CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE
OF THE BALOCH IN IRAN

Much has been written on historical and cultural background of the Baloch as a whole. But, after the Islamic Revolution no substantial work has been conducted on socio-economic profile of the Iranian Baloch. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to describe and analyze the socio-economic profile of the Iranian Baloch mainly focusing on post Islamic Revolution of 1979. This chapter, therefore, includes the demographic profile of the Baloch in Iran, their educational and occupational status, as well as, a description of their cultural status such as the different social institutions including language, marriage, polygamy, poetry, societal norms, and their religious faith.

BALOCH POPULATION OF IRAN

According to the official reports of the Administration & Planning Organization of Sistan & Balochistan, the population of the province was 1,722,579 in 1996. It was also estimated that this population might reach to 2,049,793 in 2001. However, this figure does not accurately indicate the actual Baloch population of Iran. Firstly because, there is evidence to proved that different central governments of Iran did not include any ethnic identity in their various census reports. In this regard, the Baloch were not in exception. This policy perhaps has been a method of depicting Iran as ‘One Iranian Nation,’ rather than a multinational Iran. Secondly, earlier on during the Qajar period, Balochistan was a part of Kerman and so it was known as ‘Kerman & Balochistan Province’. Subsequently the title was changed to ‘Balochistan & Sistan Province’, and then it was re-named the other way round to ‘Sistan &
Balochistan Province’, as it is called today. Therefore, being attached to and mixed with another region’s population, has always avoided taking the exact census of the Baloch population in Iran. Thirdly, the province of Sistan & Balochistan is not occupied only by the Baloch, rather there are non-Baloch residents entered either from other parts of Iran or from neighboring countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thus, all these three factors together have prevented taking a precise census report of the Iranian Baloch in the country.

Approximately, 70 percent of the total Baloch population of the world lives in Pakistan and about 20 percent inhabit the coterminous region of southeastern Iran. In 1998, Britannica Book of the Year indicated that the figure for Balochi speakers in Iran is given to be 1,420,000. According to figures given by Abdul Aziz Dolati, a Baloch former Member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly from Saravan and an adviser to the Minister of Education, in the sitting of the Higher Education & Research Institute on January 1, 2003, there are 2 million Baloch in Iran.

The total population of Iran had reached 34 million as of the 1976 census. Recently, 'the CIA World Fact Book' has estimated that by July 2009 the total population of Iran shall be 66,429,284. According to the calculation of Dr. Mohammad Hassan Hossinbour, a comparison of the earlier estimates of 6 to 7.5 million with the most recent figures indicates a ten-fold increase in the population of the country between 1892 and the 1976 – 1992. Therefore, if we assume that the Baloch population has also multiplied by the same ratio during the same period, the present population of the Iranian Baloch should be 2.5 million. To this, one should add an estimated 500,000 Baloch population scattered in other parts of Iran mainly in the province of Khorasan particularly in Birjand, Turbat Jam, Sarakhs, and Gorgan. Thus, even if one accepts the figure given by Curzon’s Persian source, the total Baloch population of Iran
would be close to 3 million. But if one leaves room for underestimation by such a source, the Baloch population will be between 3 to 4 million. Although majority of Baloch reside in the province of Sistan & Balochistan, many are spread in other parts of the country as well as in other countries of the world such as the Gulf States, Sweden, England, Norway, Denmark, etc.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE BALOCH

Before concentrating on the Baloch educational status in Iran, it is advisable to have a brief and general background of educational status in the province of Sistan & Balochistan. In this context, according to a 2004 report, the total number of students including that of kindergarten, primary, guidance, high, and pre-university institutions in the province of Sistan & Balochistan have been 553,721, out of which 305,921 have been male students and 247,800 have been female students, who all have studied at 5800 educational institutions in 22,622 educational classes. Besides, there have been also 11,100 Afghani students at the various educational institutions within the province of Sistan & Balochistan. The number of schoolteachers at different above-mentioned levels has been 22,776.

The number of the higher educational institutions including universities and other governmental educational institutions in the province of Sistan & Balochistan has been reported to be seventeen institutions in 2004. Among these higher institutions, there have been 5,730 university students between 2003 and 2004 at graduation and post graduation (Master) levels who had enrolled only in the Islamic Azad University of Zahedan, the center of the province. In the same period there have been 14,718 students in the University of Sistan & Balochistan of Zahedan, who had enrolled at graduation, post
Partly, for obvious reasons mentioned earlier (in the section of Baloch population), the aforementioned provincial statistics does not represent the actual number of Baloch students in the country. Most of the students particularly those belong to the higher institutions in Balochistan are either from Sistan or from other cities of Iran and actually the total number of Baloch students is much less than what is stated in the aforementioned official reports. Unfortunately, Balochistan of Iran, like that of Pakistan holds the highest rate of illiteracy in Iran. Under the regime of Pahlavi, majority of the Baloch in Iran lacked standard education. The illiterate Baloch mainly were among the middle and old age citizens. With reference to Baloch women during this period, it is pitiful to mention that the number of the educated Baloch women holding university degree or education had not been beyond ten persons, hardly the case. Even today, under the Islamic Republic of Iran, though the number of the educated Baloch relatively increased, it is unsatisfactory. According to Naser Askari, no single Baloch student was enrolled in any institution of higher education in the period 1955-1965 when two or three students were admitted. Thereafter, four students were admitted in 1966 and five in 1967. 

The 1970s saw the establishment of the first two institutions of higher education in Balochistan, ‘Teacher Training College of Zahedan’ and ‘University of Balochistan’ (today it is officially known as the university of Sistan & Balochistan), established in 1972 and 1973, respectively. The inauguration of these institutions brought a simultaneous sharp increase in the number of Baloch students who enrolled at the college level. For instance, in the academic year of 1972-1973, there were 198 students enrolled in the Teacher Training College. By 1978, University of Balochistan had a student body of 450. Although the
overwhelming majority of the student bodies in the two institutions were non-Baloch immigrants, the total number of Baloch students during 1972 - 1979 had been estimated to be between sixty to one hundred.\textsuperscript{14} According to Dr. Mohammad Reza Taheri, a faculty member of Sistan & Balochistan University, in the decade of 1960s, the number of Baloch students at graduation level (in the country) were less than fifteen individuals, and in the early decade of 1970s this number increased almost to hundred persons. It was, in fact, in this decade (1970s) that in his trip to Balochistan, Amir Abass Hovida, the then Prime Minister of Iran, provided a favorable situation to the Baloch in which about one hundred of Baloch undergraduate teachers were allowed to get enrolled in the Tarbeyat Moaalem University for their graduation. This was a particular move that had increased the number of Baloch educated people in the region.\textsuperscript{15}

However, it was claimed in 2008 by some unofficial sources that the total number of Baloch university students in Iran are around 6000 to 10000, who study in different disciplines at different levels.\textsuperscript{16} According to Seyed Abdol Hossain Sajadi the Governor of Saravan, only in Saravan of Balochistan there are about 4500 students studying at graduation level in 25 different disciplines in four universities.\textsuperscript{17} Around 95 percent of these students are Baloch. This figure indicates that compared with the pre-Islamic Revolution the number of Baloch students in post-Islamic Revolution particularly in its third decade has increased considerably. However, with regard to Baloch academicians or university professors, out of 537 faculty members (between 2003 and 2004) at the University of Sistan & Balochistan, the number of Baloch faculty members hardly could reach to ten individuals. In 2007, it has been claimed the total number of the Iranian Baloch Ph.D holders spread all over the world may reach to an approximate figure of sixty to one hundred persons. Well, aside from the current (2004-2008) favorable educational developments for the Iranian students such as 'easing pre-university tests of Azad universities throughout the
country', there have been several reasons behind this lack of enough educated Baloch in Iran. These reasons can be cited in the following way.

The first fundamental and historical factor has been resulted from the geopolitical and strategic situation of Balochistan. This land and its people throughout their dark history had been mostly involved in wars and battles with different rulers. Thus, in such atmosphere no room left for Baloch to think of their own self-development. Referring to the political history of the land is an obvious exemplary of the issue, as has been discussed in chapter one of this study. As a result of this impact, for years backwardness in education continued to dominate Balochistan, where majority of Baloch parents remained uneducated and illiterate, who had no knowledge of how to bring up their children properly. The problem more or less continued under the regime of Shah, whose educational policy failed to bring about educational development in Balochistan. In addition, the outcome of narrow-minded concepts of many Baloch elders such as tribal chiefs and clerics, who failed to encourage the Baloch girls to gain education, must not be overlooked.

Secondly, there is a general conception among the Baloch that in Sunni-populated areas like Balochistan, government makes discrimination between Sunni and Shia. Although discrimination exists, it does not exist to that extent as hold by majority of the Baloch. Discrimination is more visible in sensitive political or diplomatic offices such as governorship, ambassadorship and the like. With regard to the middle rank or satisfactory offices like directorship and headship of several provincial public organizations there is no discrimination as such. In this respect, Baloch Members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) and other positions such as chairmanship and principalship of different affiliated faculties and organizations can be taken as example. In Saravan, there are four universities in which the heads (2004-2008) of all are
Sunni Baloch. In Iranshahr, the head (from 2000 to 2008 this center has had two Baloch as its head so far) of Iranshahr's Higher Educational Center is a Sunni Baloch. Similar instances in the third decade of the Islamic Republic can be taken from other governmental institutions such as the Heads of 'Maskan-e Shahrsazi Organization' (a public construction organization) in Zahedan or 'Edareh Kar va Omoor-e Ejtomayee Organization' of Zahedan (an employment & social affair organization), who have been Sunni Baloch.\(^\text{18}\) One important factor which has been overlooked by majority of the Baloch is that the number of educated Baloch so far have been insufficient compared with the people of Sistan, which is why, many of the offices in Balochistan are occupied by non-Baloch. But, where there are competent and capable Baloch, they can also occupy such offices like those of Iranshar and Saravan. Whatsoever, many Baloch youth are reluctant to pursue their education, claiming that those Baloch holding highly educational qualifications are not treated in a just and equal way, so why then they should bother themselves and follow the same long route.

The third reason which can be applied to all and not to the Baloch alone is the presence of strict rules for graduation and post-education courses prescribed by the central government of Iran. For instance, conquer test (a tough pre-university examination) organized annually at the national universities. Those who can afford to go abroad for their studies can escape this test. In this regard, there are many Iranians in Europe and North America doing their educations. Example can be taken of India as well, where during 2004-2008 there have been about five thousands Iranian students including 130 Baloch students registered only at the University of Pune and its affiliated colleges. On the other hand, many Iranian youth cannot go abroad for the purpose of study and many are also reluctant to get over the 'conquer test' in Iran. There is also another 'conquer test' which is organized annually at the Islamic Azad Universities throughout the country. Contrary to the former test, this test seems to be a mere formality, as
many participants can pass it easily. In this respect, quite often it happens that a student may be interested in a particular discipline but would get entrance to a different discipline which he/she may not take interest in it at all. But, many reluctantly accept such conditions though it goes against their wish, simply because, holding a university degree is one of the major conditions for employment. With regard to the Baloch, however, due to their cultural and territorial affinity with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Gulf States, there are considerable number of young Baloch who prefer to choose business and commercial activities and deal with these countries rather than attending 'conquer tests' for their studies particularly when 'conquer tests' are regarded by them as an unnecessary ban for their progress.

These three issues may lead us to conclude that why Baloch so far have been educationally poor. But, hopefully in recent years, government has eased some of its educational policies, facilitating the way for the youth of Iran to gain higher education. For example, the conquer test organized by Azad Universities has become a formality only. Besides, a number of other universities such as International University of Chabahar and the International Branch of Sistan & Balochistan University have been established in Chabahar, where the eager Baloch youth can apply for admission without facing strict rules and regulations. The affect of world wide technological developments, globalization, and communication has also reached to this forgotten land; in there has started a growing awareness which is leading towards some reforms in the Balochi society of Iran. Today, new waves of Baloch students including boys and girls are rushing towards universities not only in the province but also all over the country, even abroad. There is a mental revolution taking place gradually and slowly in Balochistan for the good of its new generations. For example, men's attitude towards women is changing and that narrow-minded
traditional practices such as polygamy are fading away. The result of this change, of course, can be seen in the coming decades.

**OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE BALOCH**

Basically, the Baloch mostly have been engaged in agriculture and husbandry and had earned their livinghood out of this occupation. Official reports in 1956 show that only in Iranshahr 88% of the population had been engaged in cultivation and farming. The same report says in Sistan & Balochistan 93,368 people (in 1986) had been engaged in agricultural activities, and the number has reached to 104,386 namely 33.1 percent in 1996. However, irrespective of these agricultural activities, there are no signs of noticeable development in agriculture of the Iranian Balochistan. This is mainly due to the presence of several factors such as shortage of water, traditional economy, and the recent drought which has damaged the life and business of Baloch farmers over the last 15 years. This, in turn, has increased the rate of unemployment, leaving many local people unemployed in Balochistan.

Within the tribal life style of the Baloch, handicrafts such as pottery also generate some income for the people. The Baloch, in general, are involved in mat weaving, carpet weaving, tent weaving, sack weaving, needle lace, and so on.

The Baloch are also active in fishing. This is particularly true with those who live in the vicinity of the Oman Sea, as well as, in and around Chabahar. For instance, in the town of Pasabandar fishing is the main business of the Baloch, which accounts for 93.3 percent of the total occupation. Similarly, in the town of Briss 90% of the Baloch earn their livelihood through fishing. In the town of Hamidigah, 80% of the Baloch are also engaged in this business. Recently, with
the construction of more fishing-jetties in Govatr, Pasabandar, Pazm, Konarak, and Chabahar more fishing activities can be observed in the area. ²⁰

As is the case with every society, the Baloch’s occupations are not confined merely to the aforementioned activities; rather Baloch also work or are employed in many public and private institutions both inside and outside Balochistan such as construction, whole sale trade, retail trade, transportation, social and financial services, educational institutions, etc. There are also many others who work in other countries especially in the Gulf States in search of better income, most of whom are working in low-level occupations such as taxi drivers or watchmen. But, most important of all is their involvement in trade either legal or illegal. The economy of Balochistan mostly resides in the hands of Baloch. Because of the strict government policies on custom duty, most of Baloch merchants or businessmen, apart from legal business are also involved in unauthorized export and import of goods. For example, from the Iranian Balochistan they export Iranian products like fruits, pea, flour, cement, soap, oil, petrol, gasoline, and washing-powder, and from the neighboring countries like Pakistan and the Gulf States, they import, electronic equipments, perfume, cloth, tea, rice, and so forth. In the markets of Zahedan most of the imported goods that enter the city do not met with the custom’s regulations. In Nobandian, a town nearby Chabahar, for instance, more than half of the working population is engaged in such unauthorized form of trade, many people import goods like cigarette via Oman Sea and gain much profit out of it. As a result of illegal business, there are many rich Baloch, who own big businesses including, hotels, factories, petrol stations in Iran, as well as, in other countries such as Pakistan, United Arab Emirate, Bahrain, Kuwait, etc.

Generally, the common Iranians especially those who lack enough knowledge about the Baloch, look upon them as drug traffickers, who make a fortune out of
this illegal profitable business. This impression is because of two main reasons. First, it has the support of mass media in Iran. For example, several film directors have produced movies in which Baloch are projected as smugglers. Second, is because of Balochistan’s geographic location. It is next to Afghanistan, where opium is grown, and next to Pakistan, where heroin is produced. So, it is situated on the smuggling routes. Although such impression is false and is not true with majority of the Baloch, for some Baloch it is an important source of income. They see drug trafficking as a fast and short cut way to become rich. However, it is worthy of mention that due to its typical geographic location, Balochistan has become an attractive place for international drug traffickers. A great number of these drug traffickers are non Baloch --- either foreigners or other Iranians.

**CULTURAL STATUS OF THE BALOCH**

The Baloch in Iran have grown under the influence of Persian culture yet they have retained their core values. Balochi language represents the most remarkable manifestation of cohesive base for the Balochi cultural identity. It is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. The Balochi language is specifically related to the west Iranian languages of northwest Iran, thus having a strong affinity with the Kurdish language, as well as the Gilaki dialect of Gilan on the southwestern Caspian Sea. According to Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch, a historian, about 50 per cent of the words in Balochi are of Persian origin or they are disfigured forms of Persian words. However, in the Iranian Balochistan, Balochi is used only as an oral language. During the Pahlavi regime, no Balochi literary works and activities were tolerated. With the fall of the regime and victory of the 1979 Revolution, in the early months of the Islamic Republic the young and active Baloch felt the poor status of their language. So, along with political activities, they also began their efforts in the
field of literature. In this respect, Balochi papers such as ‘MAKORAN’, ‘KOKAR’ and ‘ROZHNAEE’ were published in Balochi language. But, their efforts could not be compared with the efforts of the Baloch in Pakistan, where the Balochi Academy in Quetta is a major center which is responsible for publishing several hundred volumes in Balochi, Urdu, and English on Balochi language, literature, culture, and history. In the subsequent years under the Islamic Republic, the concerned officials failed to pay much heed and interest in this cultural activity, and thus prohibition imposed upon the usage of Balochi literature in public organizations and universities, as it is supported by the constitution. In this regard, Article 15 of the Iranian Islamic constitution states, "official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as, text books must be in Farsi language and script…." A number of foreign based Baloch political activists express that such and such constitutional rules against Balochi language, is because of government's fear. Central government may consider such cultural liberty detrimental, because if given, it might instigate the Balochi national sentiments. These Baloch political activists air their views mainly on various Balochi websites or at the different conferences or interviews organized for the purpose in Europe or America.

As a matter of fact, the strong influence of Persian culture upon Baloch has made most of the Iranian Baloch reluctant to struggle for the expansion of their Balochi literature in Iran. This is mainly because the Baloch in Iran are being educated in Persian language and in order to develop their own language, they have to first undergo a process of self-education in their (Balochi) language, whereas there is an absence of Balochi educational institutions in Iran. This disability of the Baloch along with the ongoing cultural discrimination has actually turned into a matter of great concern to many of Baloch in Iran particularly in the second and third decades of the Islamic Republic. In spite of this fact, the Islamic Republic within the province of Sistan & Balochistan
has permitted daily broadcasts for radio programs in Balochi. These programs are broadcasted from Zahedan, Khash, and Iranshahr. But, contrary to other radio Balochi programs in Kabul of Afghanistan, as well as, Quetta and Karachi of Pakistan which occasionally deal with the subject of Balochi language and literature, the Iranian broadcasts hardly are allowed to touch on the matter.

**Balochi Marriage**

Marriage as the basic social institution throughout the history of the land has been mainly specified by tradition. Until recently, government did not interfere in the issue. A report of 2008 shows more than 40 percent of the newly born children of Sistan & Balochistan belong to unregistered marriages. Baloch parents play a major role in choosing marriage partners for their children, and they regard mostly marriage as an alliance between two families, rather than just between two individuals. The most extreme form of parental influence is an arranged marriage in which groom and particularly bride have no say at all and that usually the bride and groom meet for the first time on their wedding day. This is because any meeting before marriage is considered immoral against their tradition, as well as, a sin against their religion, as has been prescribed by Sunni Baloch clerics. In the history of Balochistan, most of the marriages have been of child marriage. In some marriages, children especially the girls are betrothed at a very young age without a voice in the decision. In a less extreme form of arranged marriage, parents may do the matchmaking. There are also many examples of preferential marriage, a system which, bride or groom is supposed to marry a particular kind of person, for instance, to a maternal cousin or to a paternal cousin. Marriage between cousins is a usual phenomenon in this part of Iran. Wedding parties in Balochistan can be performed with ceremonies, which include music, dance and distribution of food. Such celebrations usually last for three days and three nights with singing and dancing. However, there have
been a number of incidents, where Baloch Sunni clerics have criticized singing and dancing in Balochi marriages. According to Baloch clerics, singing and dancing are forbidden in Islam and therefore are not allowed in marriages. But, due to growing consciousness and awareness among the Baloch, particularly among the youth, such religious edics for this particular purpose do not work out as expected by the local Sunni clerics. Unlike the past, today there are urban Baloch families who are in contact with the non-Baloch. Therefore, marriages are not localized, rather Baloch of today especially the educated ones marry to non-native or outsiders such as the Shia people. Examples can be taken of almost every Balochi tribe of Sarhad and Makoran regions.

**Polygamy in Balochistan**

Polygamy or polygyny has been regarded as a usual practice in Balochistan of Iran. The practice is exercised mostly among the dogmatic religious minded people. It is the situation in which one man is married to a number of different women at one time. This practice has its roots in religion. In Islam, polygamy is allowed for men, with the specific limitation that they can only have up to four wives at any one time. Koran, the holy book of Muslims, also states that men who choose this route must deal with their wives as fairly as possible, doing everything that they can to spend equal amounts of time and money on each one of them. If the husband cannot deal with his wives fairly, one is enough. Women on the other hand, are only allowed the one husband, although they are allowed to remarry after a divorce. Though justice cannot be given equally, the practice is usual in Balochistan. Among the major factors regarded by Baloch to encourage them towards polygamy are, first their stereotype understanding of the Islamic codes and second their financial capability. Although many traditional and religious minded Baloch still retain this traditional Islamic law which permits polygamy, certain elements within the Balochi society of Iran
challenge the practice. For example, many educated Baloch of today particularly the girls strongly disagree with the practice.

**Baloche Poetry**

The bulk of the Balochi folk poetry for the most part consists of epics or heroic ballads describing their wars and ventures. One of the most striking examples is the thirty years of war between the Rinds and Lashari tribes. Baloch poetry is one of the oldest in the world. In Balochi culture, poetry has always been combined with music. Balochi music and folklore has been passed from generation to generation as a valuable art.

The oldest available Balochi poetry is of 16th century which belongs to poetry of Mir Chakar’s era. Of course, it is to be noted that Balochi poetry and poems existed long before that era in Balochi societies, for the reason that composing of poems surfaced and furthered with evolution of the language. It is also clear from the shape and style of the language of poets in novels that those poetries are not of initial and basic poetry. That is why one can say prior to that era Balochi literature was not passed successfully to its people. Sanctuary, avenges and bravery is the essence of poetry of that period. Poems of that era are more of war ballads and historical nature, and they also include many of the wise-men of the time. In the 18th century vast regions of Balochistan came under a centralised system of governance, so urbanisation with its values were evolving which had its effects on Balochi poetry. The romantic style of poetry became far common than war ballad poetry. Therefore, sensitivity, love, friendship, and above all a message for peace and security emerged. Jam Dorrak was the greatest poets of that time. After Jam Dorrak in the 19th century, a number of other famous poets emerged such as Mula Fazol, Mula Qasim, Ezat Panjgori, Mastt Tavakoli, Mula Ibrahim Bahoei, Mula Bohir, Mula Bahram, and so on. In
the early 20th century in the subcontinent of India, national movements rose-up, and many political groups and parties were founded and began making efforts against the British colonization of their lands. In Balochistan efforts also were made against British oppression. Rahm Ali was the poet of the time, and his poems are full of freedom seeking and of nationalist aspiration and character. The rise of freedom seeking movement of Mir Yousof Ali Khan Magasi and his poetry influenced a large number of the Baloch youth. Not so long time gone by, some Baloch youths such as Gul Khan Naseer and Mohammad Hossain Onga stepped into the new era of Balochi poetry. When Reza Shah's army attacked western (Iranian) Balochistan in 1928 and subjected it under his oppressive rule, and his son intensified oppression on Baloch people during his reign, then progress on Balochi literature became an impossible phenomenon. Despite the oppressions, Baloch people constantly made efforts to work on their literature and poetry. Baloch people made the Balochi poems tasteful and splendid by rehearsing them in their weddings and ceremonies. The new era of Balochi poetry began after the Second World War. When India gained its independence, the desire for freedom and national rights was increasing among other nations of the region. In Balochistan such desires were at an optimum level when Pakistan’s army made incursion into Kalat, the capital of eastern Balochistan in 1948 and annexation of eastern Balochistan to Pakistan was declared. In such turbulent circumstances, Baloch nationalists made more efforts and focused on political and cultural fronts. In Balochi poetry, political thoughts emerged. Gul Khan Naseer was the leading poet of this caravan. Patriotism and aspiration for independence of mother land, nationalism and progressive movement are the essence and theme of Gul Khan’s poetry, so has been the case with majority of Pakistani Baloch poets. When Gul Khan and his poetry combined with his struggles gained grounds and popularity in eastern Balochistan, other young Baloch poets with nationalist tendencies stepped into Balochi poetry. Among these poets, Azat Jamaldini and Mohammad Hossain
Onga are well worth of mentioning. If a preview on contemporary Balochi poetry is given, it is abundantly evident that many of poets followed the classical style, and many of them are still following it, though other new styles are evolving or are in progress. The current Balochi poetry is aware of Baloch people’s demands and aspirations, so it is full of patriotic sentiments and reflective of their desire for development and prosperity of Balochistan whether Pakistani Balochistan or the Iranian Balochistan. Balochi poetry is also longing for respect on humanity, unity, peace and equality for the whole world. \(^{(25)}\)

In the contemporary time, in comparison with the Baloch poetry in Pakistan, the Baloch poetry in Iran, however, has not been much in active use. It is mainly due to the absence of moral, as well as, financial support to the Baloch poets and musicians in Iran. In the Iranian Balochistan, there are a few of the best Baloch musicians and poets famous in the country, but their cultural activities (poetry, music, singing, dance) are confined to some celebrations such as graduation parties of Baloch students, Balochi wedding ceremonies, and sometimes official gatherings between Baloch elite and the government authorities in Balochistan. In such occasions, they are hardly allowed to perform politically oriented poems like state oppression, etc. Today, a number of the Iranian Baloch poets, in groups, meet informally and regularly at residents of each other and discuss issues related to Balochi literature and poetry. Such groups can be mainly found in cities like Saravan, Iranshahr, Chabahar, Nikshahr, and so on.

**Balochi Diwan or Council**

Diwan literally means gathering or assembly. In cultural terms, there is a great sense of communalism affecting the set of rules, norms, and values governing the social and economic relations. This is best manifested in such a social
institution as council or ‘Diwan’ as it is called so, which is organized regularly in every village, town, and city among tribes with purpose of publicly discussing and addressing major social, political, and legal issues of Baloch concern.\textsuperscript{26} The Balochi Diwan in its formal nature is to be attended by Baloch elders and noted figures of the village, town, and city such as experienced men, educated Baloch, religious leaders, and tribal chiefs. Usually, the house of an important Baloch personality like a cleric, a tribal chief, an influential wealthy, or an academician, is the place for such get-togethers. This custom has made the Baloch into a close-knit community. Apart from these traditional gatherings, Balochi Diwan can be also organized in a totally different manner. For instance, recently i.e. from the year 2000 onwards, internet has facilitated the way for many Baloch to organize virtual worldwide meetings, debating freely over various socio-political issues concerning Balochistan. A number of free chat rooms of PALTALK, an internet chat service for text, voice, and video chatting, which is a privately held New York based company founded in 1998, \textsuperscript{(27)} can be referred as a prime example.

\textbf{Balochi Zeal}

A Baloch identifies himself to outsiders as 'I’m a Baloch.' This is done with such staggering emphasis on the word 'Baloch' that is taken by most outside observers as implying a belief in a sense of racial uniqueness. Lord Curzon, for example, has stated that the Baloch “… are apt to round off every period with swaggering assertion that I’m a Baloch.”\textsuperscript{28} Pottinger, Hughes, and many other European and non-European travelers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have also taken note of this popular national sentiment. It is, however, more an emphasis of the Baloch distinct identity than a belief in a sense of racial uniqueness.\textsuperscript{29}
Baloch are deeply committed to maintaining their personal honor, showing respect and generous hospitality to guests, and giving protection to those who seek it from them. These are among the most visible characteristics of the Baloch. In this respect, many British colonial officials, authors, as well as, other Iranians who have traveled and visited Balochistan have testified in their records to the Baloch hospitality and generosity. Their food and costume are simple and so simple are their demands. Obedience, hospitality, tenacity, bravery and endurance are their supreme virtues.  

For the Baloch, however, the only crime that could invoke death penalty or banishment besides treason is adultery. Sometimes mere suspicion of unfaithfulness by wife is sufficient to put her to death. The man would also get the same punishment. Throughout the history, Balochistan has been witnessing such customs, and even today this is very much practiced in the entire Balochistan irrespective of its political boundaries such as in Nimrooz and Farah of Afghanistan, in Balochistan of Pakistan, and in Balochistan of Iran.

Honor killing is another major important cultural practice in Balochistan. Honor crimes are acts of violence. Usually murder committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family. A woman or girl can be targeted by male individuals within her own family for a variety of reasons including, refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault or sexual relationship, seeking a divorce even from an abusive husband or allegedly committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that 'dishonors' her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life. Many cases of honour killings have been reported in Balochistan of Iran and on many cases the authorities have failed to prevent the killings.
Balochi Religious Faith

Equally important for the Baloch is the Islamic faith and its culture to which they adhere. The overwhelming majority of Baloch belong to the Hanafi rite of Sunni sect of Islam. There are also some Karamatis, Zikris, and Shia, but their number is very insignificant. Correspondingly, Islamic laws or Sharia and the Islamic Sunni institutions play a very important role in the overall aspects of Balochi society. Majority of the Baloch, think highly of their Molaviz or Sunni clerics who propagate Islam and its teachings in the Balochi society of Iran. Balochi religiosity, in fact, is the most striking cultural feature that pervades all aspects of their life. In cases of conflicts, for example, between two Baloch families or even between two different Baloch tribes, matters usually will be referred to the religious leaders. It also happens that in some disputes between Baloch and non-Baloch, the non-Baloch approach and request local Sunni clerics to take conciliative measures and settle down the disputes. In this regard, cleric Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi, the religious (Sunni) leader of the Baloch of Iran has settled down a number of such conflicts. Thus, Sunni religious institutions such as the Maki Religious School of Zahedan have become a source of encouragement for many Baloch. This, in turn, has enhanced the power and influence of the Sunni clerics within the Balochi community of Iran. The causes and effects of such strong link between Baloch and their Sunni clerics, however, have been discussed in chapter five and chapter six of this study.

In fact, the geographical setup and the substructure of the Iranian Balochistan has been the dominating factor in the creation of tribal, as well as, religious authority. But, contrary to the Baloch of Pakistan, though the Iranian Balochi social structure unites them under the tribal and religious leadership, it so far
has hindered them from building separatist attitudes or nationalist movements. This clearly indicates the Baloch's true sense of belongingness to Iran.

However, social psychology and political economy of Balochistan has not been understood fully by state authority, that is why, the Baloch have never been completely subjugated by any government at any time in history. When governments fail to capture the imagination and aspirations of Baloch masses and when things become uncontrollable then as a last resort the state officials approach the tribal and religious chiefs and some times the wealthy influential Baloch, to pacify the crisis. In reality, occasional armed conflicts between the rebellious Baloch and the Iranian security forces are the consequences of this lack of understanding.
REFERENCES & NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

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(2) The exact number of the Baloch in the world and those who are or claim to be of Baloch ancestry is difficult to determine, however, different sources such as books, articles, and papers, give different estimations, which are close to what I have mentioned in this study.

(3) Britannica Book of the Year 1998, 772, Balochistan of Iran.

(4) Bani Torof Yousof Azizi, National Inequality in Iran: Arab and Balochi Iranians are the forgotten Nationalities, published on Gooya.com, an Iranian online Bulletin, 2003.


(7) Gulam Reza Jafari (the head of Education Organization of the province of Sistan & Balochistan), Economy of Asia (Eghtesade-e Asia), a monthly international economic news bulletin of Sistan & Balochistan, No. 458 (2004), Degaat Publication, Mashhad, Iran, p. 66. Persian

(8) Iran, Zahedan, Data Bank of Sistan & Balochistan (Bank-e- Itelaat-e Sistan va Balochistan), Administration & Planning Organization of Sistan & Balochistan (Sazman-e-Modiriat va Barnamehrizi Ostan Sistan va Balochistan), winter 2004, p. 267. Persian

(9) Moosa Shahbakhsh (the Vice Chancellor of the Islamic Azad University of Zahedan), Economy of Asia (Eghtesade-e Asia), a monthly international economic news bulletin of Sistan & Balochistan, No. 458 (2004), Degaat Publication, Mashhad, Iran, p. 60. Persian

(10) Ahmad Akbari (the Chancellor of the Sistan & Balochistan University), Economy of Asia (Eghtesade-e Asia), a monthly international economic news bulletin of Sistan & Balochistan, No. 458 (2004), Degaat Publication, Mashhad, Iran, p. 48. Persian


the book, this estimate is based on interviews with the Baloch students enrolled in the University in 1979.

(15) Interview with Dr. Mohammad Reza Taheri (an Iranian Baloch History & Political Science Assistant Professor & the Head of Saravan's Agriculture & Natural Resources Faculty), on 04 July 2007. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri in Saravan, Balochistan, Iran. Balochi

(16) This estimate is based on interviews with a number of Baloch students and professors at the University of Sistan & Balochistan, in 2008. Balochi

(17) Sajadi Seyd Abdol Hussain (Governor of Saravan, 2008), Zahedan Daily Newspaper, (03/08/2008, Year 9, No.1231), p. 2. (Persian); In an interview with Baztab (a periodical magazine of Azad University of Saravan) Dahmardeh (the Vice Chancellor of Zahedan Azad University) had stated that there are 1200 students in Azad university of Saravan out of which 95 percent are local students, Nashrieh-e Daneshjooye Baztab, (No.1, Year 2007-2008 or Day Mah-e 1386), p. 9. (Persian); In a separate interview with Rahmati (Vice Chancellor of Payam-e Noor University of Saravan), he pointed that around 1000 local students are studying currently in this university, (May 2008). Ahmad Reza Taheri took the latter interview. (Balochi)

(18) Most of the emotionally motivated Baloch hold that in the Islamic Republic of Iran there is discrimination between Sunni and Shia. In fact, such discrimination does exist between Sunni and Shia only with reference to highly sensitive political or diplomatic positions such as governorship and ambassadorship. With regard to the middle rank positions (directorship and faculty headship) to the Baloch, there is no discrimination as such. In this respect, Baloch members of Parliament and other positions such as chairmanship and principalship of different affiliated faculties and organizations can be taken as example. Almost since the year 2000 in Saravan, the four universities are headed by the Baloch: Azad University headed by Dr. Noorayee, Payamnoor University headed by Rahmati, Payamnoor University of Souran headed by Mohammadi, and Agriculture & Natural Resources Faculty of Sistan & Balochistan University headed by Dr. Taheri, who all are Sunni Baloch. In Iranshahr, the head of Iranshahr Faculty or Higher Educational Center was Dr. Mahmoudzahi, and the institution is currently (2008) headed by Dr. Azim Shahbakhsh, both are also Sunni Baloch. Similar instances can be taken from other governmental institutions like the head of Maskan-e Shahrsazi Organization (a public construction organization) in Zahedan headed by Hashemzahi, or Edareh Kar Organization of Zahedan (an employment & social affair organization) headed by Ismael Rigi.

(19) Iran, Zahedan, Data Bank of Sistan & Balochistan (Bank-e- Itelaat-e Sistan va Balochistan), Administration & Planning Organization of Sistan & Balochistan (Sazman-e-Modiriat va Barnamehrizi Ostan Sistan va Balochistan), winter 2004, p. 382. Persian

(20) Afrakhteh Hassan, Chabahar’s Role in the Coastal Regions of Southeastern Iran (Nagshe-e Chabahar dar Nahieh-e Saheli Jonoob-e Shargi Iran), Publication: Vagefi, Sherkat-e- Chap-e Mashhad 1996, pp. 75-76. Persian


(25) The website of the Balochistan National Movement Iran, a foreign based political party, zrombesh.org/Balochilanguage.htm


(27) PalTalk is an internet chat service for text, voice, and video chatting. The company is a privately held New York based company founded in 1998. It is run by President and COO., Joel Smernoff. Paltalk claims 4 million users worldwide, making it the largest voice and video chat community on the World Wide Web. It also owns and operates HearMe, a video and voice-enabled web conferencing service that allows users to conduct group meetings.

