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The Struggle for Political Supremacy: Thirty Year Intra-Tribal Rind-Lashar Baloch War (1490-1518)

Abstract

The fifteenth century marks a dominant phase of Baloch migration and settlement in what is now constitute as Balochistan, divided between Iran and Pakistan. The time is mythologized not only with the stories of Baloch origin, migration and settlement, but also with the tribal feuds and warfare for political supremacy, necessary for livelihood and survival. The Thirty Years War (1486-1518) between two major Baloch tribes, Rind and Lashari, has become a custom-mark of Baloch epical mythology as well as folk tradition. The epics of 25 battle fought between two popular claimants of Baloch identity, presents a story of Baloch culture, poetry and history. The Wars were fought between popular Baloch heroes Mir Chakar Khan Rind (1468-1565) and Guahram Lashari. The stories has constructed the customs and culture of Baloch bravery. The Wars are considered to be forming the modern identity of Baloch ethnicity as well as political Balochistan. Not only culture and customs of Baloch tribes are settled around the stories of the wars, but also the political authority and Baloch pride and prejudices are constructed on the culture of these Wars. The purpose of this paper is to explore and nature of these Wars and analyze the impact of these wars on the Baloch identity. For, the original Baloch folk lore, poetry and traditions as well as twentieth century Baloch and orientalist's versions of analysis are used to draw inferences.

Keywords; Political Supremacy, Baloch, Rind, Lashar, Chakar, Guahram, Nali etc.

Introduction

The paper primarily deals with the Thirty Years Conflict between Rind and Lashar Baloch tribes for political supremacy. Baloch folk-lore and epics have mythologized this War with pride and prejudices. Although the War is notorious for the bloodshed it produced, yet it left a permanent impact on the History, Culture and Demography, not only of Balochistan but also of Sindh and the Punjab. The War became a source to prove tribal political supremacy. Balch *daptar* reflect a lot of warfare and *Chupao*.¹ The culture can be compared with the Arabs before Islam, the pre-Muslim Rajputs of India and Mongols of north-western sahara; all desert chivalrous with certain barbarian character of "Nomadism" which pre-supposed a blind obedience to their chiefs; an obligation to take personal family or tribal revenge, an exaggerated and excitable ration of personal or tribal dignity or prestige and a 'neck or nothing' attitude when a call to arms was made in defense of tribal *Dastur*. In this culture, the thirty years war set new norms and custom for the Baloch tribes. The war has provided Baloch identity with a new sort of epic literature and Baloch *Dastan*. The thirty years war (1486-1518) was a series of Conflicts and clashes between two Baloch tribes, Rind and Lashar, in between 1556 and 1586. Basically, it was a War of supremacy among the tribes. The literary accounts of the war are highly valuable as the primary source of the Baloch history. The folklores are quite eloquent on why Guhar came under the protection of Mir Chakar; why Ramin cut down her calves; how the war starte;, how brave and powerful were the two sides and what were their respective military achievements.² The purpose of this paper is to analyze the nature of this war and the impact it lasted on the region from Makran to Punajb.

Historical Perspective.

Although one can find so many theories on the origin of Baloch tribes in the nineteenth century scholarship³ and consensus on the Semitic origin of the race, rival Baloch tribes had consistently challenged the genealogies and authority of each other.⁴ Baloch migration and settlement in the Baloch regions of today's Pakistan is not clear. However, it reflects a history of feuds and clashes leading Baloch tribes to the more barren lands of Seistan and Makran. From the eighth century onward the Baloch tribes remined in arm conflict with each other. The Mongol invasion in the region, resultant disorder and arrival of new hordes of Baloch tribes provided stimuli to the resisting Baloch tribes to initiate a new struggle for political supremacy. They established smaller tribal chieftains, independent of foreign ascendancy, but fighting mutually for food and booty or resisting internal system of authority.⁵

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¹ Muhammad Shafique, 'Discourse of Baloch Identity Under the British', JRSP, 52/1, 2015, pp. 225-235

² Al.Kadri,Qdri, *Balchi Adab Ka Mutalia*, Quetta, 1976,-86.

³ Muhammad Shafique Bhatti & Lubna Kanwal, 'Baloch Tribalism and British Imperialism(1800-1887) the Conflict of Identity, Authority and Sovereignty', in Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, pp.41-48

⁴ Maulana Abdullah Dirmani, , 'Baloch and Balochistan', *Balochi Dunya* (Nov. 1959), p. 41; Maulana Qazi Abdul Samad Sarbazi, 'Makran Aur Uska Jughrafia' *Balochi Dunya*, (Sep. 1966), p. 31; Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *Inside Balochistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1975), p.70; Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri Bijarani, *Qadeem Balochi Sha'ri*, Urdu,(Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab, 1963), pp. 11-13; Ghulam Hyder Sindhi, *Pakistan Ka Lisani Gughrafia*, Urdu.(Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, 2005), pp.31-62; Umar Kamal Khan, *Baloch Afghan Ta'aluqat Tarikh Kay Aienay Mein*, Urdu (Multan: Bazm-e-Adab, 1989), pp. 9-11

⁵ Muhammad Shafique Bhatti & Lubna Kanwal, 'Baloch Tribalism and British Imperialism(1800-1887) the Conflict of Identity, Authority and Sovereignty', in Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, pp.41-48

This federative arrangement seems to have worked smoothly so long as the Baloch remained confined to Makran. The re-organized and recouped Rinds and Lahars of Makran assumed the role of conquerors in 15th century and ruled over the Kalat region for two years but probably finding it as unproductive as Makran, they left it under Mir Mandwa, the father-in-law of Mir Chakar and moved towards Kachhi. Kachhi's water resources, nature of the soil and agricultural potentiality tempted them so much that they occupied it dividing it into two parts: the eastern falling to Lasharis and western to the Rinds. Mir Jalal divided Baloches into clearly defined tribes under individual leaders as two principalities with capitals at Gandawah and Shoran under the leadership of Mir Jalal Khan.

Mir Jalal Khan had left five sons Rind, Lashar, Qarai, Hot and Jato who organized the Baloch tribes afresh. He had saved Baloches from extermination by the Saljuqs and successfully led them into Makran and again it was he who trained his sons in the art and craft of chieftainship; again it was he who dissolved the original 44 Baluch tribes and reorganized them under his five sons so that the old tribal denominations were obliterated.⁶ Mir Jalal Khan left this reorganized Baluch power to recoup itself under his sons. Rind, as the eldest son, succeeded him as the Baluch generalissimo for defence and external invasions though the other four seem to have been perfectly independent enjoying the power of option. Gradually the Jatois and Hots came to be attached and associated with Rind while the Qarals adhered to Lashar, the second son of Mir Jalal Khan. It was the second great step towards Baluch unity when the Hots, Jatois and Qarais joined the Rind and Lashar ranks which must have been further increased by the liberal Baloch custom of embracing the quasi-independent but submissive neighbour as Mowalis.⁷ These federative arrangement seems to have worked smoothly so long as the Baloch remained confined to Makran and their numbers were small. When however, Makran became smaller in area and resources for their increasing numbers, requirements and ambitions and drive towards the east became only a question of time, their old organization fitting in well in Makran was bound to expand and crack. The re-organized and recouped Rinds and Lahars of Makran assumed the role of conquerors in 16th century when they killed Mir Umar Mirwani or Mirwari, the Brahui ruler of the infant state of Kalat under Mir Chakar Khan Rind. They ruled over the State for two years but probably finding it as unproductive as Makran, they left it under Mir Mandwa, the father-in-law of Mir Chakar. Then the Baloch band moved towards Kachhi which was a plain area and fit for permanent settlement. Its water resources, nature of the soil and agricultural potentiality tempted them so much that they occupied it dividing it into two parts the eastern falling to the lot of Lasharis and western to the Rinds so that none had any cause of complaint. Here they lived peacefully probably as two independent but fraternal political entities. It was here that Mir Chakar, not so unwisely as through by M.S. Khan, divided them into clearly defined tribes under individual leaders, so as to meet the growing problem of numbers and forestall any dis-integration consequent upon it as well as to secure a permanent military organization for the perilous times he lived in. So long as he was there, nothing ominous was visible in the arrangement. There was peace, plenty and prosperity and was right with the world and every Baloch was well aware that Chakar had a majestic personality. He was a fierce lord, bred to arm and well bred.⁸ However, this peace and tranquillity was disturbed very soon which led to the destruction of Baloch confederacy and a thirty-year long series of wars between 1556 and 1586.

Origin Of the War.

Very soon after the death of Mir Jalal Khan a struggle for supremacy among Baloch tribes began which led to this long war. Rind were considered the most important tribe in the 16th century. After the death of his father, Chakar became the chief of Rind tribe and he extended his power in the neighboring lands with the support of other Baloch tribes.⁹ Unfortunately, some rivals of Chakar gathered in the camp of Mir Gohram the chief of Lashar tribe who had also declared himself chief of the confederacy in the life of his father.¹⁰ Therefore a war of supremacy was to ensue. But what led to the outbreak of war is controversial.

There are different stories on the origin of War, but it is clear that it was the part of the struggle for supremacy among the Baloch tribes. The hereditary claims on the rich and fertile regions occupied by Mir Jalal Khan and to his power, prestige and authority has been sued during the lifetime of Mir Jalal Khan. Mir Gohram Lashari has presented his claims even during the lifetime of Mir Jalal Khan. As Rind were the most powerful tribe therefore the headship was entrusted to Mir Chakar Khan Rind. Within the tension of the claims on inheritance, an event of Horse race and plundering of a woman led to the beginning of bloodshed which lasted for almost thirty years. Ramin Lashari the son of Gohram and Rehan Rind from Chakar's allies set a bet on the horse race and riding. The race ended in a victory for Ramin but the Rinds, instead, announced the victory of Rehan and indulged in celebrations and jubilations. Ramin all the while burnt with protest and rage swearing to avenge.¹¹ On their way back, Lasharis', to demonstrate their courage and bravery, on the traditional method of Baloch plundering 'Chupao', looted a lamb killed calves. In the evening, they again attacked a nearby village to take a revenge of the event and killed the camels and calves of Gauhar Jatni a woman under Rind protection.

Gauhar was a Jat widow and a popular character of Baloch-classics as 'Maheri' or Mistress of camels, cows and cattle. She was a lady possessing the power of wealth as well as that of beauty.¹² Therefore, Mir Guhram Lashari requested her to marry him.¹³ Gauhar refused the proposal with a plea that she had nourished guhram as a son and

⁶ Abdul Qadir Leghari, *Tareekh Dera Ghazi Khan*, Dera Ghazi Khan, 1987, P.74

⁷ Ihsan Ahmad, *Tareekh Dera Ghazi Khan*, Oota, Dera Ghazi Khan, 2005, 23

⁸ M. Sardar Khan, *History of Baloch Race and Balochistan*, Quetta, 1958, P.48

⁹ Hukam Chand, *Tawareekh, Dera Ghazi Khan*, Indus Publications, Karachi, 2005. P 173

¹⁰ Freedi, Noor Ahmad, *Chakar-e-Azam, Qasar Ada*, Multan, 1983, P.138

¹¹ Bijrani, Khuda Bakhsh, *Qadeem Balochi Shairi*, Quetta, 1963. P.26-31

¹² She sat on the floor of silk and brocade, her tent poles were made of gold and she was a lady of velvet tread and numerous blandishments. Even her camels were comely and attractive. Such a lady of dazzling fortune and outstanding beauty could be the envy of anyone.

¹³ . Fareedi, Noor Ahmad, P.141

loved him as a brother, therefore can not marry him. However afraid of revenge by the Mir, She sought refuge and asylum under the Rinds with her herds and belongings. The chivalrous Mir Chakar, in conformity with the Baloch custom, granted her refuge and allowed her to graze her cattle at Kachhi irrigated by canals in Shoran area.

The War Council First and Camapign.

The attack on Gauhar was an attack on the Baloch tradition. Mir Chakar Khan claimed a redressal, return of camels caught by the lasharis and payment of losses to the grieved which Lasharis refused to comply with.¹⁴ The refusal of Lasharis was a big blow to the prestige of the Rind as well as the strength and unity of the confederacy who had recently fought battle of Gandhawa jointly against the rival Brahuis. The Rinds had to take a revenge to prove their power and restore their prestige as well as tribal supremacy. For Mir Chakkar Called on a council of the tribes or Jirga.¹⁵ The council was dominated by war-minded and war-tempered men. Although the elders tried to avoid the war, yet it was decided to send women and children on the Kavand mountains, and wage war against the Lasharis.¹⁶ The Rinds were a major tribe and had 40000 warrior at their disposal and advanced against the Lasharis,¹⁷ killed their animal and looted their property and camels. The clash led to a series of skirmishes predatory campaigns and Chupao. Twenty five such campaigns can be counted out of the Baloch folk-lore and Dastan. Among them 15 were planned and executed successfully by the Rinds and 10 by the Lahsari, but both tribes failed to defeat each other completely. During the War the Jatois and Hots came to be attached and associated with Rind while the Qarals adhered to Lashar, the second son of Mir Jalal Khan. Other tribes also became the allies of either Rinds or Lasharis.¹⁸

Lasharis' Alliance and War of Nali.

Lasharis, soon after the losses inflicted by the Rinds contingent, were burning with vengeance. Mir Gohram knew it well that Mir Chakar had a longer experience of fighting and conducting wars and that the Rinds were superior in numbers, war leaders and resources. Therefore, to strengthen his power, they approached Nuhani tribe who had differences with Mir Chakar and occupied the territory in between Rinds and Lashar lands and succeeded in winning their support with 1700 bulls, 1800 arms and 120 Maunds of flour besides 1000 warriors. Lasharis also concluded an agreement with the Sammas of Sind and raised an army of 30,000 armed men to march on the Rinds. The armies met on the river Nali.

Nali was the first great battle among the Baloches. Both sides fought for the victory. But Rinds were defeated leaving 700 dead bodies including their big names. Mir Chakar himself was left without horse and sword and was seen defending himself with his shield only. He was rescued and saved by his neighboring tribe.¹⁹ The war became a symbol of pride in Lashari folk lore.²⁰

Rind's Reaction and Battles of Gori, Dabani and Gajan

¹⁴ The events are lauded in the local tradition and Balochi folk tails as quoted in Abdul Qadir Leghari, Tarikh Dera Ghazi Khan, D. G. Khan, 1987, p.74

رند و لاشار، منہ بُنا، براتان ، جگ سئی این کہ حمزہ زاتاں ، :
 بانگا لاشاری پھرا چارا ، تاشان بوراں پہ
 توقلاشابا.¹⁴ گوستہ ریحان سیاہ زار تازی ، گڈا ، رامیں نا ، گُرائڈ ، گپتہ ،
 چڑے تہہ، ر پتہ منہ ڈڑویں ، دیغرے، پاھرا ،
 گڈے تہنہ، ہرچہ کینغ و، زاھرا۔
 گوھرے ،ہراکھگڈے تہہ ، پیری، بے گنا سا
 گیریں تہہ غنت ، ہیری۔
 میر رندگو، آ ف منان مرداراں،
 پیش کارچیں پھسانی گوزواں۔

¹⁵ The Council comprised the viper-tongued Mir Jarror of Phuz tribe; God-fearing Huddey; Mir Hasan Maulai or a *darwish*; Piro Shah, a veteran warrior and his equally brave and charitable son Mir Bajjar; Mir Han, a boon companion of Mir Chakar; the hot headed Raihan; the warm-blooded Sohrab of brave-necked horse, the level headed Bivaragh or Bibarg; the impetuous Haibat and tried warriors like Sobha, Maihan, Mir Ali, Jam Sihak, Allan, Ibrahim, Safar, Ahmad, Kallu, Hammal, Kihan, Chanar, and Jind etc.

¹⁶ Ibid.P.32.

¹⁷ Korai, Ghulam Rasol, Baloch Punjab Maen, AMratasar, 1954, P.23.

¹⁸ Ihsan Ahmad, *Tarikh Dera Ghazi Khan*, D. G. Khan, 1987, p.74

¹⁹ . M.S. Khan, PP.40-41.

²⁰ Bijrani, Qadeem Balochi Shairi, p. 24. In the Baloch folk lore the event is celebrated as: گوبرام کو جاکرے

شہ اژگورا بونکئی بمچے شوئے رنج اتھ گون نواتھ ریشبان جاکر عقل چوزانہ غاکم ہا۔
 وائلی آ او تنک دغیں گتان ، کشتہ ما ، نامان نی ملک میر حان

Mir Chakar had well realized the importance of foreign powers support after the defeat of Nali. For a short time he indulge in humiliation but soon began to develop alliances and sought support to devastate Lashari lands and smash their power completely. He hurried to Turkish ruler Shah Hussain Balaqara of Herat (873-911A.H./1468-1505 AC) amidst the war. To stop the Turks to support Mir Chakar. Mir Gohram sent precious presents to the Turkish ruler including a gold brocaded carpet. However, the refined and benevolent Shah was inclined to Mir Chakar, his immediate neighbours, the first to knock at his door. But he could not spurn the Lashar emissaries outright and he was still procrastinating and indecisive when he had already tested the presents of mind, skilled horsemanship and sheer bravery of Mir Chakar by subjecting him to three successive ordeals during which Lasharis very cleverly offered three loads of presents, until the Shah's mother was converted, as the Baloch classics go, to Rind cause due to the Mir's unprecedented bravery. She intervened and prevailed upon his son to order his Qandahar Governor Zaman Beg Arghun to help Rinds. Shah agreed and the Mir returned to Sibi having succeeded in his mission and feeling stronger. Lasharies were demoralized and shaken due to their failure at the Turkish Court. High spirited as Mir Chakar was, he planned to weaken the Lashari position as far as possible before the arrival of Qandahar troops. He, therefore, made a sudden swoop on the Lashari positions. Lasharis demoralized suffered defeat at the battle of Gori and Chakar successfully storming Dabani fort so that when Mir Guhram taunted him for his defeat at Nali, he could equally taunt him for his defeats at Gori and Dabani and the losses suffered therein.²¹

This is supposed to be last major Campaign of Thirty Years Baloch War may be in between 1508 and 1510. However, If Mir Guhram could laud his victory at Nali due to Sindhi support, Mir Chakar could expressthe pride of his victory at Gajan to Turkish support. Neither the Sindhi support saved Mir Guhram Lashari and his tribal from the ultimate doom nor the Arghuns support saved Mir Chakar and his tribal from being insulted and finally compelled to leave Baluchistan for good to Multan.²² The major booty of the wars and defeats was served to the Sindhis and Turks. The War left a harmful impact on the Baloch culture and progress of Baloch confederacy of tribes and left the space open to the Brahui Khanate of Kalat. Although the War of Gajan ended with the supremacy of Rind, yet it was an endless series and the tribesmen had become sick of the situation and Warfare. Thousands of the men had been killed, cattle destroyed, and crops burnt, and the War was continuing. None of the parties had been able to claim a complete victory. The Rinds had failed to subdue the Lasharies and Lasharis had not been able to occupy any part of fertile land occupied by the Rind. Rinds were a prosperous tribe and became vagabonds as a result of the War although Chakar's victory was lauded.²³ Therefore, the allied Baloch tribes of Both parties began to assert their role. Another migration was most suitable way to avoid this bloodshed. Chakar Khan still wanted to continue but the irony of the time compelled both tribes to migrate. The warfare and barren destroyed land necessitated the search of new land of hope and fertility. Therefore, most of the Lasharis moved to Sind and Gujrat Kathiawar and Rinds to Multan.

Rind Migration to Multan.

In 1518, Chakar khan rind decided to leave the region in search of better opportunity and fertile land. From Sibi he moved to Sanghar Desert and occupied the region to establish his rule.

For many years, No one was able to defeat him until Mir Doda Khan defeated him. After the defeat Mir Chakar and his army left Sanghar and moved to Multan. Multan at that time was being ruled by the Langah who welcomed the Chakar Khan. Simultaneously, the ruler of Multan brought Mir Doda Khan under his umbrella. The situation was unacceptable to Mir Chakar Khan, therefore, Mir Chakar khan moved to the borderlands of Multan and settled in Satghara. By the time the small paris, phallis, clans and tribes began to settle all over Punjab. Mir Chakar Khan gained power and respect in the area. Sher Shah Suri Sent a message to Mir Chakar to unite with him to consolidate his gains. Mir Chakar appreciated the offer but refused to help Sher Shah Suri. Under the command of his son, Mir Shahdad Khan, his forces instead joined the Mughal army of Emperor Humayun in 1555. Emperor Humayun recaptured Delhi and ousted the Suri dynasty in 1556. As a reward, Emperor Humayun conferred a vast Jagir, including horses and slaves to Mir Chakar. He ruled this territory until his death in 1565. People who accompanied Mir Chakar to Satghara after leaving Balochistan constructed a tomb for his body.²⁴ Hereafter, Baloch became a major ethnic group of the Multan Province of the Mughal Empire.

Conclusion

The thirty years War reflect a traditional Baloch culture of mutual feuds, migration and settlement. Whether it interrupted the Baloch settlement, or it was the part of the historical culture of Baloch nomadism, is an important question. It is certain that although the war did not allowed the Rind and Lashari Baloches an era of peace and tranquility, exhausted their energies, destroyed their resources, and killed thousands of Baloches yet led them to settle in more fertile lands of Sindh and Multan. The destruction of infant confederacy of Baloch tribes under Mir Jalal Khan could not win a maturity and left the region open for the Brahui Khanate of Kalat to flourish. Neither Lasharis nor Rinds were able to achieve their ends. However, the war provided Baloch culture and literature a new dimension. The Baloch settlement in Sindh and Multan developed a new ethnic identity of Sindhi Baloches and Saraiki Baloches and both identities are represented as Sindhi nationalists and Saraiki nationalists. More importantly, the wars had provided a glamorous subject matter and content to the Baloch history and identity. The Baloch historians and intellectuals has drawn parallel between Balch history and world history.²⁵ Even this idea of Thirty years War represents a parallel between European wars and Baloch wars and is used by western educated intellectuals and historians writing in English language.

²¹ Ibid, P.64

²² J. H. Raverty, Notes on Afghanistan and Balochistan, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel,1976,p .560.

²³ Raverty calls "mighty Chakar Rind" that " God-like man and no one is like mighty Chakar among Baloches'.

²⁴ 'Mir Chakar Rind', www.peoplepill.com/people/mir-chakar-rind, accessed 23/6/2020

²⁵ Muhammad Shafique, 'Pakistani Baloch Historiography: An Elitist Self Assertive Discourse' in Jaffar Ahmad, ed., *Challenges of History Writing in South Asia*, Karachi: Pakistan Study Centre, 2013.