

The Bugti and Marri resistance against British Raj 1839-1919

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Abstract:

In nineteenth century Great Game begun between Russia and Britain, as British viewed Russia as an enemy, brought British in Balochistan to protect its interests in the region. In 1839 British advancement was heavily resisted by Bugti and Marri tribes. These tribesmen are brave to madness, they live in the rigged mountainous areas east of Quetta and sibi bordering Sind and Punjab Province, these areas were called Marri Bugti country at the time of British invasion. Both tribes nominally remained under authority of khan of Kalat but always enjoyed complete autonomy. They continually harassed British convoys on their way to Afghanistan. More than 180 battles were fought between British and Balochs, and more than half of them were fought by Bugti and Marri gladiators. Marri tribes defeated British forces more than a couple of times, raised a torch to the neighboring tribes and proved that British is not invincible. The British declared the whole Bugti tribe as their enemy and reward of 10-rupee offered to bring them dead or alive. This paper is based on the interesting affairs of British with Bugti and Marri Tribes of Eastern Balochistan.

Key Words: - *Great Game, British Interests, Invasion of Balochistan 1839, Harassment of British Convoys, Bugti British affairs, Marri British affairs, Baloch Resistance, British policies.*

Introduction

Balochistan is God gifted with various natural resources, a long coastline along the warm waters, has rich cultures, tribal customs, moreover has got an interesting history as well. 7000 BC old stone age site of Mehargarh, Alexanders march through Balochistan and British invasion of Baluchistan in 1839 are some such examples. Wild tribes living in Balochistan are as unique as its Geography and location. Bugti and Marri are such war like, dignified Baloch tribes, unique in their own way. British affairs with these tribes, and colonial policies, such as forward policy, closed border policy, jirga system, strengthening sardars by given immense powers to suppress Baloch resistance, totally changed the Baloch history, politics and geography. A comprehensive and detailed historical and political sketch research work comprising the Bugti and Marri tribe's affair with the British and a historical note on the arm resistance of these mighty Baloch tribes of eastern Balochistan was so much needed, to understand the course of history of Heroic resistance of Freedom Fighter Baloch tribes. To know about tribal Heroes, to understand wild tribal way of life, Baloch resistance, moreover an episode of our past. This research is so much helpful for those who are interested in interesting history of Baloch, Balochistan, and want to know about the British interests in the region at that time, and the cruel policies they adopted dealing these tribes. Scattered information and data found in different varieties of books, journals, official documents, personal diaries, biographies of British soldiers, officers and record maintained by them about the affairs of British with these Baloch tribes, is gathered and analyzed in this research paper.

Significance

History is a continuous story and a book consisting of facts and realities, that can enlighten new generations. Knowing Some bitter events of their past make them gloomy and sad but teach them a lesson for the future, and the other hand some glorious and heroic events of their history make them

happy and proud of their past and make them optimistic to move ahead. So, it is very important to know their past.

The Brave Baloch freedom fighter tribes of Marri and Bugti always played an important role in the politics and history of Balochistan and Baloch. A detailed research work about the British affairs with these two wars like Baloch tribes of Eastern Balochistan from the year 1839 with the advent of British in Balochistan till the end of World war One, 1919 when Political map of the world almost begun to change, was a significant and important research work of its type, for the students, researchers and for those interested in the history and politics of Balochistan. Analyzing such worthy data and information revealed, British interests in the region and Baloch mentality and past. To study an important chapter of history regarding locals of the province which enlightens Baloch Heroes, freedom fighters and martyrs, who gave tough time to British, defending their honor faith and land, is a worthy research work.

Research Objectives

- To compile a detailed note on Bugti and Marri affairs with British.
- To know about Baloch resistance against British raj.
- To reveal British Atrocities and cruel policies against frontier tribes.
- To narrate an important chapter of the history of Bugti and Marri Tribes from 1839 to 1919.
 - To analyze scattered data found in different books, personal narratives, diaries and British records about the events, battels and characters, regarding Bugti Marri British affairs.
 - To explore our interesting past, tribal way of life, British Interests in the Region and local resistance.

Research Methods

As the area under study of this research work covers the years from 1839 till the end of 1919 world war 1. To this particular historical research, Narrative, descriptive and analytical research methods were adopted to reach the goals and objectives of the research. Qualitative research was pursued to provide a complete and detailed description of the research work.

Data collection

Researcher tried to explore Primary and secondary data available for this particular research. While Secondary data found in documents, Books, Magazines, journals present in personal possession of Scholars, present in libraries, Such as Balochistan Archives, Balochi Academy Jam Durrak Kitabjah were frequently visited. Personal narratives and daily dairies of various English officials and Government records were searched. Archives on web helped a lot having so many precious rare books in PDF. The research was skillfully contrived to get the real facts, data and information about the historical events and Characters.

Organization of research work

The researcher divided research work in following 5 chapters.

- Chapter 1 Balochistan and Baloch (This chapter is consisting of brief introduction of Balochistan's geography, history, Baloch origin, character, and customs, to understand Nature of country and Baloch character.
- Chapter 2 Bugti and Marri Tribes (This chapter is about these Tribes location, nature of country, Brief history and origin, way of life and uniqueness)
- Chapter 3 Bugti British Affairs (This chapter is about the main events battles, affairs of British with Bugti tribes)
- Chapter 4 Marri British Affairs (This chapter is about British affairs with Marri tribe from 1839 to 1919)
- Chapter 5 Conclusion. (In this chapter research work is analyzed and concluded)

Literature Review

Baba-e-Balochistan Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bezinjo writes in the prologue of Tareekh-e-Balochistan that, Baloch don't have an authentic history about their Nation and Land except some foreign historian especially British who left some books in which some of the events and conditions of their nation and land is mentioned. Further about the book he says that, it seems history of Kalat rather than the history of Balochistan (NASEER, 2016 p. xix). His opinion opens up new doors for the

researchers and writers to do more research work on Balochistan, its history and people. Finding a gap and reason, researcher decided to write on the Bugti tribe who were first to face the British as their frontiers touch Sindh and Punjab and brave Marri tribe as their history customs mentality is identical With Bugti tribes. “In 1838, the Indian Government having resolved to restore Shah Sujah to the Afghan throne, intercourse between the British and the khan of kelat took place early in the year as a preparatory measure to the passage of the troops through his dominions.” (BIDDULPH, 1881, p. 627). “In that year lieutenant Leech was deputed to the Khan to arrange Terms for the passage of British troops through his Territory on their Way to Kandahar.” (PAGET, 1983, p. 38)

“It was in April of 1839 that Sir John Kean’s army found its way up the Bolan Pass to Quetta. Behind Keane’s army, which pushed on to Kandahar and Ghazni, predatory tribes closed in, cut off his convoys and cut up his Kasids (messengers) as opportunity offered, the leading spirit being Bijar Khan Dumki” (YATE, 1918, p. 43) “The march of the columns through the Kachi and the Bolan to Quetta was attended with constant harassing by the warlike tribes on all sides of the routes and passes. The most daring raids and attacks were made on detached parties and on the baggage trains, causing loss of life and general obstruction. So, straightened were the troops that they were placed on half rations, and the cavalry suffered severely, and at one time it was a question whether the army had not better give up the expedition and retire.” (BIDDULPH, 1881, p. 627) “Mr. Bell, the political agent, in vain made every effort to obtain a free passage through cutchee by negotiations and pecuniary arrangements with the plundering tribes; their chiefs were deaf to all persuasion, and scorned every offer”. (JACOB, 1852, pp. 1-2)

Immediate cause of war between British and Hill Tribes

“The Murrees and Boogtees inhabited the neighbouring hills; the chief town of the former, Kahun, of the latter, Deyra. These mountain tribes were nearly all footmen, and seldom or never ventured in hostile guise into the plain country. While the Doomkees and Jekranees were in power, the horsemen were far too strong for them in the plain, while, on the other hand, they were safe in their mountain fastnesses from the attacks of the

lowlanders. Such being the respective positions, these warlike tribes, with occasional exceptions, were usually on friendly terms, and afforded each other mutual support.” (JACOB, 1852, pp. 3-7) Normally much of the plunder gained by the Jakhranis and Dombkis was passed through the Bugti hills to be disposed of among the Hindu merchants of Harrand and Dajil, and Bibarak (Bugti Chief) received a share in transit. (LAMBRICK, 1975, p. 41) “At the request of the political officers, a detachment was ordered in the month of June, 1839, to proceed from Sukkur and Shikarpoor against Beejar Khan.” (JACOB, 1852, p. 9)

Bijar Khan Domki’s refuge in Bugti hills

“On the arrival of the force at poolajee, it was found that the kutchee plunderers had deserted the country, abandoned their homes in the plain, and taken refuge in the Bhoogtee Hills.” (JACOB, 1855, p. 129)

Ross Bell summoned Bugti Marri chiefs

Ross Bell’s plan was to send a force of Regular troops to punish the latter and capture or kill their leaders; and at the same time to summon Doda Khan Marri and Bibarak Bugti into his presence, to obtain their submission to Shah Shuja, the restoration of as much plunder as could be recovered, and finally security for their future conduct. (LAMBRICK, 1975, p. 41)

The Bugti and Marri chiefs who were now called upon, to their great astonishment, to pay the usual share of one-third of their produce to the King of Kabul, and to acknowledge his sovereignty. The two tribes had never paid the Khan tax or tribute, and could seldom be induced to admit the most vague and nominal suzerainty of Kalat. The British indeed seemed to be irresistible. On the 19th December Bibarak Bugti made his appearance in Postans’s camp at Chattar. He denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of Bijar Khan and his men, but offered vaguely to help in securing them; he admitted in some bewilderment the sovereignty of Shah Shuja; and with great reluctance consented to the march of the troops to Dera, his headquarters. He flatly refused to go to Ross Bell’s camp and Postans did not press the point, after obtaining as a hostage the chief’s principal adviser, Mir Hassan, together with guides for the troops. Bibarak therefore returned to Dera. (LAMBRICK, 1975, pp. 44-45)

“final instructions were received from the political officers, and in the beginning of the month of November, 1839, the force proceeded in two

detachments to enter the Murree and Boogtee hills, wherein the Dombkees and Jekranees had found refuge.

One party proceeded, via the Goree pass near Poolijee towards Deyra, and the other via Lahree, and the pass near that town towards Kahun”.

The first party consisted of Major Billamore and Captain Brown, who acted as staff officers to the force. The light company of the 5th regiment, under Lieutenant Stanley, a company of the grenadiers, the artillery under Lieutenant Jacob, and one hundred and twenty men of the Sinde irregular horse under Lieutenant Clarke.” (JACOB, 1852, pp. 22-23)

Salvia A Metheson states that “It all begun in 1839 when a Major Billamore captured Dera Bugti after many skirmishes with the raiding Bugtis who had been constantly harassing the British on their march, under lord Kean, to Afghanistan” (MATHESON, 1997 P. 179)

When British were twice defeated in Battles of Sartaff and Naffusk, states an English writer that “The torch raised by the Marris was carried to the Kakars, the Kajjaks and the Brahuis; Quetta was attacked, Kelat retaken, and no immediate counter-move could be made. (LAMBRICK, 1975, p. 54) Eastwick states the impacts of defeat as “This was the first severe loss we suffered coupled with defeat, since our array crossed the Indus; the effect was great, and the Marris were elated with success, and thenceforth no detachment could enter the hills without danger. The sipahis, when ordered on service in that direction evidently considered they were about to take the shortest road to the country of Yama (Death). Going to Takka, as they called the hills, was with them equivalent to is *de Kopaxas*, and they forthwith deposited their savings with some friend, or in the treasury, for transmission to their families. About the same time with Sartaf happened another untoward event. The sword of the Marris first showed that the Faringi was not invincible, the Brahui and Kakar insurrections followed, and the train spread to distant Cabul.” (EASTWICK E. B., 1849, pp. 111-112,54)

Sylvia A. Metheson narrates a story of a Marri notable that “One of the Marri Waderas (headman of clan) reached the cannon ahead of his chieftain, whipped off his Pushti & thrust it down the mouth of the Cannon with his arm, then he shouted to the Marris to come on because he had

covered the entrance to the devil's cave and the Wadera was blown to pieces!" (MATHESON, 1997 P. 49)

Sir Charles Napier proclaimed the whole Bugti tribe as enemies. (BRUCE R. B., 1871, p. 67) In January 1846 directed to capture or kill the Bugtis, and all cattle belonging to them, when they came near the frontier. (LAMBRICK, 1975, p. 126)

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