khan (1494 A.D.) and Dera Ismail Khan,¹⁰ the capitals of their two principalities which Hoat-Dōdā'ī stock ruled for about two centuries.¹¹

Principality of Kalāt

Proceeding from Makran a century later than the Hoat, the clans of the Rind-Lāshārī confederacy reached Central Balochistan by the middle of the fifteenth century. Kalat was by then already a Baloch principality, having been conquered from the Sīwās (the Scythians) by the early migrating Baloch stocks. It was then being ruled by Mīr 'Umar son of Mīro of the Mīrwārī dynasty of the Brāhū'ī speaking Balochs. When Mīr 'Umar blocked the Rind-Lāshārī advance, he was killed in the ensuing battle and Kalāt was occupied and annexed to the Rind-Lāshārī confederacy. They, however, do not seem to have stayed in Kalat for long because of its cold climate and meagre resources to sustain the bulk of their people. The Rind and allied clans descended

through the Bolan Pass into the plains of Sibi while the Lāshārīs and their allied clans passing through the Mullah Pass spread into the plains of Kachchi-Gandava country.¹³ Here, the Rinds led by Mīr Chākar and the Lasharis by Mīr Gwāhrām fell out among themselves as a consequence of a contentious horse race, and were thus engaged in a series of long drawn battles of their 'Thirty Year War', the main theme of the classical Balochi poetry. The Rinds sought help from the Mughuls of Herat, and in this connection, Mīr Chākar or his emissary is said to have even visited the court of Sultan Ḥusayn Bāi'qarā (1469-1506 A.D.). The Lāshārīs got support from the renowned ruler of Sind, Jām Nizāmu'ddīn (1462-1508 A.D.), whose commander-in-chief, Daryā Khān alias Mubārak Khān was a scion of the Lāshārī clan. The 'Thirty Year War' sapped the energies of the once powerful Rind-Lāshārī confederacy. Consequently, the Arghūns, who ruled Qandahar for Herat and were supporting the Rinds, found it opportune to extend their power to the plains of Sibi and eventually to Sind. Under their pressure, the Rinds and the Lāshārīs disengaged themselves, the Lāshārīs going to Thatta and thence to Gujarat and Mīr Chākar taking his people to the Multan region.¹⁴

The Baloch Ascendancy in Multan (1525-1543)

The Baloch strength, mainly of the Hoat stock under the leadership of the Dōdā'īs, who were later joined by other groups, had been the mainstay of the Langāh State of Multan.¹⁵ Beginning from the downfall of the Langāhs in 932/1525 until the rise of Sher Shah Sūrī, Multan became essentially a Baloch state governed by the chiefs of the Baloch confederacy of whom Fath Khan of Qabūla-Fathpūr, Mīr Bakhshū of Multan and Mīr Mando of Karor were the front line leaders.¹⁶ When Humayun fled before Sher Shah 'Bakhshū Balōch who had forts and many boats' (as recorded by Gulbadan Begum) was bold enough to send to the helpless Emperor '100 boats laden with corn'.¹⁷ Sher Shah took a serious note of this act of the Baloch chief. According to *Tārkh-i-Shēr Shāhī*, 'the Baloch had got into their power and possession the country of Multan' and Haybat Khan, the Governor of the Punjab, was ordered by Sher Shah 'to expel these people from the country and to punish them'.¹⁸ With Haybat Khan's victory in 950/1543, the Baloch ascendancy in Multan came to an end.

Principality of Sat-Gharā

Mīr Chākar Rind after being cold shouldered by Sultan Ḥusayn Langāh of Multan, kept himself aloof and soon attained power and prestige as the ruling chief of his Sat-Gharā principality. Trying to remain neutral, he sent his emissary to Haybat Khan who asked him to guard the frontier of Debālpūr to block the escape of Fath Khān Baloch.¹⁹ No further information is on record as to how far Mīr Chākar could comply with the orders of Haybat Khan.

Ever since the Baloch were befriended by Babur whom they first met at Bhera (1519 A.D.), they became favourably disposed to him and to Humayun, whom they even assisted in adversity. According to the Baloch tradition, later on when Humayun returned from Iran, Mīr Chākar and his son Shahdād joined him with forty thousand strong Rind fighters, besides a number of other Baloch contingents, so that Humayun succeeded in conquering Delhi. The event is epitomized in the 'War Balled of Shahdād'²⁰ who must have played a leading role in the whole affair in view of Mīr Chākar's advanced age.

REFERENCES

1. Cf. M.S. Khan Baloch, *History of Baloch Race And Balochistan*, Quetta, 1958, pp.1-17. The author has underlined the view that Baloch are the descendants of the Kaldians, a branch of the Kushites. Their racial name was Kaldian but the rulers bore the supreme diety name of 'Belus'. Emperor Izdbar or Nimrod, the Belus, ruled Babylon in 2130 B.C. (p.24).
2. By this time, presence of two collateral stocks of the race in Iran -- the Koch and the Baloch -- are referred to in Fridawsī's *Shāhnāma*. King Nawshirwan was told, 'The world is wasted by the Baloch' and that in the past 'The glorious Ardshīr' had tried with his veteran officers to punish the Baloch but all his 'strategems failed'. Now Nawshirwān with his army 'like aunts and locusts', encircled the Baloch, with orders that 'Let not a single one of them escape'. In this attack, 'Fre of the Baloches or none survived'.
3. For details, see Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al Umam*, Vol.I, Cairo, n.d., pp.352, Vol.II, pp.249-53; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kitāb al-Kāmil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, Vol.VIII, pp.124-25.
4. 'The language of Makran is Persian and Mukrī', so observed Istakhrī (*Kitāb Masālik al-Mamālik*, Leiden, 1870, p.177) and Ibn Hawqal (*Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, Leiden, 1873, p.332). But later on, Muqaddisī (*Aḥsan al-Taqaṣīm ft Ma'rifat al-Aqālim*, Leiden, 1877, p.482) writing about Banjbūr (Punjpūr/Panjgūr) -- the main city of Makran, specifically named 'Balusi' (Balochi) as the language of the people.

5. According to the Baloch tradition, they were well settled in Sīstān (in the 7th/13th century) when the country was ruled by Shamsu'ddīn and Badru'ddīn. The former may be identified with Malik Shamsu'ddīn ('Alī b. Mas'ud) of Sīstān (633-653 A.H./1235-1225 A.D.) who had invaded Khuzdar, Mastung and Mashke in 652 A.H. (Anonymous, *Ta'rikh-i-Sīstān*, ed. Bahar, Tehran, 1314 H.Sh., pp.396-98.
6. For more details, see N.A. Baloch, 'The Sultanate of Makran', *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Islamabad, Vol.XIII, No. 1, January-June, 1992, pp.107-111.
7. There was a substantial Baloch presence in Sindh during the later Sūmara rule in the 13th century A.D. (Cf. Mīr Ma'sūm, *Ta'rikh-i-Sind*, Persian text, ed. U.M. Daudpota, Bombay, 1938, pp.291-93; and also an additional extract from it in Elliot and Dowson, Lahore, repr., n.d., Vol.I, pp.216-223). 'Alīshēr Qāni', *Tuhfat al-Kirām*, Persian text, ed. Sayyid Husāmuddīn Rāshidī, Hyderabad, Sind, 1971, pp.55, 56, 61, 87 and 88.
8. The year in which they attacked Thatta in Sind. The *zahrōnk* (elegy) composed by Hamal's sister figures in the classical Baloch poetry.
9. The 18,000 strong army of Sultan Maḥmūd Langāh consisted of the Baloch tribal divisions of Dōdā'ī, Kōrā'ī, Chāndiya, Rind and Jatt, when he prepared to face Mīrzā Shāh Hasan Arghūn (Cf. *Ta'rikh-i-Sind*, *op.cit.*, p.153; Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Thaththawī, *Tarkhān Nāma*, Persian text, ed. Sayyid Husāmuddīn Rāshidī, Hyderabad, Sind, 1965, p.18).
10. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Oxford, 1907-1909, XI/270.
11. M. Longworth Dames, *The Baloch Race*, London, 1954, pp.39,48.
12. Mīr Gulkhān Naṣīr, *Ta'rikh-i-Balōchistān*, Vol.I, Quetta, 1952, pp.17-20. According to the author, Mīr 'Umar became ruler on his father's death in 1511 A.D. This does not fit in into the scheme of events of Rind-Lāshārī migration. Bījar, Mīr 'Umar's son, later wrested Kalat from Mīr Mando who was killed in the battle. *Ibid.*, pp.22-23.
13. According to Akhūnd Muhammad Siddīq, the Rinds migrated through the Bolan Pass and the Lasharis through the Mullah Pass. (The Persian Manuscript of his *Ta'rikh*).
14. Mīr Khudā Bakhsh Bijrani Marri Baloch in his *Searchlight on Baloches and Balochistan* (Karachi, 1974, p.177) has surmised that Mīr Chākar visited the Herat court in 1496 A.D. when Sultan Husayn Bā'iqarā and his governor of Qandahar, Dhū'n-Nūn Bēg (who was directed to assist Mīr Chākar) were both alive.
15. Mīr Chākar's advent in Multan is confirmed by Nizāmu'ddīn Aḥmad in *Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī* Vol. III, Calcutta, 1935, p.538.
16. In 931 32/1524-25 when Shāh Hasan Arghūn attacked Multan, it was mainly the Baloch army of Sultan Maḥmūd Langāh consisting of Dōdā'ī, Jatt, Kōrā'ī, Chāndiya, Rind and other Baloch divisions that faced him. (Mīr Ma'sum, *Ta'rikh-i-Sind*, Persian text, *op.cit.*, pp.152-154; *Tarkhān Nāma*, *op.cit.*, pp.27-28. Mīr Ma'sum repeats that most of the army consisted of the Baloch. اکثر مردم بلوچ بودند.

17. Mir Khuda Bakhsh Bijarani Marri, *Searchlights...*, *op.cit.*, pp.147-164, has weighed historical evidence regarding the Baloch presence in Sibi and Multan which, among other things, confirms that these three men were the powerful allied Baloch leaders of their time.
18. Gulbadan Begum, *Hymāyūn Nāma*, Persian text, with Eng.tr. by Annette S. Beveridge, London, 1902.
19. 'Abbās Khān Shērwanī, *Ta'rikh-i-Akbarshāhī* alias *Ta'rikh-i-Shērshāhī*, extracted in Elliot and Dowson, Vol. IV, p.398.
20. *Ibid.*, pp.298-99.
21. Vide M. Longworth Dames, *op.cit.*; Marri Baloch, *op.cit.*, pp.179-180.