



CULTURAL ORIENTATION

BALOCHI



*Baloch children attend school, Malek Abad village, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
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*Passenger train near Kolpur, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / umer malik*

Chapter 1 | Balochi Cultural Orientation

Profile

Introduction

Balochi, a northwestern Iranian language, is the language of the Baloch people, and an estimated 10 million people speak it.¹ Balochistan, as it is referred to by the Baloch people, is a transnational territory spanning southeastern Iran, southwestern Pakistan, and southern Afghanistan. Most Balochi-speaking people live in this vast, arid region the size of France. The Iranian side of Balochistan includes Sistan and Baluchestan Province and western Hormozgan and Kerman provinces. The largest portion of Balochistan, in both area and population, is Pakistan's Balochistan Province. Its northern end lies in Afghanistan, encompassing the southern areas of Nimroz, Helmand, and Kandahar provinces.^{2,3}

Originally a nomadic warrior people, the Baloch are thought to have migrated to Persia from the Caspian Sea area around the sixth century CE.⁴ Today they are seminomadic, and a settled agricultural existence is becoming more common. Baloch practice a moderate form of Islam; their Sunni beliefs have, during times of Islamic extremism, led to their repression. Baloch have also suffered political, cultural, and socioeconomic discrimination by the Pakistani and Iranian governments.⁵ They are famed for camel breeding, carpet weaving, and for being fierce fighters.⁶

In the 19th century, the Baloch often fought with the British colonial armies trying to expand the boundaries of India. Since the British departure from the region in 1947, and after the accession of their homelands to Pakistan, Baloch nationalism and a desire for self-determination has grown into an insurgency.^{7,8}



The 127th Queen Mary's Own Baluch Light Infantry
Wikimedia / Alfred Crowdy Lovett (1862-1919)

The Baloch regions in Pakistan and Iran hold significant mineral and gas reserves, and border 1,450 km (900 mi) of strategic Arabian Sea coastline. The areas are also among the poorest in their respective nations. Baloch maintain that their lands are neglected and exploited.^{9, 10, 11} Poverty among the Baloch has driven a thriving network of cross-border smuggling of weapons and drugs.^{12, 13}

Over the last several decades, Baloch grievances in Pakistan relate to political, economic, and cultural rights, and a desire for more constitutional autonomy. The Pakistani government's repressive response has radicalized most elements of a "nationalist" movement. Baloch tribes have periodically waged guerrilla attacks in Balochistan Province, fighting what they view as incursions from the Pakistan Army and a Punjab-dominated majority. Baloch terrorist organizations have launched attacks on civilian and military targets in Pakistan and Iran. Thousands have died in the struggle.^{14, 15}

Balochistan: A Tri-Nation Area

Balochistan, the tri-nation area of the Balochi-speaking people—not to be confused with Balochistan Province in Pakistan—spans portions of eastern Iran, southwestern Pakistan, and southern Afghanistan. Only in the late 19th century were the present borders between Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan drawn. The Baloch are not a completely homogenous group; the countries in which they live shape their culture. That said, in each of these countries, the Baloch are a minority, and the regions in which they live are the most underdeveloped, with the lowest standards for health and education.^{16, 17}

Sistan and Baluchestan, Iran



Dasht-e Margo Desert, Sistan Basin
Flickr / Jeff Werner CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

While politically and economically a peripheral province in Iran, Sistan and Baluchestan Province is the second-largest province in the country. Its rugged, mountainous terrain extends 180,726 sq km (69,779 sq mi) through the southeastern corner of the country, bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹⁸ The province's population of 2.5 million is predominantly rural.¹⁹ About 20% of the total Balochi-speaking population resides here, and although they form a majority in the province, they have few group rights and are underrepresented in the provincial government.^{20, 21} There are also Baloch populations in the surrounding provinces

and as far north as Golestan Province. While Shia Islam is the predominant religion in Iran, the majority population in Sistan and Baluchistan Province is ethnic Baloch, who practice Sunni Islam.²² According to Iranian law, teaching and promoting the Balochi language or Baloch culture is treasonous.²³

Consistently in drought conditions, Sistan and Baluchestan Province is one of the driest regions in Iran. Political and religious alienation and severe poverty are widespread. The province's porous, 1,094-km (680-mi) border with Pakistan and Afghanistan has become a route for smuggling and drug trafficking.²⁴ Ethnic and sectarian conflict has long plagued the province, which remains militarily important because of its border with Pakistan.^{25, 26}

Balochistan Province, Pakistan



Uplands near Dera Bugti, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Kamalb90 CC BY-SA 3.0

Some 70% of all Balochi-speaking people live in Pakistan, primarily in Balochistan Province.²⁷ Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province. It spans 347,190 sq km (134,050 sq mi) and constitutes 44% of Pakistan's total land mass. It is mainly desert and is Pakistan's most remote and sparsely populated province. The Baloch, who consider Balochistan Province their homeland, make up over 55% of the population.^{28, 29} The economy of the province is largely based on coal, natural gas, and mineral production. Bordered by Afghanistan to the north, Iran to the southwest, and the

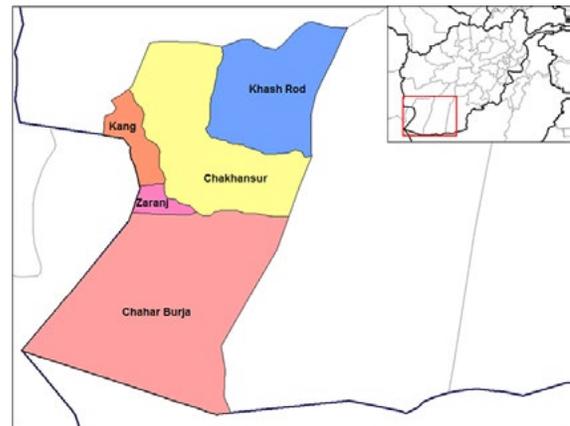
Arabian Sea to the south, the province also serves as a transit area for oil and gas pipeline projects linking Iran and South Asia.³⁰

Infrastructure outside the provincial capital of Quetta is still in development.³¹ There is limited farming in the interior and fishing along the Arabian Sea coastline. Due to the tribal lifestyle of many Baloch, animal husbandry is important as are trading bazaars found throughout the province.³²

The area of Balochistan Province was annexed 9 months after Pakistan formed as a country in 1947.³³ Many Baloch have never accepted being part of Pakistan; some call for secession, and a majority want greater control over the province's natural resources.^{34, 35} Islamic extremists, including the Islamic State, are also active in the region.^{36, 37}

Southern Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, there are around 2 million Baloch, or approximately 10% the Baloch population, spread across the Southern Plateau—129,499 sq km (50,000 sq mi) of high plains and diverse desert terrain, including salt flats and dry, stony expanses. They live primarily in the southernmost districts of the three southernmost provinces: Nimroz, Helmand, and Kandahar. Those living in Nimroz and Helmand provinces speak Balochi. Nimroz Province, which covers 41,000 sq km (15,830 sq mi), is Baloch-dominated and borders the other Baloch-populated regions—Iran's Sistan and Balochistan Province to the west, and Pakistan's Balochistan Province to the south.^{38, 39}



District map, Nimroz Province, Afghanistan
Wikimedia

With a population of 167,600, Nimroz Province is the least populated province in Afghanistan. Most of the inhabitants live in and around Zaranj, the provincial capital. The Baloch are the majority ethnic group in the province, whose inhabitants, except Hazaras, follow Sunni Islam.^{40, 41}

Nimroz Province is a patchwork of barren deserts and plateaus. A substantial part of the province is the desert area of Dasht-e Margo and the adjoining Dasht-e Khash. This area receives little rainfall, but a few rivers make farming possible. In addition to raising sheep, goats, and cattle, farmers grow wheat, corn, melons, and opium poppies. The Taliban, who control nearly half of Afghan territory, oversee opium distribution, and Baloch rebels traffic the narcotics into Iran.^{42, 43, 44}

Geography and Topography

Sistan Basin, Iran and Afghanistan

In the northeastern part of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, straddling the border between Iran and Afghanistan, lies the 2,000-sq-km (800-sq-mi) Sistan Basin. It is a large, remote desert depression

known for its windstorms, extreme floods, and droughts.⁴⁵ The basin contains a series of shallow, semi-connected playas and the large delta of the Helmand River (called the Hirmand in Iran). The Helmand is the most important river in the Balochi-speaking region (and the longest in Afghanistan at 1,400 km/870 mi). It flows roughly southwest through the Afghan provinces of Helmand and Nimroz, where it is generally considered the northern boundary of the Balochi-speaking lands, before turning north and briefly forming the Afghanistan-Iran border. Afghanistan's Farah River joins the Helmand at the Sistan Depression, also discharging into neighboring Iran. The waters of the Helmand and the Farah are critical resources for irrigation in both countries.⁴⁶ International water-sharing disputes are common.⁴⁷



Flamingos, Hamoun Wetlands, southeastern Iran
Wikimedia / Massoud Sheikhouysi

The Helmand, Farah, and other rivers feed the Hamoun Wetlands, three interconnected wetlands known as the Hamoun Lakes. They lie mostly in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, and have been a vital life-support system for the people and wildlife of the Sistan Basin.⁴⁸ Prolonged drought, irrigation, and dam construction have caused the lakes to dry up for long periods, wiping out agricultural activities across the province.⁴⁹ Strong winds, referred to as the “wind of 120 days,” blow across the dry lakebeds in the summer, creating crippling sand and dust storms.^{50, 51}

In 2016, Zabol, Iran (population 134,950) had the highest levels of particulate pollution of any city in the world, according to the World Health Organization.^{52, 53}

Makran Coastal Area, Iran and Pakistan

Balochistan's southern reach is the Makran region, a semi-desert coastal strip extending from southeastern Iran to Pakistan's Balochistan Province, where it is known as Kech Makran. The low, jagged hills of the Makran Coastal Range rise sharply from the coast, followed by several east–west running valleys separated by rugged desert mountain ranges.⁵⁴

The Makran coast stretches 1,000 km (600 mi) along the Arabian Sea, adjacent to the Gulf of Oman, a major shipping channel.⁵⁵ Today, modern ports that link the Persian Gulf with the Indian Ocean are being developed for international shipping. Because of the Arabian Sea's proximity to the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia, deep-water ports along its coast are valuable militarily and economically and have attracted Chinese and other international investors. The two major, and competing, ports along the Makran coast lie only 170 km (106 mi) apart: Pakistan's Gwadar, near the Iranian border, and Iran's Chabahar. Most of the coastal region's sparse population is concentrated in these ports.^{56, 57}

Sections of the Makran coastal region are rich in biodiversity. East of Chabahar Port lie mangrove forests and the delta of the Bahu Kalat River, a protected area supporting diverse migratory and endemic birds and the endangered Iranian mugger crocodile.⁵⁸ Pakistan's largest national park, Hingol National Park, is

located in southeastern Balochistan Province. It covers an area of 1,650 sq km (640 sq mi). Fed by the Hingol River, the park has abundant wildlife and diverse physical features and habitats, including rivers, estuaries, deserts, and mountains.⁵⁹ Just beyond the preserve, the vast mangrove lagoon of Miani Hor extends 363 sq km (140 sq mi).⁶⁰

West of Gwadar Port, Pakistan, lies the fertile Dasht River Valley.⁶¹ The main river, the Dasht, flows southeast through an expansive flat plain and empties into the Arabian Sea. At its northern end, the Mirani Dam provides irrigation water to 33,000 acres of farmland, serves as flood control, and delivers water to the region.⁶²

Central Balochistan Mountains

Balochistan contains numerous parallel mountain ridges that run through the province from northeast to southwest. Of these, the Sulaiman, Central Brahui, and Kirthar ranges separate Balochistan from the fertile Indus River Plain to the east. Bolan Pass, in the Central Brahui Range, provides the main access to the northern city of Quetta, the area's only large city and the capital of Balochistan Province. North of Quetta lies Khojak Pass. Located in the Toba Kakar range at 1,945 m (6,381 ft), the pass is the only official entry point into Afghanistan along its long border with Balochistan Province.^{63, 64}



Waterfalls, Central Brahui Range
Wikimedia / Furqanlw CC BY-SA 4.0

The Central Makran Range, with peaks reaching 3,000 m (9,800 ft), forms the southern end of the Central Balochistan Mountains. They arc from the outskirts of Quetta, in the north, for 1,150 km (715 mi), paralleling the coast to the Strait of Hormuz in the west.^{65, 66}

East Iranian Uplands

The northwestern-most branch of the Makran coastal area veers north into the east Iranian Uplands and the Sarhad Plateau.⁶⁷ Here the arid mountains have an average elevation of 2,400–3,000 m (8,000–10,000 ft) and feature the highest point in southeast Iran, Mount Taftan (Kuh-i-Taftan), an active volcano 4,042 m (13,261 ft) high. Northwest of the uplands lies the vast Lut Desert, which stretches 51,800 sq km (20,000 sq mi) between Iran's Kerman and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces. Surface temperatures here are among the hottest ever recorded (70.7°C/159°F).⁶⁸

Western Balochistan Plateau, Pakistan

This region is extremely arid, particularly in the northwest. The plateau extends westward to Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan and Iran. Vast expanses of featureless semidesert and desert, mountains, high

plains, and basins predominate the scene, with vegetation consisting of shrubs and other desert plant life. The highlands are primarily inhabited by nomadic Baloch and Brahui herdsmen. The tri-border region is notorious for cross-border smuggling of everything from diesel and cement to opium and weapons.^{69, 70}

Butting against the Afghanistan border, the Chagai Hills form the northern boundary of a desert region consisting of inland drainage basins and *hamuns*. The sandy, mountainous Kharan Desert features prominently. The few rivers that exist are short-lived. The largest seasonal lake in the area is Mashkel Lake (Hamun-e Mashkel).⁷¹ Pakistan has carried out its underground nuclear tests in this sparsely populated corner of the country.^{72, 73}

Climate

Except along the coast of the Arabian Sea, which lies outside the monsoon belt of the Indian Ocean and receives 12.5–25 cm (5–10 in.) of rain annually, most of the Baloch homeland has a desert-like climate where temperatures differentials are extreme.^{74, 75} Temperatures in the Sistan Basin of Iran can drop to -12°C (10°F) in winter and reach 50°C (122°F) in summer.⁷⁶ Turbat, in Balochistan Province, recorded a temperature of 53.5°C (128°F) in 2017.⁷⁷ To the north, temperatures in the Southern Plateau of Afghanistan are less extreme. In Nimroz Province, temperatures can fall to 0°C (32 °F) in winter and can reach 43° C (109° F) in summer.^{78, 79}



*Dust storm in the Hamoun Wetlands
Tehran Times Daily Newspaper*

In addition to occasional monsoon rains in Pakistan that can cause dangerous flooding, severe dust storms are common throughout Balochistan in the winter and spring.⁸⁰ The region is also prone to destructive earthquakes.^{81, 82}

Cities

Karachi, Pakistan

The provincial capital of Sindh Province, Karachi is Pakistan's most populous city and primary seaport. After Pakistan's independence in 1947, the city served as the national capital for over a decade until the government moved to Rawalpindi and then to Islamabad.⁸³ Today, Karachi is Pakistan's foremost industrial and financial center, and a military headquarters. It is home to Pakistan's two largest seaports, the Port of Karachi and Port Bin Qasim, and the country's busiest airport, Jinnah International Airport. Karachi is also a focal point of culture and learning in Pakistan. The Sayad Hashmi Reference Library on Baloch history and culture can be found here.^{84, 85}

Today, Karachi is a heterogeneous mix of culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse communities, with the largest concentration of urban Pashtuns and Baloch in the world.^{86, 87} Although the dominant language in Sindh Province is Sindhi, Karachi's population of 15 million people (some sources estimate nearly 20 million) is predominantly Urdu-speaking.⁸⁸



Karachi, capital of Sindh Province
Wikimedia / Son of ATM CC BY-SA 4.0

More than 2.5 million Baloch live in Karachi, with most residing in its poverty-stricken Malir and Lyari districts.^{89, 90} Lyari—referred to locally as “Little Balochistan”—is one of the oldest and most densely populated neighborhoods in Karachi.⁹¹ As a focal point of the Baloch antigovernment resistance, Lyari has long been the site of violence involving criminal gangs, political activists, and state security forces.⁹²

With the influx of different ethnic groups since 1947, Karachi faces economic problems. The population boom has strained the city's resources; its slums, the poorest in Pakistan, house 60% of the city's population.⁹³ Karachi's location in a mostly desert-like region with swamplands to the southeast has made water particularly difficult to supply. Most is piped from the Indus River, but the demand is greater than the supply. Providing other basic city services remains an ongoing problem.⁹⁴

Violence among the city's ethnic groups as well as sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia Muslim groups has plagued Karachi for decades.⁹⁵ In recent years, increased police presence has made Karachi safer, but rates of homicide, kidnapping, gang violence, and terrorist activity remain high.^{96, 97} In 2018, the U.S. Department of State assessed Karachi as a high-threat location for crime directed at or affecting U.S.-government interests.⁹⁸

Quetta, Pakistan



Quetta, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Beluchistan CC BY-SA 2.0

The capital, administrative center, and largest city of Pakistan's Balochistan Province is Quetta. Located at the entrance to the Bolan Pass and the roadway that traverses the 3-hour drive to the Kandahar region of Afghanistan, Quetta is a trading center for Iran, Afghanistan, and cities in Central Asia.^{99, 100} The Command and Staff College, the Pakistan Army's premier professional military education institution, the Balochistan Police Training Academy, and the University of Balochistan are located in Quetta.^{101, 102}

The city's population of 1.7 million consists of a majority of ethnic Pashtuns. But the city's significant minority of Baloch makes Quetta one of the largest urban concentrations of Baloch in the province.¹⁰³ Quetta's Balochi Academy and the Pashto Academy promote the preservation of Baloch traditions.^{104, 105}

Quetta's rise as an administrative and military center came during the 19th century under British colonial control. Today, the city is on the frontline of Pakistan's battle with extremism.^{106, 107, 108} It is simultaneously the home base of the Taliban's senior leadership and the Baloch separatist movement. The ongoing war in Afghanistan has made Quetta a hub for international arms and drug smuggling, of which the Taliban are the main brokers. Waves of Afghan refugees have settled in Quetta.^{109, 110} Since the late 1990s, Shia Hazaras, Christians, and other minorities have been subjected to attacks from the extremist Sunni militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.¹¹¹ Ethnic Baloch militants are also active in the region.^{112, 113}

Zahedan, Iran

The largest city of southeastern Iran and the capital of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Zahedan is home to a large number of ethnic Baloch, whose Sunni Muslim religion sets them apart from Iran's Shia Muslim majority. There is also a strong Afghan presence comprised of refugees who fled the war in neighboring Afghanistan. The city of 588,000 lies in a tri-border region, close to Pakistan's Balochistan Province and Afghanistan's Nimroz Province. Its road and rail linkages make Zahedan a transportation and trading hub for this corner of Iran.¹¹⁴ Zahedan hosts several small- and medium-sized industries producing textiles, processed food, tannery goods, bricks, and woven materials such as mats, rugs, and baskets. The city lies in one of the poorest, least-developed, and most unstable parts of Iran. Narcotics smuggling and opium processing are also part of the local economy.¹¹⁵ Before 1929, the city was known as Dowzdab, and locals may still use the name.¹¹⁶



Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan Province Wikimedia / Masoud Sheikh-Veisi

Unlike most cities in Iran, Zahedan has a majority Sunni population. Iran's largest Sunni mosque, Makki Mosque, and the leading Sunni seminary, Darul Uloom Zahedan, are both here. Sunni terrorist groups, including Jaish ul-Adl (Army of Justice), are active in and around Zahedan.¹¹⁷ As a result, police units accompany trains that travel to the city.^{118, 119}

Turbat, Pakistan

Turbat ("place of the tomb") lies in the Makran region of southern Balochistan Province, Pakistan. With a population of 214,000, it is the second-largest city in the province.¹²⁰ Turbat is situated on the Kech River in the narrow, fertile Kech Valley; the Makran mountains run to the north and east of the valley.¹²¹ Turbat is one of the hottest cities in South Asia, and farming consists of drought- and heat-resistant crops. The city is also

a marketplace for the numerous varieties of dates grown in the region.^{122, 123} A public university, University of Turbat, was established in 2013.¹²⁴

From the 18th to the 20th century, Turbat was the capital of the Baloch-ruled princely State of Makran. The former palace of the *nawab* (a Mughal empire governor) is located here, as well as the Koh-e-Murad shrine. Koh-e-Murad is sacred to the Zikri Muslims, who live in the Makran region, particularly around Turbat. Zikri followers are predominantly Baloch and gather at the shrine annually during Ramadan.^{125, 126} Turbat is a significant place in Baloch folklore and literature. The Baloch poet and playwright, Atta Shad, was born in Turbat.^{127, 128}



Drought-stricken fields near Mirani Dam, Balochistan Province Wikimedia / Yasir Dora CC BY-SA 4.0

Turbat, like most of Balochistan Province, is volatile. The city is considered one of the hubs of Baloch nationalist thought.¹²⁹ The area is poor and underdeveloped, and water is scarce. The nearby Mirani Dam has drawn the ire of locals, many who have been displaced by its construction. Large areas of land have become uncultivable as a result of the dam.¹³⁰ Baloch insurgents have attacked dam workers and other large projects they believe are meant to benefit non-Baloch.^{131, 132} They have also attacked Pakistan Army convoys on the road connecting to Gwadar.^{133, 134}

Gwadar, Pakistan

Gwadar is a deep-water seaport on the Arabian Sea in southwestern Balochistan Province. It has a majority Baloch population. The city is an important fishing and trade center. The area to the north is drained by the Dasht River.^{135, 136} Gwadar is the cornerstone of the \$60-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a massive project to improve Pakistan's infrastructure and give goods from southwestern China access to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. With investment from China and Saudi



Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea, Balochistan Province Wikimedia / Madihasalam CC BY-SA 4.0

Arabia, Gwadar is being built into a major international port and free-trade zone.¹³⁷ The city's population of 91,000 (2017) is expected to surpass 2 million by 2022.^{138, 139} A highway under construction to the northeast, the M-8, will connect the port with the town of Ratodero, facilitating trade among Pakistan's provinces.¹⁴⁰

The impoverished Baloch have wide-ranging grievances against the Pakistani federal government, including harassment by law enforcement, the influx of foreign workers, restrictions on fishing, and a lack of compensation for land taken for development work, such as roads and dams.¹⁴¹ As a result, Gwadar faces chronic insecurity. Attacks by the Baloch terrorist organization, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), targeted

police, coast guard personnel, road construction, infrastructure, local airports, and Chinese investors.^{142, 143} To secure the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the government set up a special security force of 10,000 troops, with the majority of the force deployed around Gwadar.¹⁴⁴

Zaranj, Afghanistan



Border between Zaranj, Afghanistan and Milak, Iran
Wikimedia / U.S. Marine Corps

At the mouth of the Helmand River, near the Afghan-Iranian border, lies the ancient town of Zaranj. This town of 50,000 people is the administrative capital of Nimroz, Afghanistan's westernmost province. Zaranj's proximity to Iran has made it a trading and transit hub. The Baloch people, who form the majority population in Zaranj, and Nimroz Province as a whole, have settled for centuries along the banks of the Helmand River. There are also significant numbers of Pashtuns and Tajiks in the region. Balochi is spoken, as well as Dari and Pashto. Zaranj hosts the only Balochi-language television program in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁵

The area's Baloch are traditionally farmers, raising camels, sheep, goats, and cattle.¹⁴⁶ In recent years, severe droughts have destroyed harvests and killed livestock. The overuse of the Helmand River for opium cultivation has compounded the problem, affecting scores of families.¹⁴⁷

The history of Zaranj dates back 2,500 years. It was once part of the historical region of Sistan, which converted to Islam in the seventh century BCE. During the 9th and 10th centuries, Zaranj was the capital of the short-lived Persian Saffarid Dynasty, which is credited with helping bring a Persian cultural renaissance after centuries of Arab rule.^{148, 149}

Zaranj sits on the Delaram-Zaranj Highway, or A71, which connects north to the rest of Afghanistan and south through the Iranian cities of Zabol and Zahedan.¹⁵⁰ Baloch in the region are known to traffic humans, narcotics, goods, fuel, and weapons across borders; Zaranj has been a hub for ferrying narcotics and Afghan migrants seeking work in Iran. Despite the 15-foot wall the Iranian government built along its border with Nimroz, trafficking continues.¹⁵¹ Simultaneously, the conflict in neighboring Balochistan Province has driven thousands of Pakistani Baloch to Nimroz Province. Many settle in Zaranj, where they work occasional jobs in construction or farming.¹⁵²

Chabahar, Iran

Chabahar is a deep-port city in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province. The majority of the city's population of 107,000 is ethnic Baloch.¹⁵³ The fishing industry is a key part of the city's economy, as is the expansion of port and transportation facilities. Chabahar's strategic location on the Gulf of Oman and its status as a free-trade industrial zone has drawn investment from India (Iran's second-largest crude oil importer) and

encouraged immigration from other parts of Iran to the city.¹⁵⁴ There is a maritime university, and since 2002, an international university.¹⁵⁵

The area around modern Chabahar was settled as early as 2500 BCE as a fishing village and former port, named Tis.¹⁵⁶ Modern Chabahar dates back to 1970, when Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last shah of Iran, established a naval and air base there. The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) brought insecurity to the Strait of Hormuz, which lies to the east of Chabahar. As Iran and Iraq sought to disrupt each other's oil exports, Chabahar gained strategic importance.^{157, 158}

As Iran's best access point to the Indian Ocean, Chabahar is increasingly seen as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar Port.¹⁵⁹ As such, the port complex is being expanded with investment from India, which took over part of the port's operations in 2019.^{160, 161} U.S. sanctions and regional security issues are ongoing concerns for the port's development.^{162, 163} Chabahar is also being developed as part of a new transportation corridor.¹⁶⁴ The 500-km (311-mi) Chabahar-Zahedan railway will connect Chabahar to Central Asia and Afghanistan via Afghanistan's Zaranj-Delaram road.¹⁶⁵



Chabahar Bay, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Wikimedia / Ksardar1359

History

Early History

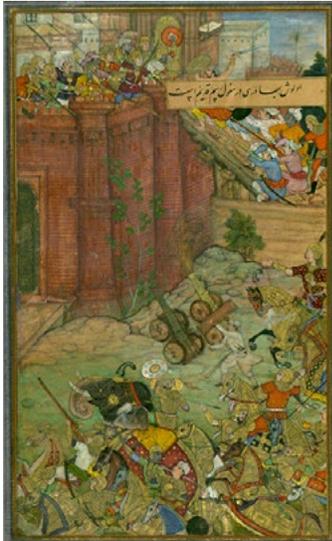
Balochistan's history predates the introduction of Islam in the seventh and early eighth centuries CE, when it was known as Makran (after the name of its coastal region). For centuries, the control of the Baloch homeland was divided between the empires to its east and west, but it was too remote for firm control to be exerted by any dynasty for an extended period. As such, the inland areas were connected at different times with Great Britain, Iran, and India; regions in coastal Makran were historically tied with Oman and the Persian Gulf states.^{166, 167}

Starting in the fourth century CE, the Persian Sassanid Empire ruled and spread the teachings of Zoroastrianism, an ancient monotheistic religion.¹⁶⁸ In the seventh century CE, as the Persians faced the onslaught of the Arabs, Makran passed briefly to the control of the Indian Rai Dynasty of Sindh. The Arabs eventually conquered Makran in 644 CE, and the region converted to Islam.¹⁶⁹

During this time, nomadic Baloch tribes lived southeast of today's Kerman Province, Iran.¹⁷⁰ When they arrived and where they came from, however, is a source of historical debate. Because the Balochi language belongs to the same Iranian group of Indo-European languages as Persian and Kurdish, many historians maintain that the Baloch originated from the area of the Caspian Sea. Over the centuries, they migrated across Iran and then eastward.¹⁷¹ Around 1000 CE, several tribal principalities emerged in what

is today Balochistan Province. Many Baloch settled during this period, farming oases and forming tribal confederations and kingdoms.¹⁷² It is around this time that the term “Balochistan” came into existence.¹⁷³

Creation of the Khanate of Kalat



Mughal Empire battle, late 16th century illustration
Wikimedia / Zahir ud-Din Muhammad Babur (1483-1530)

In the 1500s, the Balochistan region was divided into zones of control between the Safavid Persian Empire to its west and the Indian Mughal Empire to its east. This division roughly reflects the Iran-Pakistan border today. Although the Baloch moved into Punjab and Sindh provinces in today’s Pakistan, the authority of the Mughals stopped them from establishing permanent kingdoms there.¹⁷⁴ In Persia, the Safavids established Shi’ism as the state religion and a new economic and political order that required forced labor. Slave labor in Persia (and the Indian subcontinent) greatly expanded, peaking in the 1800s. Descendants of these east African slaves live in southern Balochistan today.¹⁷⁵

In the 16th century, the Baloch Lashari and Brahui Mirwari tribes strove for dominance in Kalat, the central region of Balochistan.¹⁷⁶ The Brahui prevailed and the various Brahui and Baloch tribes combined into a loosely knit confederation with its capital at Kalat.^{177, 178} In 1666, Mir Ahmad I Khan Qambrani founded the Khanate of Kalat (Kalat), an independent princely state that, on behalf of the Mughals, ruled over the Baloch vassals of Lasbela, Makran, and Kharan states, which make up most of the Pakistani portion of Balochistan today.¹⁷⁹ While the first khans, or rulers, of Kalat were Brahui, the population was dominated by the Baloch and assimilated to a Baloch identity. Balochi became the dominant language in public and politics.¹⁸⁰ Kalat would become what Baloch nationalists today regard as their historic national state.^{181, 182}

The Khanate of Kalat in the 18th Century

The division of Balochistan into western and eastern halves temporarily lapsed during the 18th century when the Safavid and Mughal empires collapsed. In 1747, Pashtun commander Ahmad Shah Durrani established the state of Afghanistan. Durrani expanded the Afghan territory from Mashad to Delhi (modern-day Iran and India, respectively) and the Arabian Sea.¹⁸³ Balochistan reverted to a collection of principalities, some of which then fell under the control of Afghanistan, but most remained independent, including Kalat.¹⁸⁴

Under the leadership of successive khans of the Ahmadzai Dynasty, Kalat became the dominant local power throughout the 18th century.^{185, 186} During the reign of Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan I Ahmadzai (1749–1817), considered the greatest of the khans, Kalat became the nearest it has ever been to an independent Balochistan. Its authority extended beyond the modern boundaries of Balochistan, as far as Karachi.¹⁸⁷

British Dominance in (Eastern) Balochistan



Mir Nasir Khan Baloch II, reigned 1841–1857
Wikimedia / Zaham baloch CC BY-SA 4.0

The British interest in Balochistan began with the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842), which was motivated by the need for safe passage for troops and supplies, potential Russian encroachment, and internal power struggles within Kalat. The British attacked Kalat in 1839 as part of their related invasion of Afghanistan. They installed a friendly ruler who, two years later, was forced to hand over control to a Baloch-supported leader, Mir Nasir Khan II, after a rebellion by nationalists. In 1843, the British annexed Sindh from the Talpur Mirs, a dynasty of Baloch descents, and then Punjab state from India.¹⁸⁸

From 1839 to 1847, the British fought to contain the western Baloch hill tribes, principally the Marri and Bugti tribes, who conducted raids in the surrounding area. The Treaty of 1854 required Kalat to maintain better control over the Marri and Bugti areas that threatened trade routes and neighboring British Indian districts.^{189, 190}

The British subsequently negotiated a series of treaties with Kalat (and the princely states of Kharan, Makran, and Lasbela) that brought most of modern Balochistan Province within the fold of British India. The Treaty of 1876, which eventually came to govern the relationship between the khanate and the British Empire, affirmed the independence of Kalat, leased the strategic Quetta region including the Bolan Pass to the British, and left the khan in control of the rest of his territories (with the aid of a British minister). Britain's Baluchistan Agency, with its center in Quetta, administered the Baloch princely states and directly ruled the northern half of what is now Balochistan Province.¹⁹¹ First Agent Sir Robert Sandamen established contacts with the Baloch tribal chiefs (sardars) and maintained peace in the area. His approach included providing tribal chiefs with subsidies for maintaining order and granting them a degree of autonomy as long as they accepted British directives.^{192, 193} Some scholars claim that the approach increased the power of sardars and undermined the authority of the khanate.^{194, 195}

New International Boundaries

During the early 18th century, the Persians were weakened after decades of war with the Russians and Ottomans. In the early part of the century, the fourth khan of Kalat, Abdullah Khan (1714–1734), had expanded his realm across the Makran area to Bandar Abbas, in Iran. The region was divided among local rulers, including Baloch chiefs, who rebelled against Persian expansion southward.¹⁹⁶

Persian concerns about Russian encroachment in the north led to a period of Anglo-Persian military cooperation. In 1872, Persia and Britain imposed the Goldsmid Line, which partitioned Balochistan into Western Balochistan and (eastern) Balochistan, establishing the modern frontier between Iran and Pakistan. Persia was given the western territory that had been controlled by Kalat.¹⁹⁷ Heavy taxation

by Persian rulers led to widespread revolt by the western Baloch. In 1915, Baloch leader Mir Bahram Khan gained control of Western Balochistan. To cease hostilities and prevent his advancement into (eastern) Balochistan, the British recognized him as the ruler of the area. In 1928, Persian forces captured his successor and reasserted control over the region.^{198, 199}

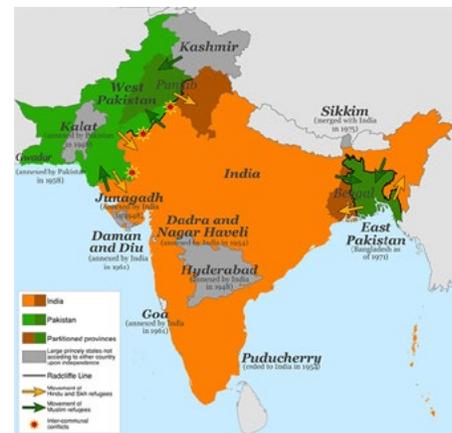
Northern Baloch Areas

In 1893, Britain and the emir of Afghanistan came to an agreement on the demarcations of the border separating Afghanistan from the northwestern extent of British India (modern Pakistan). Because the Durand Line, as it became known, arbitrarily split tribal populations of Baloch and Pashtuns, it became a source of contention between Afghanistan and Pakistan that remains today.²⁰⁰

The Khanate Accedes to West Pakistan

In 1947, India gained independence from Britain, and the subcontinent was divided into two nations. The Partition, as it became known, created the new nation of Pakistan. Its area, which included much of modern-day Pakistan (then West Pakistan) and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), was composed of the Muslim-majority areas of former British India. At this time, there were still over 650 states run by princes that had not decided which country to join.²⁰¹

After Pakistan's Governor General Muhammad Ali Jinnah offered Kalat autonomy, the last khan signed merger documents on 27 March 1948.²⁰² This was followed by the khan's formal removal from power and the abolition of the state's boundaries in 1955. The princely states of Kharan, Makran, and Lasbela also acceded to Pakistan that same year.^{203, 204} In Iran, Sistan and Baluchestan Province became the principal political entity encompassing the Baloch population.^{205, 206}



Map of the 1947 Partition of British India
Wikimedia / CC BY-SA 4.0

Baloch Resistance

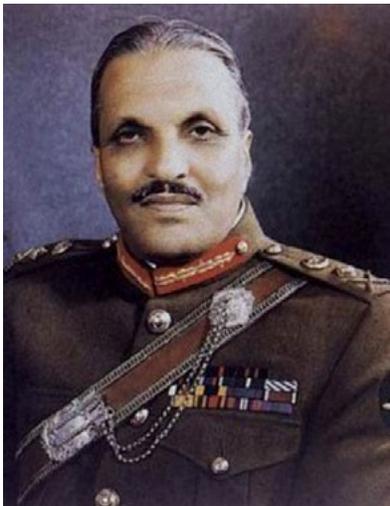
The Baloch rejected the accession of Kalat with Pakistan.²⁰⁷ In 1958, following a period of political turmoil in Pakistan, the security situation became fragile and Baloch rebellions erupted.²⁰⁸ The government declared martial law in Pakistan, and the constitution was suspended. Soon after, Pakistani General Muhammad Ayub Khan overthrew the civilian government, creating the country's first military dictatorship.²⁰⁹ The present shape of Balochistan Province was created in 1958 when the Sultan of Oman sold Gwadar back to Pakistan.²¹⁰

The Baloch separatist movement gained momentum in the 1960s, following the installation of Pakistan Army garrisons in the province and the introduction of a new constitution in 1956 that limited provincial autonomy. Demanding Baloch representation in the government, a share of revenue generated from the Sui gas fields, and the ability to defend their own interests, the eastern hill tribes of Mengal, Marri, and Bugti set up a

network of base camps from which they bombed railway tracks and ambushed convoys from 1963 to 1969. The uprising ended shortly before the area was named Balochistan Province in 1970.^{211, 212}

Baloch and Pashtuns from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, with whom they found common ground in their grievances, formed the National Awami Party (NAP) in 1970. In elections that year, the NAP won 8 of the 20 seats in the Balochistan Legislative Assembly. Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto appointed Baloch politician Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo of the NAP as governor of Balochistan Province in April 1972.²¹³

1973–1977 Conflict



General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq
Flickr / Zoraak Zagr

By 1973, the economic and developmental inequalities between Balochistan Province and the rest of Pakistan were evident. Income, education, and industrial progress remained stunted, and many Baloch felt excluded as Bhutto's regime persisted with centralization of power. Tension between the provincial government of Balochistan Province and the central government took a turn for the worse when Bhutto accused NAP leaders of attempting to sabotage the foundations of the state. In 1973, he dissolved the province's government.²¹⁴ The result was a bloody uprising of insurgents, mostly led by Mengal and Marri tribal leaders. In 1976, Baloch Marri leader Mir Hazar Khan Ramkhani formed the radical Baluch People's Liberation Front, which the Baloch nationalist movement then joined.^{215, 216} Some 12,000 people were killed during the conflict, and hundreds of thousands of Baloch migrated to Afghanistan during the 1970s.^{217, 218}

The Pakistan Army mobilized 80,000 troops but could not eradicate the insurgency. Only after Pakistan's General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq launched a military coup did negotiations with the sardars begin. Eventually, the army withdrew from the province, liberating the Baloch leadership and several thousand activists. Under Zia-ul-Haq, Benazir Bhutto, and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Balochistan Province experienced more or less the same political evolution as the rest of the country and remained peaceful until 2005.^{219, 220}

Meanwhile, in neighboring Iran's Western Balochistan, by now called Sistan and Baluchestan Province, a similar pattern of violence developed in 2004. Jundallah ("Soldiers of God"), a Sunni Baloch rebel group, began to carry out armed assaults against government security forces and other symbols of state authority. The acts were intended to highlight economic and political inequality between the Baloch population and the rest of Iran.^{221, 222}

Musharraf Era (1999–2008)

In a 1999 military coup in Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf took power from Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the elected prime minister. During his 9-year rule, Musharraf consolidated power, suspending Parliament and the constitution, establishing a powerful military panel of experts with far-reaching jurisdiction. He

conducted mass arrests of journalists, lawyers, judges, human rights activists, teachers, and students, and launched a crackdown on Baloch activists. Hundreds, and by some estimates thousands, of Musharraf's political opponents and dissidents were abducted by the military during this time.^{223, 224} As of 2019, hundreds remain unaccounted for.^{225, 226} Musharraf received harsh public criticism for his policies.^{227, 228}

Although separatist tendencies persisted in Balochistan Province in the early 2000s, the groups that actively promoted separatism were a minority. The tension was especially intense in the Bugti area, because of its rich natural gas resources. In 2000, the BLA militant organization, made up of Marri and Bugti tribe members, was formed.²²⁹ At the same time, the Oxford-educated former governor and chief minister of Balochistan Province, Nawab Akbar Bugti, sought more autonomy within the federal constitutional framework and for the government to respect the socioeconomic rights of the Baloch. A charismatic figure in the Baloch independence movement, Nawab Akbar Bugti worked to unite the Baloch. Musharraf's repressive response radicalized most elements of the nationalist movement and relations worsened.²³⁰

In 2005, Pakistani government troops launched a military offensive against the BLA and Baloch nationalists, focusing on the Marri and Bugti tribal regions of Balochistan Province.²³¹ As the fighting intensified, Baloch fled to Sindh and Punjab provinces.²³² A year later, Nawab Akbar Bugti was killed in a military operation, and riots erupted across the province. Nawab Akbar Bugti became a symbol of Baloch independence and a hero among the Baloch.^{233, 234} As a result of the events in Gwadar, the U.S. Department of State designated the BLA a foreign terrorist organization in 2019.²³⁵

Recent History

Though most Baloch want to remain part of Pakistan, some continue to resent the presence of Pakistani armed forces and the exploitation of the province's natural resources by the government. The latest insurgent movement, which began in 2004, continues today; several armed pro-independence groups operate in Balochistan Province. In 2019, the largest groups—BLA, Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), and Baloch Republic Army—merged under the banner of the Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar to launch coordinated operations.²³⁶ These groups use improvised explosive devices, mortar strikes, and small arms attacks;



*Jam Kamal Khan, chief minister of Balochistan Province
2018–present Wikimedia / Mirza*

their targets are often Pakistani government organizations, the army, and Punjabi (the largest and most influential ethnic group) and foreign workers in Balochistan.^{237, 238, 239} Also active in the region are the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISK) and Jaish al-Adl, an extremist Sunni militant group operating out of Balochistan Province. Formerly known as Jundallah, Jaish al-Adl targets Iranian soldiers and security personnel in and around Zahedan.²⁴⁰ In 2019, ISK announced it had established a “province”—Wilayah Pakistan—in northern Balochistan.²⁴¹

Forced disappearances and raids against separatists have continued over recent years, with nationalist militias responding in kind.²⁴² Human rights advocates describe a government campaign of assassinating suspected Baloch nationalists and other opposition figures; mass graves of Baloch missing persons who



Imran Khan, 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan Flickr / Chatham House

were arrested and subsequently killed without trial were discovered in 2014. There have been accusations of human rights violations by the security forces. Over the past two decades, thousands of Baloch have fled the violence in Balochistan Province to Nimroz Province in Afghanistan.²⁴³

In the meantime, Prime Minister Imran Khan, elected in 2018, has stressed the importance of a system to support the oppressed in Balochistan Province. The Baloch remain underrepresented in local government and more than 70% of Baloch live below the poverty line.²⁴⁴ The prime minister's plan includes promoting education and developing job skills among the Baloch, ensuring job quotas, and introducing a new local government system.^{245, 246}

Media

Media outlets in the Balochi language are limited. In Pakistan, the primary Balochi-language television channel is government-operated PTV Bolan; PTV National also has some Balochi programming. Both broadcast from Quetta.²⁴⁷ One Balochi-language daily newspaper, *Nawa-e-Watan*, and a monthly publication, *Gidrosia*, are published in Quetta, and their readership is limited.^{248, 249} Radio programs in Balochi broadcast out of Quetta and Lahore, and All India Radio hosts Balochi-language broadcasts that are available through the internet.²⁵⁰ Mobile and internet services are not available in all parts of Balochistan Province due to the region's rugged terrain, sparse population, and lack of electricity.²⁵¹ Additionally, the Pakistani government controls all mobile and internet access and will suspend service anywhere in the country for "security concerns."²⁵² In late 2018, service in four Balochistan Province districts was still suspended.²⁵³ News networks have been threatened with closure by the government; journalists have been threatened with harm by the Taliban and ISK for coverage the groups find unfavorable.²⁵⁴

In Iran, the state has complete control of news and information.²⁵⁵ Balochi-language publications are not readily available and mostly imported from Pakistan. Requests to register Balochi-language publications have been rejected by the Iranian government or have been granted on the condition that most pages are published in Persian. Those newspapers have since been banned. Some Balochi-language programming is broadcast on the state radio station, but nothing in Balochi is shown on the state-run television channel.^{256, 257}

Afghanistan's state-run television channel, RTA, broadcasts 30 minutes of Balochi programming daily in regions with significant numbers of Balochi speakers. As of 2015, Zaranj hosts the only Balochi television program in Afghanistan from 5–6 pm.²⁵⁸

In 2018, Reporters without Borders, the Paris-based nongovernmental organization, ranked all three countries at or near the bottom of the World Press Freedom Index, with Iran receiving the lowest score of the three, 164 (out of 180).²⁵⁹ The Iranian government keeps a tight grip on media outlets and independent journalists, using intimidation, arrest, and long jail sentences. In Pakistan, the media are targeted by militant groups, such as the BLF, Islamist organizations, and government intelligence agencies.^{260, 261} The BLF claims newspapers did not give coverage to Baloch disappearances and were an extension of “anti-Baloch” government policies.^{262, 263, 264}

Economy



*Poppy fields, Zaranj-Delaram Highway, Nimroz Province
Wikimedia / United States Marine Corps*

Although Balochistan is generally dry, agriculture is by far the most important segment of the local economy.²⁶⁵ In Afghanistan, most people in rural areas support themselves and their families as farmers and livestock herders. In Nimroz, Helmand, and Kandahar provinces, the main crops are wheat, corn, barley, beans, melons, fruits, vegetables, and opium poppies (the latter especially in Helmand Province).^{266, 267} During the summer, cotton is a key crop.^{268, 269} Historically, the primary farming obstacle has been water, which is more plentiful in the spring. Irrigation is essential in these areas.²⁷⁰ Drought conditions during much of the 2000s reduced surface water; increased use of groundwater led to depletion of some water tables. The drought also adversely affected livestock.²⁷¹

Within Balochistan Province, Pakistan, 60% of the population works in the agricultural sector and accounts for two-thirds of its economic output. Extended drought has put the industry at risk, and poverty rates are double the national average.^{272, 273} Limited mining of copper, barite, chromite, lead, and zinc occurs in the province, and natural gas production is part of the local economy.^{274, 275} The modern port at Gwadar, built with Chinese aid, has failed to generate substantial shipping business because of its remote location. Development proposals to make Gwadar more viable, such as pipelines and Saudi-funded refineries, are generally opposed by Baloch nationalists because they fear being marginalized if Gwadar becomes a foreign shipping magnate.^{276, 277} By 2022, a Chinese-funded International Port City will house an additional 500,000 Chinese professionals. It is estimated that Chinese workers will outnumber Baloch in the province by 2048. Chinese investment is also significant throughout the rest of gas- and mineral-rich Balochistan Province. The province’s reserves of natural gas in Dera Bugti are among the largest in the world. The gas is piped to nearly all major cities in Pakistan for use as industrial power.^{278, 279, 280}

Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran, contains significant mineral and gas reserves, but aside from a copper mine, they have not been exploited. The province is generally viewed as the poorest in Iran, where unemployment is five times the national average and little investment has occurred in the last two

decades. Drug smuggling has long been a significant component of the provincial economy because of its proximity to the poppy fields in Afghanistan.²⁸¹

The Baloch People



Nawab Aali Bugti, grandson of Nawab Akbar Bugti
Wikimedia / NATIONALIST12 CC BY SA 4.0

Throughout the Baloch-inhabited areas today, there are approximately 130 tribes, with the Bugti and the Marri being the principal ones.²⁸² The Baloch (also Baluch) live mainly in Balochistan Province—where they constitute Pakistan’s fifth-largest tribal group—southeastern Iran, and southern Afghanistan. Many Baloch possess passports of all three countries, making it easy for them to cross borders. Smaller Baloch communities exist in southern Turkmenistan and in the Arabian Peninsula.^{283, 284}

Baloch ethnicity is defined more by language than race.²⁸⁵ The Baloch population today is estimated at 9 million. Another approximately two million are Baloch in culture but have adopted the language of their neighbors.^{286, 287} Baloch are predominantly Sunni Muslim, though they identify more with their tribal code, Balochmayar, than with Islam. Women are strictly secluded in Baloch society.²⁸⁸

Baloch typically live among other ethnic groups, such as Pashtuns, Persians, and Sindhis. Some Baloch have assimilated into local populations, adopting the customs and language of the area.^{289, 290} In most cases however, Baloch have preserved their identity, while their neighbors have learned to speak Balochi and have borrowed certain elements of Baloch culture.²⁹¹

The Balochi Language

The Balochi (or Baluchi) language is spoken primarily in Balochistan and in smaller communities in Turkmenistan, and the Arabian Peninsula. There are many different dialects of the Balochi language. The regions in which the Baloch live, and their contact with surrounding languages (Persian, Pashto, Urdu, Punjabi, and Sindhi), results in heavy borrowing from these languages.^{292, 293} Early in its history, the Balochi language was influenced by Indo-Aryan languages (the language family of the Indian subcontinent). Because of the Baloch early history of contact with Indo-Aryan languages (the language family of the Indian subcontinent), all Balochi dialects show signs of Indo-Aryan sounds and vocabulary.²⁹⁴

There are three primary dialects: Western (Rakhshani), which is influenced by Persian Farsi; Southern (Makrani), influenced by Arabic; and Eastern (Hill, or Suleimani), influenced by Sindhi and Pashto.²⁹⁵ None are unified dialects. Rather, they are conglomerates of dialects often referred to by the Baloch tribal names of the speakers, such as Marri, Bugti, Leghari, and Mazari.^{296, 297}

The Western dialect is the basis for written Balochi because it is the main dialect in all three countries.²⁹⁸ In Pashtun areas of Afghanistan, many Baloch speak Pashto, and the distinction between Baloch and Pashtun rests primarily on political allegiance to Baloch khans rather than language or descent.²⁹⁹ While there is borrowing from Persian Farsi in the Western dialect, the two languages are not mutually intelligible.^{300, 301, 302}

Southern Balochi dialect is spoken along the coasts of the Gulf of Oman in both southern Iran and Pakistan, including Karachi, as well as the Persian Gulf states.^{303, 304} Eastern Balochi is restricted to the regions east of Quetta and to the Central Brahui Mountains in Pakistan's Balochistan and Sindh provinces. With its heavy borrowings from Indic languages, the Eastern dialect is not easily comprehensible to speakers of other Balochi dialects.^{305, 306}

Balochi in Use

Balochi has a short history as a written language.³⁰⁷ The first Balochi writing (using a Latin alphabet devised by the British) appeared in the 19th century. After Pakistan gained independence in 1947, Baloch scholars adopted the Perso-Arabic script.³⁰⁸ Today it is most commonly written using a modified Urdu script, though written Balochi has not been standardized.³⁰⁹

In 1978, Balochi was made a national language in Afghanistan. It is taught in some schools in Nimroz Province, and there is a Balochi Department at the University of Kandahar. The language has no official status in the other countries in which it is spoken, nor is it used in the educational systems. Many Baloch parents want their children to learn Urdu, Persian, or English. Thus, Balochi remains the spoken language of the home and local community, and only 1% of those who speak Balochi can read or write it.³¹⁰



Main entrance to the University of Balochistan, Quetta
Wikimedia / Najamuddin Shahwani

Pakistani initiatives have been designed to raise the status of Balochi to a national level. In Quetta, a Balochi Academy and a Balochi Studies department at Balochistan University were established in 1961 and 1997, respectively. Under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Balochi was taught briefly in state primary schools in Pakistan in the early 1990s.³¹¹

Ethnic Neighbors

Brahui

The Brahui are a tribal people numbering about 1.5 million. The majority of Brahui live in Balochistan Province, in an area from the Bolan Pass through the Brahui Hills to Ras Muari (Cape Monze) on the Arabian Sea. Here, they are primarily nomadic goat herders. There are also small minorities of partly settled Brahui in

Afghanistan, along the Helmand River, and seminomadic Brahui in Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Like the Baloch, the Brahui are Sunni Muslims. Because they are descended from Dravidian tribes that once spanned across India 2,000 to 3,000 years ago, their basic social customs are Indian. Women are not strictly secluded, in contrast to Baloch customs.³¹²

Many Brahui speak the Dravidian Brahui language (Dravidian is a family of languages spoken in southern India and Sri Lanka), which is influenced by the Dravidian grammatical structure, but most vocabulary is borrowed heavily from Sindhi.^{313, 314} Other Brahui are bilingual in Balochi and Brahui, while others speak only of Balochi. Having lived among the Baloch for centuries, Brahui are, in many cases, indistinguishable from their Baloch neighbors.^{315, 316}



Brahui speakers meet at University of Balochistan, Quetta
Wikimedia

The 29 tribes of the Brahui owe a loose allegiance to the Brahui khan of Kalat. At times, the Baloch have served as khans of Kalat.³¹⁷ Brahui tribes are a loosely knit grouping of families bound by mutual interests relating to such matters as grazing rights, cattle ownership, and blood ties. The position of the tribal chief, or sardar, is usually hereditary. Brahui tribes rarely fight one another, in contrast to the Baloch and the Pashtuns.³¹⁸

Pashtuns

Pashtuns (also Pakhtuns) are indigenous tribal people who live in the mountainous regions of northwestern Pakistan and the neighboring regions of Afghanistan. They are the second-largest ethnic group in Pakistan, or 25% of the population, and nearly half the population in Afghanistan. Pashtuns are generally livestock herders, farmers, and traders.^{319, 320} Living in close proximity for generations, Baloch and Pashtuns share many cultural similarities—tribal organization, clothing, and a similar code of honor. As such, the two groups coexist peacefully. Pashtuns speak Pashto, which belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European linguistic group. It is a dominant language in the eastern and southern regions of Afghanistan, as well as in northwestern Pakistan. A smaller number of Pashtuns living in Baloch regions are also fluent in Balochi.^{321, 322}

Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims whose social structure is based on the Pashtunwali code—a mix of an unwritten tribal code of honor and local interpretations of Islamic Law.³²³ This system of rules emphasizes community consensus and local decision-making. Additionally, each man is obligated to defend the honor of the family and tribe, seeking revenge if necessary. Pashtunwali requires Pashtuns to provide shelter to anyone needing refuge, even an enemy, and compels individuals to submit disputes to specially convened groups of tribal leaders and then abide by their decision. Most Pakistani Taliban fighters are ethnic Pashtuns, though not all Pashtuns are Taliban.³²⁴

Sindhis

Sindhis originate from the southern Pakistan province of Sindh, which has a culture that dates to the 7,000-year-old Indus Valley civilization. Sindh culture is influenced by Sufi folkloric traditions. In Sindh Province, women and folk singers play an important role in spreading folklore. Sindhis speak Sindhi, an Indo-Aryan language of the historical Sindh region in northern India. It is the official language of Sindh Province, and is also spoken in central and southeastern Balochistan Province.^{325, 326}

Historically, large landholders occupied the Sindh region, and most people were tenant farmers who worked for the landlords. This disparity between extreme wealth and poverty persisted through much of the 20th century. After Partition, the rural Sindhi population faced tough competition as Muhajir (native Urdu speakers) poured into the Sindh Province cities of Karachi and Hyderabad and began to achieve economic and political dominance. Today, most Sindhis farm wheat, rice, cotton, and various fruits, or raise sheep, goats, and camels. Those living in cities often work as merchants, physicians, and teachers.^{327, 328}



Sindhi man, Sindh Province
Wikimedia / DFID - UK Department for International Development

Sindhis often feel marginalized because Muhajirs and Punjabis hold many higher-level jobs, such as those in commerce, military, and the civil services. Muhajirs live and work primarily in urban areas of the province, while the indigenous Sindhis live in rural areas and have less access to education and training in business or professional fields. Thus, their wealth is comparatively small and they are proportionately underrepresented in public positions. After Pakistan's capital city was moved to Islamabad (Punjab Province) from Karachi (Sindh Province), tensions increased as power shifted.³²⁹ Sindhis and Baloch, who have coexisted for centuries, share a sense of disenfranchisement by the Pakistani government, specifically about its lack of support for their native languages in schools, employment opportunities, and self-determination.^{330, 331, 332}

Sistani Persians

The majority of Iranians are of Persian ethnicity. Persians are part of the Iranian peoples who speak Persian Farsi, an Indo-European language that is the official language of Iran.³³³ Persians are descendants of the Aryan (Indo-Iranian) tribes that began migrating from Central Asia into what is now Iran in the second millennium BCE. The Persian language emerged as these Aryan tribes split into two major groups, the Persians and the Medes, and intermarried with peoples indigenous to the Iranian Plateau.³³⁴

Sistani Persians are mainly agrarian. They inhabit northern Sistan and Baluchestan Province, where they are the minority after Baloch, except in Zabol city on the Afghan border, where

they are the majority. Sistani Persians speak a variant of the Persian Farsi language known as Zaboli, or Sistani, which is similar to Dari (Afghan Persian). Sistani Persians, like most Iranians, are predominantly Shia Muslims and, as a result, hold most provincial positions in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.³³⁵

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Chapter 1 | Assessment

1. Balochi is a Dravidian language with most of its vocabulary borrowed from Sindhi.
2. Most Balochi-speaking people live in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran.
3. The Khanate of Kalat was a Baloch princely state that made up most of today's Balochistan Province.
4. The Makran coastal region is valuable economically for its rich mineral resources.
5. The climate of the greater Balochistan region varies from subtropical in the south, to temperate and cool in the north.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



*Men offer daily prayers, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Mehr News / Sadeqh Souri*

Chapter 2 | Balochi Cultural Orientation

Religion

Introduction

The Baloch are predominantly Sunni Muslim. Baloch Sunnis follow the Hanafi school of Islam. The most liberal of Islam's four recognized Sunni schools of thought, Hanafi adherents use reasoning based on analogies to reach legal decisions. The Hanafi school follows its founder's reluctance to impose restrictions on the personal liberties of its followers and is tolerant of differences within Muslim communities. In fact, tribal ties are significantly more important than religious beliefs.^{336, 337} For the Baloch, religion is separate from politics and governance.³³⁸

Baloch are liberal in their religious outlook. A single tribe may be divided into two or more religious groups with somewhat different practices, but this has never strained relations.³³⁹ The Hanafi are seldom centralized, which makes it difficult for them to be incorporated into Islamic states such as Iran or Pakistan.^{340, 341}

Islam

The Arabic term “islam” means “to submit” or “surrender.” Islam, like Judaism and Christianity before it, is a monotheistic religion and recognizes the validity of the Old and New Testaments. But Muslims believe the final and culminating revelations were made to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 CE. They consider Muhammad the last in a long line of prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The Quran, the sacred Muslim text, is considered the record of God’s revelations to Muhammad. The Muslim community, or *umma*, worship Allah directly, without the intermediary of clergy.^{342, 343}

Islam has two main branches: Sunni and Shia. The origins of the Sunni-Shia split lie in conflicting views of how the successor to the Prophet Muhammad was to be chosen. Upon the Prophet’s death, Sunnis felt that the community should choose the next leader. Shia, by contrast, believed that leadership should remain within the family and that Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin, was the rightful successor. The Sunnis prevailed and chose the first caliph (successor) based on his merit. While Ali eventually became the fourth caliph, his succession followed violence between the disputants.³⁴⁴ Those who believe that Ali should have been the immediate successor are called Shia, short for Shi’a-t-Ali (party of Ali). This difference in beliefs continues to divide the two schools of Islam and remains a source of theological tension.³⁴⁵



Ali and his sons, Qajar Dynasty, 19th century depiction Wikimedia

Sunni Subsects in South Asia

The Sunni Muslims of South Asia are divided into two major subsects, the Barelvi and Deobandi, named after their towns of origin in India in the 19th century. Barelvis are steeped in a shrine-based Sufi tradition. Deobandism, an orthodox subsect within Sunni Islam, has served as an inspiration for the Taliban.³⁴⁶ In Pakistan, the Deobandi represent a minority of Sunni Muslims, whereas the Barelvi dominate the religious landscape. Because of religious differences, these two subsects are deeply divided. Both have been connected with Pakistani terrorist organizations in recent years and have taken up arms against each other and other religious groups.³⁴⁷ While the majority of Baloch in the Balochistan region are Deobandi, they are generally more secular in their approach to religion, and ethnic concerns are more important for Baloch.^{348, 349}

The Five Pillars of Islam



Haji pilgrims, Mecca, Saudi Arabia
Wikimedia / Adli Wahid CC BY SA 4.0

Muslims believe in a day of judgment when Allah will determine whether an individual will spend their afterlife in heaven or hell.³⁵²

Regardless of sect, Muslims follow the five Pillars of Islam, which capture the essential beliefs and rites of the Muslim faith. The first and foundational pillar is the shahada, the declaration of faith that “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”³⁵⁰ The salat is the requirement to pray five times a day. Sawm is the required fast during the month of Ramadan. Zakat is the expectation that Muslims should be generous by giving money or other assets to the needy. The fifth pillar is the hajj, which requires all able Muslims to make the pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca at least once in their lives.³⁵¹

Zikrism

Zikrism is a Muslim sect that follows traditions similar to the Hanafi school, but is more aligned with Sufism; its adherents are predominantly Baloch. For this reason, scholars have described Zikrism as a uniquely Baloch religion, and many Baloch intellectuals depict it as the national religion of the Baloch and a Zikri (locally pronounced *zigri*) as the typical Baloch. Population estimates for the Zikri Muslim community range between 500,000 and 800,000.³⁵³ The Zikri live in southwestern Balochistan Province, particularly around Turbat.^{354, 355}

Zikri are followers of Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, an Indian Sufi who founded the movement in the 15th century CE. Jaunpuri claimed to be a Mahdi—a messiah-like reformer of Islam.³⁵⁶ His followers in India are known as the Mahdavis. Though his tomb is in Farah (Afghanistan), Turbat (Pakistan) is the center of Baloch Zikri faith and religious activities in Pakistan, as the Mahdi is said to have prayed and meditated there.³⁵⁷

While the Zikri consider themselves Muslims, orthodox Sunni religious leaders consider the religion heretical and have called for the Zikri to be declared non-Muslims. Some Zikri religious ceremonies are different from those practiced in orthodox Islam.^{358, 359} The Zikri hide their identities in cities such as Quetta for fear of violence.³⁶⁰ The group maintains that their traditions have been misrepresented in order to claim they deviate from Islam.³⁶¹ For example, Zikri make an annual pilgrimage (ziyarat) to the Koh-e-Murad shrine near Turbat and deny that it replaces the hajj to Mecca.^{362, 363} The Quran is the basis for Zikrism, and its followers use and treat it like other Muslims. When children come of age between ages 7 and 12, they vow to the Quran and to Allah to live as a Muslim following the rules of the Quran. This is referred to as the *tawba* (oath), and it is one of the most important rituals for the Zikri.³⁶⁴

The Zikri have, at times, faced violence from others.³⁶⁵ In the 18th century, nearly all of the sect’s religious and historical records were destroyed by the forces of the Khanate of Kalat. During General Zia ul Haq’s

administration in the 1980s, the Zikri, like other religious minorities at the time, faced persecution.^{366, 367} Today, societal discrimination and harassment are more common. In recent years, the Zikri have come under attack from Islamic fundamentalists.³⁶⁸

Role of Religion in Government

The sociopolitical realities of the Baloch depend on the country in which they live. Baloch do not believe in a religious state, preferring to maintain a distinct separation between religion and the practice of politics and government.

Pakistan

Traditionally, Sunni Muslims have governed Pakistan, although in recent years Shia Muslims from Sindh Province have risen to power. The government has started to institute measures to combat religious intolerance and violence within the country, especially toward religious minorities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs established 11 August as Minorities' Solidarity Day and set up hotlines to collect data on violence against religious minorities.³⁶⁹ Each of Pakistan's districts also operates a District Interfaith Harmony Committee that strives to resolve religious conflict. Pakistan now reserves seats for minority leaders in its Parliament.^{370, 371}

Regardless of recent changes to promote religious tolerance, sectarian violence dominates Pakistan's cultural landscape. Shia, Zikri, and other religious minorities have been targeted for attacks.^{372, 373}

Iran

In the Shia Muslim state of Iran, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews are recognized as religious minorities.³⁷⁴ Despite this, many members of religious minorities have faced persecution, intimidation, and harassment for their beliefs; they are commonly asked to supply the government with the names of their churches' members. Conversion to Christianity is punishable by death.³⁷⁵ Sunni Baloch suffer religious discrimination and claim they have no real voice in Iranian politics and that they are barred from true representation because of religious differences.³⁷⁶

Sharia law, as exercised in Iran, restricts any religious behavior, including the practice of Sunni Islam, that may insult or undermine Shia Islam. At the government level, there are no seats in Iran's Majles (parliament) reserved for Sunni Muslims. A Sunni may be voted into Majles, but this happens rarely. Sunnis are prohibited from gaining upper-echelon government positions and forbidden from being president. Regional governing officials are exclusively Shia, even in Sunni-majority districts. Within Sunni-majority districts, public schools do not allow Sunni religious materials or teachings.^{377, 378, 379}



Mosque minaret, Tis village, Chabahar
Wikimedia / Nikat CC BY-SA 3.0

The Iranian government enacted a law aimed at avoiding religious conflicts. The law bans the construction of Sunni places of worship in urban areas predominantly populated by Shia and vice versa. As a result, Sunnis in cities like Tehran, the capital of Iran, which are almost exclusively Shia, cannot attend an official Sunni mosque. Sunni internet portals refer to nine Sunni mosques in Tehran. All of them are in back courtyards with no signs or indication that they are mosques.³⁸⁰

Afghanistan

The Afghan constitution states that Islam is the religion of the state and it provides equal recognition of Sunni and Shia Islam, though Sunni Muslims make up 80% of the population. Hanafi jurisprudence forms the default method of resolving legal issues that are not covered in the constitution. The constitutional framework of the country provides for an Ulema Council made up of Muslim scholars who advise the president on moral, ethical, and legal issues.³⁸¹ The Ministry of Hajj and Islamic Affairs governs the religious lives of the people. It also provides government subsidies to help citizens adhere to the five pillars of Islam, most specifically for Muslims from both sects to perform the hajj to Mecca.^{382, 383}



Hajj pilgrims, Afghan Ministry of Hajj program, Kandahar Province Wikimedia / defenseimagery.mil

The Ministry of Education provides Islamic education to young people and oversees Islamic religious schools to ensure they follow a moderate curriculum and do not receive funding from extremist sources. Although formal discrimination against the Shia does not exist, informal discrimination still occurs, leaving Sunni-Shia relations tense.³⁸⁴

Influence of Religion on Daily Life

In most Muslim countries, Friday is the one-day weekend and holiday. Muslim males are expected to participate in the Friday group prayer and listen to special sermons from mullahs (male religious leaders or teachers). Foreigners should not interrupt the sacred Friday midday prayer, and they should, if possible, avoid entering mosques altogether during this time. In most Muslim countries, stores, businesses, and government offices close on Fridays. In 2015, at the urging of businesses, Pakistan moved to make Friday a half working day and Sunday a full day off. Pakistanis still observe *jumma* (Friday prayer), and then may go back to work for another hour.^{385, 386}

The Baloch, regardless of the region they occupy, have traditionally relied less on religion in their daily lives than some of their neighbors. Previously nomadic and wholly tribal, their loyalties lie with their tribes and tribal leaders. Fundamentalist Muslims have criticized the Baloch approach to Islam as lukewarm, a kind of “folk Islam.”³⁸⁷

Despite criticisms from other Muslims, Baloch see themselves as devout. They believe that Allah governs all aspects of their lives, and they take great pains to follow the five pillars of Islam. They maintain madrassas (schools) to educate their children in the tenets of Islam, and religious leaders help tribal leaders make informed decisions about tribal life.^{388, 389} In Iran, the Baloch minority has struggled for many years to achieve recognition within Iran's sociopolitical environment.³⁹⁰

Prayer

Islam heavily influences a person's daily routine in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Foremost among daily rituals, Muslims are required to perform a series of prayers, known as *salat* (the second pillar of Islam). Traditionally, these prayers (*salah*) are performed at five approximate times of the day: before dawn, midmorning, midafternoon, at sundown, and after sundown. Muslims are called to prayer at each *salah* time by the muezzin, who typically announces the call to prayer from the minaret of the local mosque. Islamic prayer rugs or mats are used to ensure that the area used for prayer is clean. Whether the hands are folded while standing during prayer or kept at the sides generally identifies the worshipper as either Sunni or Shia, respectively.³⁹¹

Daily prayers may be performed alone or with other Muslims at mosques. All prayers must be offered in the direction of Mecca.³⁹² Traditionally, Zikri men and women always covered their heads, and men wore their beards long. Today, young men are often clean-shaven and cover their heads only for prayer.^{393, 394}

The Zikri voice many of their zikrs (prayers), including the *kalima* (Declaration of Faith), in a loud voice.^{395, 396} There are five zikrs (the equivalent of *salahs*) performed at specific times of the day. In Balochi they are *gwarbamay* (dawn), *nemrocay* (midday), *roczarday* (sunset), *sarsapay* (early night), and *nemhangamay* (midnight). Three of these are performed as chants in groups, while the other two are performed silently by males only. Zikri men form a circle and sing religious songs (considered prayers) accompanied by slow step movements.^{397, 398}

Cleansing

Prior to prayer, Muslims are required to perform *wudu* (a ritual cleansing, or ablution). This purification process typically involves washing one's hands, face, arms, neck, and feet, as well as rinsing out the mouth and nose. Cleansing is not solely intended for purposes of physical cleanliness—although this, too, is important. Rather, the rite is meant to spiritually and mentally prepare the participant to perform a holy action in a pure and concentrated state. When water is unavailable, Muslims may perform ablution with clean, dry sand.³⁹⁹



Ritual cleansing (*wudu*), Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Nima.Today

A Muslim can break this state of ritual purity through several acts: defecating or urinating, breaking wind, or, for many Muslims, touching a person of the opposite sex. The necessity of performing multiple daily prayers encourages Muslims to maintain ritual purity throughout the day. Mosques often have facilities where Muslims can cleanse prior to prayer.⁴⁰⁰

Religious Events and Holidays

Ramadan

Although the Baloch do not adhere to the rules of Islam as stringently as Muslims from other cultures, they do celebrate the major religious events when they are able. Ramadan (or Ramazan) is the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic calendar. During this time, observant Muslims fulfill the third pillar of Islam—fasting, when, Muslims demonstrate their piety and devotion to the Islamic faith. Tradition requires that adults abstain from eating, drinking, and smoking during daylight hours for 30 days. Restrictions also apply to sexual intercourse. Only the young, sick, elderly, and pregnant or nursing women are exempt from fasting. Non-Muslims should avoid eating and drinking in public during fasting hours of the day; such activities are considered disrespectful and rude. A common greeting during the first few days of Ramadan is “Ramadan mubarak” (Have a blessed Ramadan). Like all Islamic holidays, the dates for Ramadan are based on the lunar calendar and are therefore approximate.⁴⁰¹



Typical dishes served at the iftar meal, Karachi
Wikimedia / Miansari66

In addition to fasting, many people perform extra prayers during Ramadan, and take care to avoid any wrongdoing. During this time of piety, Muslims also make charitable contributions to the homeless or to an established organization like a mosque or the Red Crescent Society (similar to the Red Cross).⁴⁰²

Ramadan alters the usual rhythm of life. People are released from work early during Ramadan. Preparations for iftar, the evening breaking of the fast, begin before sunset. While most restaurants are closed during the day, many offer evening iftar deals, especially in large cities.⁴⁰³ As part of their charitable contributions, many Muslims offer free iftar meals to the underprivileged.⁴⁰⁴ Mosques and city streets are colorfully decorated. People play traditional music throughout the night.⁴⁰⁵

Despite the month's religious focus, violence by Islamic militants occurs during Ramadan.⁴⁰⁶ In 2017, a suicide bomber killed 13 people and wounded 20 others in Quetta.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, restrictive rules have limited the movement of women during the holy month.^{408, 409}

Eid



Eid market, Balochistan Province
Flickr / USAID Pakistan

in Pakistan, it traditionally marks the end of the hajj. The festival commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah. Muslims participate in the Eid practice of *qurbani*, the slaughter of a goat, cow, or sheep.^{412, 413}

The two most important religious holidays for the Baloch are Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. Eid means "festival" in Arabic, and Eid al-Fitr (The Feast of the End of the Fast) marks the end of Ramadan. Muslims celebrate the end of the fast with a large, multiday feast with family and friends. Family gatherings center around cooking holiday foods.⁴¹⁰ Baloch will begin the day with clean clothes and prayer.⁴¹¹

One of the holiest days in Islam, Eid al-Adha (The Feast of Sacrifice), marks the 12th month of the Islamic calendar. Called Eid-e-Qurban in Iran and Bakri-Id or Qurbani Eid

People throughout Pakistan spend the three-day Eid holidays calling on close friends and relatives. Each of these events is, depending on wealth, a time to put on new clothes and prepare large feasts.⁴¹⁴ People visit from house to house. To visit someone during Eid is to pay a great compliment, and the same goes for inviting someone to visit. A common greeting during Eid is "*Eid Mubarak*" (Have a blessed Eid).⁴¹⁵

Ashura



Ritual Ashura mourning, Iran
Wikimedia / Payam Moein CC BY SA 4.0

demonstrates the Shia belief that only physical pain can reflect the grief felt by the Muslim world when Hussein died.⁴¹⁸ In recent years, Ashura festivals in Pakistan have been marred by conflicts between Sunni and Shia.^{419, 420, 421}

Ashura commemorates the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali, the son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad, who was killed in the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE amid power struggles for the caliphate. This day is recognized by all Muslims, but it is especially significant to the Shia community, who live among the Baloch, primarily in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran, and Quetta, Pakistan.⁴¹⁶ Ashura occurs on the 10th day of the Islamic month of Muharram, a period of mourning for Shia Muslims. During this time, Shia men may scourge their backs or cut their heads with various instruments until they bleed.⁴¹⁷ Self-flagellation

Buildings of Worship

Mosques



Mosque in Dureji, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / khadim-un-nabi Rao CC BY SA 3.0

Although the specific design of mosques varies, all mosques (masjids) typically include several elements. Most have four walls. The qibla is the wall facing Mecca. A small niche in the qibla, the mihrab, helps the faithful identify the proper direction in which to face during prayers. To the right of the mihrab stands a pulpit (*minbar*), where the prayer leader (imam) stands while giving services.⁴²² Mosques also often have a minaret from which the calls to daily prayers are issued. Many mosques have an ablution fountain in the center of the central courtyard (*sahan*), where Muslims may conduct ritual washing.^{423, 424}

Mosques play a vital role in Pakistani, Iranian, and Afghan society.⁴²⁵ The mosque is much more than a house of prayer. It serves many social functions and is often used as a schoolroom for traditional Islamic education. Muslim boys typically attend a madrassa prior to formal education. In many villages, the mosque is used for community meetings and, in Pashtun-dominated areas, sometimes as a guesthouse. Travelers often stay overnight in mosques, and villagers provide them with food and drink. Foreign males may be invited into a mosque to meet with local leaders.^{426, 427}

When do you worship?		
Visitor:	shumaa kujaam waadaa nemaazey kenet?	When do you worship?
Local:	jumey Rojaa	On Friday.

Exchange 1

The mosques in many areas of these countries are immaculate structures that highlight the craftsmanship of centuries of Islamic artisans. Some mosques, such as Masjed-e Jame of Isfahan, Iran, and Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan, are designated or proposed UNESCO World Heritage sites. Calligraphy, detailed geometric artwork, reflective tiles, and intricate stonework are a conscious contrast to the loud, difficult reality of daily life.⁴²⁸

Local mosques in Balochistan Province are modest and primarily made of mud brick; some may be accented with tile decorations or with recycled automobile headlights set into the brick facade.⁴²⁹ Among the Zikri, group prayers take place in large, male- and female-designated thatched structures (*zigrana*, “house of prayer”). The structures for men are built with a large open area in front that is used for religious congregations.⁴³⁰

In Iran, Sunni Baloch face formal discrimination from the Shia government. Although Sunni mosques exist in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, they are under constant threat of attack.^{431, 432, 433} The Grand Makki Mosque of Zahedan is the largest Sunni mosque in Iran and is located in the center of the city.⁴³⁴

Shrines



Tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini, Tehran, Iran
Wikimedia / Zoheir Seidanloo

Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan have numerous shrines (*ziyarat*, from the Arabic word *zur*, meaning “to visit”), which have become places of pilgrimage.⁴³⁵ They include mausoleums of political leaders, such as that of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in Karachi and of Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran, and tombs of important religious figures.⁴³⁶

Shrines of Sufi religious leaders (*pirs*), as well as a few Hindu shrines, are located across Pakistan, especially in the southern and eastern villages.⁴³⁷ Villagers visit these sites to pray for good weather (to aid their crops) or for relief from troubles.⁴³⁸ The Zikri Baloch gather on the 27th night of Ramadan to venerate Jaunpuri at Koh-e-Murad shrine.^{439, 440} Several attacks on Sufi and Zikri shrines by Islamic militants, who in their orthodox interpretation of Islam view “grave-worship” as heresy, occurred in 2014 and 2017.^{441, 442, 443}

Behavior in Places of Worship

For the Baloch, the mosque is not merely a place of worship, but where community problems are brought for resolution. Etiquette for mosques throughout Balochistan remains the same as for mosques in the rest of the world. Mosques are sacred spaces, and they should be respected as such.⁴⁴⁴

May I enter the mosque?		
Visitor:	maa maaseeta et-haa aat kanaan?	May I enter the mosque?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 2

When foreigners visit a mosque, they should ask permission to enter. The dress code requires modesty and dignity. Clothing should always be loose-fitting and free of images of living creatures. As a rule, the more rural the region, the more one should be covered. In Iran, women must wear a chador (head cloth) to enter (there are usually chadors available for visitors).^{445, 446} Many mosques have separate sections for female devotees, who commonly attend prayers at mosques.⁴⁴⁷ In Pakistan, while it is not prohibited, women traditionally do not visit mosques. If a woman does enter a mosque, only her face, hands, and feet



*Badshahi Mosque, Lahore, Punjab Province
Wikimedia / Fassifarooq CC BY SA 4.0*

can be visible; her hair must be completely covered. Women should wear pants or ankle-length skirts that are neither tight nor transparent.⁴⁴⁸

For men, pants are preferred, but shorts that cover the knees are acceptable. Shirts should have sleeves no shorter than a standard T-shirt. Once inside the mosque, non-Muslims should not touch books or walls (especially the western corner where people direct their prayers).⁴⁴⁹

Under normal, noncombat circumstances, visitors should remove their shoes at the doorway and place them in the designated area. They should turn off cell phones, observe photography restrictions, and refrain from eating or drinking inside the mosque.⁴⁵⁰ Visitors should take care not to disrupt or walk in front of Muslims in prayer; this is thought to invalidate the prayers and will upset the worshipper. The presence of dogs in a mosque is considered a desecration.⁴⁵¹

Do I need to wear a scarf on my head?		
Visitor:	alameen kema seReega bigRaan?	Do I need to wear a scarf on my head?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 3

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Chapter 2 | Assessment

1. The majority of Baloch are Shia Muslims.
2. The Baloch enjoy religious freedom in Iran.
3. Eid al-Adha is a famous Zikri mosque in Balochistan Province, Pakistan.
4. The split between the Shia and Sunni Muslim community began with a dispute over who should succeed the Prophet Muhammad.
5. Men and women pray in separate areas of a mosque.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True



Traditional Baloch sword dance (Zahm Dharees) during Nowruz, Sistan and Baluchestan
mehrnews.com

Chapter 3 | Balochi Cultural Orientation

Traditions

Introduction

The Baloch value personal honor, fairness, and integrity. They are generous hosts and esteem sharing and cooperation. Poets and musicians are treasured by the Baloch, who have strong oral traditions that often celebrate bravery and courage. They live by an honor code, Balochmayar (“the Baloch way”), which not only regulates day-to-day life but also helps tribes maintain their identity and unity.⁴⁵² Kinship is a guiding principle, as is the protection of others in difficulty—possibly because of the harsh conditions in which the Baloch live. Some scholars consider this helpfulness as a nomad’s “insurance” against future losses.^{453, 454, 455}

Tribes are self-sufficient units, and the Baloch manage well in the harsh desert. They are noticeably gregarious and do not understand or value personal solitude. The group-oriented Baloch often sit together while working, talking, or relaxing.⁴⁵⁶

Within the tribe, but often not between tribes, people work hard to avoid conflict. To publicly disagree with a kinsman is extremely bad form for the Baloch. Taking time to do something is preferred over being in a hurry. Baloch also prefer to keep their feelings to themselves.^{457, 458}

Many Baloch maintain beliefs that their people held before Islam, such as the influence of their ancestor's spirits. Men and women believed to have magical or prophetic skills exist alongside Islamic mullahs, and the belief in jinns (spirits) and the supernatural are widespread.^{459, 460}



Farmers with their harvest, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / United States Agency for International Development

Greetings and Codes of Conduct

The Baloch are generally quick to greet friends as well as strangers. Greetings, especially to strangers, are offered in a formal manner respectful of status and gender. The most common greeting is the traditional Muslim “Aasalaamo ’alykom” (“May the blessings of Allah be upon you”), or simply “Salaam” (“Peace be upon you”). When greeting a non-Muslim, Muslims may use the religion-neutral “Adaab” (“Respect to you”).^{461, 462}

Good morning!		
Visitor:	sob wash baat!	Good morning!
Local:	sob wash baat!	Good morning!

Exchange 4

Good night!		
Visitor:	shep wash baat!	Good night!
Local:	shep wash baat!	Good night to you!

Exchange 5

Out of respect, elders are greeted first, and men will stand when a leader or elder enters the room. Men who know each other well may hug. Female friends may kiss each other on both cheeks as a sign of affection. Handshakes are a typical greeting between men across the region. Using both hands to shake demonstrates warmth and sincerity. A handshake may be accompanied by a hand over the heart and a gentle nod in greeting.⁴⁶³ This gesture should be returned. Although Westerners usually shake hands with a firm grip, the tradition in the region is to use a loose grip.^{464, 465, 466}

The formality of the greeting depends on the relationship between the speakers. For example, when greeting an elder, a Baloch may touch the feet or ankles of the respected figure: a *sardar* is greeted with a touch on the feet or knees. When groups meet, people are introduced in order, first by rank and then by age, with the oldest person introduced first.^{467, 468, 469}

Among the Baloch, relationship-building is the most important part of the greeting between two men. Baloch customarily begin with detailed inquiries about a visitor's health (*durahi*) and then exchange news.⁴⁷⁰ This initial greeting (*haal*) can last longer than any other greeting and may include questions about how the visitor left their house, who they met along the way, the weather, and the wellbeing of family (but not specifically wives or daughters) or even cattle. An unfamiliar visitor may be asked about tribal affiliation, as well as the name of his village and his father's name before asking a first name. It is impolite not to respect this lengthy greeting custom.⁴⁷¹

Hi, Mr. Shastuni! (informal)		
Visitor:	salaamu waajaa shetoonee!	Hi, Mr. Shastuni!
Local:	salaam!	Hello!
Visitor:	shumey chey haal int?	Are you doing well?
Local:	hhawo waajaa	Yes.

Exchange 6

Greetings between Men and Women

By contrast, distance is maintained between unrelated people of the opposite sex. Traditionally, men and women share a verbal greeting but make no physical contact. Men and women shake hands or embrace only if they are family or close friends.⁴⁷²

Any meeting and greeting between a man and woman should occur in the presence of the man who accompanies the woman (often a male family member). An introduction between a man and woman may involve a handshake only if initiated by the woman; a male visitor should not offer to shake hands with a woman. This is considered overly direct or even offensive and is likely to make the woman feel uncomfortable. Instead, the visitor should simply nod and issue a spoken greeting or follow the female's lead. If a woman initiates a handshake, it should be quite light, touching only the fingertips.^{473, 474}



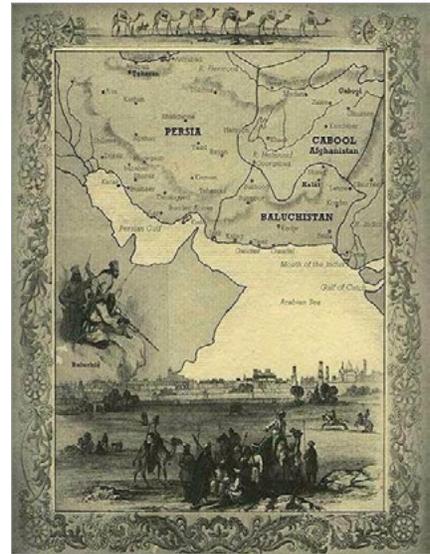
Homeira Rigi (left), a Baloch, is an ambassador of Iran
tnews.ir

Honor and Values

Balochmayar, the Baloch code of honor, takes precedence over Islamic rules and unites the Baloch people as much as their language. The complex range of customs and values outlines the social responsibilities of the group and is the basis for local law in rural Baloch communities.⁴⁷⁵

The main principles of Balochmayar are:

- Revenge (*ber* or *hun*)—Baloch are duty-bound to avenge an insult or the murder of a relative. This principle has given birth to inter-tribal blood feuds, tribal migration, and the elimination of whole families. The old but ongoing feuds between the Rind and Lashar, and Bugti and Kalpar tribes are well-known throughout Pakistan.^{476, 477}
- Refuge (*bahut*)—When a friend, or enemy, has been given asylum during anything from a serious family matter to a life-threatening situation, every tribesman has the obligation to fight to death for them. Baloch have a deep respect for *bahut* and believe no one has the authority to touch the person protected under *bahut*, not even government officials.^{478, 479}
- Hospitality (*mehmani*)—Baloch hospitality extends to both friends and strangers and requires the defense and protection of the guest. The obligation expires the moment the guest has left the host's house or territorial limits. If the guest has been given *bahut* and is insulted or killed, the family is obligated to take revenge (*ber*).^{480, 481}
- (Retribution for) adultery (*siahkari*)—*Siahkari* demands the death penalty for men and women who have sex outside of a marriage. *Bahut* is not available to them.^{482, 483}
- Protection of the weak (*kamzor-o-lachar*)—Baloch are prohibited from killing women (except in cases of *siahkari*), religious minorities (who live peacefully among the Baloch), slaves, musicians, prepubescent boys, or any person who has taken refuge within a shrine or mosque.
- Promise (*qaul*)—Baloch are honor-bound to keep their word. Not doing so is seen as reflecting badly on the entire Baloch people.⁴⁸⁴
- Trust (*etbar* or *aamanat*)—A Baloch will defend to the death any property or valuables entrusted to him.



Historic map showing Persia, Baluchistan and Cabool, date unknown
Wikimedia / ریشترینگ CC BY SA 4.0

Family Honor

The concept of honor (*izzat*), which applies to both genders and across religious lines, is deeply ingrained across South Asia and Iran. An individual's *izzat* is affected by their own actions and the behavior of their

family or community. This results in cultural pressure for individuals to protect their reputation and avoid shame (*sharam*).^{485, 486}

The foremost priority of the Baloch social code is the preservation of individual and family honor, which are deeply connected and valued above all else. Perceptions of character affect daily social relations and political matters within the community. If a man's, a family's, or a tribe's *izzat* has been violated, they are obliged to seek restitution.⁴⁸⁷

Across Balochistan, *izzat* is closely linked to *namus*, or sexual integrity of family members, especially women. A woman's sexuality is considered a potential threat to the honor of the family. Therefore, women's behavior and mobility are restricted and controlled through *purdah* (gender segregation) and violence.^{488, 489}

Reclaiming Family Honor

In recent years, Pakistan and Afghanistan have drawn attention for so-called honor killings.^{490, 491} Despite being illegal, the rate of honor killings in Pakistan is especially high. More than 1,000 people—mostly women—are killed each year by relatives who believe the accused has dishonored their family.⁴⁹² *Siahkari* (or *karo kari*) executions are punishment and redemption for the perceived shame a woman has brought upon her family and community.⁴⁹³



*Social media event discussing violence against women, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi
Flickr / USAID Pakistan*

The murders are most commonly committed against women accused of adultery, engaging in premarital sex, refusing an arranged marriage, or suffering rape, which is often treated as adultery.⁴⁹⁴ Proof is not necessary. Men are also victims of honor killings. If a man marries a woman against her family's will, he may be considered complicit in dishonoring her family.⁴⁹⁵ The death of the shamed person in such a killing is thought to restore the family's honor. Male relatives usually carry out the killings themselves, but often whole communities are complicit.^{496, 497}

Gender Roles and Relationships

Islamic fundamentalism and tribal traditions provide enormous powers to the men of Balochistan. Male family members preside over a woman's life, and the head of the household makes all key decisions for a woman.^{498, 499} Moreover, women are considered the custodians of family honor. As such, women face the contradiction between the freedoms and opportunities they are given by law, and what is acceptable in practice. Women have the right to vote, drive, go to school, and pursue a career, but many women face serious abuse or discrimination if they do not follow traditional Islamic or tribal customs. The extent to which a woman observes such traditions, either forced or freely chosen, varies according to her occupation, education, and where she lives.^{500, 501, 502}

While views of women can vary from community to community, veiling is observed throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan, and required by law in Iran.^{503, 504} Most commonly women cover themselves with a full-body garment, such as a burka or chador, or a scarf that covers the head and neck, such as a hijab.⁵⁰⁵ Homes and public spaces, such as mosques, are segregated by gender—either by high-walled enclosures or curtains within the home. Veiling and segregation (purdah) varies widely across Balochistan; it is especially strict in Iran and in Pashtun-dominated areas, and less so in remote areas of Balochistan Province.⁵⁰⁶



Traditional Baloch scarf and embroidered dress bayanbox.ir

Before Islamic fundamentalism came to the region, Baloch women enjoyed relative freedom in public life. Today, although Baloch tradition is much less bounded by Islamic law, Baloch society is deeply patriarchal and heavily segregated.⁵⁰⁷ Interaction between men and women is possible only if they are related. Women spend most of their time at home looking after family and are often pressured to not pursue education or work outside the home.^{508, 509}

Status of Women

Although men and women have equal rights under the Iranian, Pakistani, and Afghan constitutions, the countries remain deeply conservative and patriarchal. Women face severe gender inequality and discrimination in matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody.^{510, 511} A report by the World Economic Forum in 2018 placed Pakistan as the second-lowest performing country in the world for gender equality; Iran was ranked only a few spots higher.^{512, 513} While Afghanistan was not part of the study, other studies indicate similar results there.⁵¹⁴

Though their numbers are small, more women are entering political leadership roles in Pakistan. Some of the country's leading politicians, journalists, and teachers are women; in 2018, women made up 20% of Pakistan's parliament and 20% of the Balochistan (province) Assembly.^{515, 516, 517} In 2018, Tahira Safdar was appointed chief justice of the Balochistan High Court, the first woman to serve as chief justice of a high court in Pakistan.⁵¹⁸



Members of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, Quetta Flickr / Watanpaal Photography CC BY NC 2.0

Though women are not as present in the professional workforce in Afghanistan as women in Pakistan, they participate more in politics than women in Pakistan due to Afghanistan's constitutional quota system.⁵¹⁹ In 2018, they accounted for 28% of the representatives in the Afghan parliament (by comparison, women made up 23% of the U.S. Congress in 2018).⁵²⁰ In Iran, where

men can prevent their wives from having certain occupations if they consider them against “family values,” and where there is no quota for female political representation in parliament, women have about 3% of the seats in parliament.^{521, 522} In Sistan and Baluchestan Province, women have little to no representation in local government.⁵²³

Violence against women is widespread.^{524, 525, 526} Because women are often viewed as the property of male family members, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced marriages occur.⁵²⁷ In 2018, Pakistan and Afghanistan ranked at the top of a Thomson Reuters poll of the most dangerous countries for women.⁵²⁸

Hospitality

Baloch tribes are known for their hospitality (*mehmani*) and guests are deeply valued. A customary form of hospitality is to invite visitors for a meal. Hospitality is considered one of the most essential duties, even among the poorest of the Baloch. Those with the means will slaughter a sheep or goat for guests. Since the guest is considered the guest of the whole village, often the rest of the village will contribute to the meal.⁵²⁹ If invited into a Baloch home, be aware that the value placed on hospitality is so great that poorer families and villages will suffer financial stress to provide for guests.⁵³⁰

Before entering any home in the region, visitors should find out about local customs and try to follow them. A visitor can learn much by observing others. Guests customarily remove their shoes before entering and wash their hands before eating. Meals in rural homes may be served on a cloth or rug on the ground, and cushions may be provided for seating. Men and women eat separately. The host will generally direct the guest where to sit. Guests should sit cross-legged and take care not to show the soles of their feet or point them at others, which is considered offensive. When dining, the host will serve the guests first, but the guests should not begin eating until the eldest person begins.⁵³¹ Formal manners apply in all social situations. At a dinner or social event, guests should graciously acknowledge the hospitality of their host, communicating that they appreciate the invitation.^{532, 533}



Baloch boy with serving tray
Wikimedia / CC BY SA 3.0

I really appreciate your hospitality.		
Visitor:	maa ta-ee izmatey minat oowaaRum	I really appreciate your hospitality.
Local:	mey waashee int	It's my pleasure.

Exchange 7

When a host offers coffee or tea, politely accept the offer. Rejecting hospitality outright could cause the host to lose face (i.e., feel insulted or shamed). It is a mark of pride for a host to entertain his guests. Likewise, a guest should show interest in the food that is served. This is a form of compliment. Per Islamic tradition, diners should use only the right hand to eat or pass food. It is considered rude to use the left hand in social

interactions or when eating and drinking. As the meal comes to an end, the guest should compliment the host or the person who cooked the food.^{534, 535}

The food tastes so good.		
Visitor:	naan baaz wash taam int	The food tastes so good.
Local:	shumey meheRbaanee int	Thanks for the compliment.

Exchange 8

What is the name of this dish?		
Visitor:	ee naaRushtey naam chee int?	What is the name of this dish?
Local:	gosht gon bataag	This is <i>gosht gombatag</i> (lamb with eggplant).

Exchange 9

When attending a social occasion in any home, a visitor may bring a small gift. The gift should not be too elaborate. An expensive or elaborate gift may be perceived as arrogant or an attempt to impress the recipient with your wealth. If circumstances require that a male give a gift to a woman (such as the wife of his host), he should say that the gift is from one of his female relatives.⁵³⁶ The presentation of any gift should be performed in a discreet and modest manner. Use both hands to present a gift. As a rule, the gift is not opened in the presence of the person who gave it. Foreigners should respect Islamic dietary customs that prohibit consuming pork or alcohol.⁵³⁷

Eating Habits and Types of Food

In rural areas, most Baloch eat two meals daily—at morning and sunset—with snacks between meals to curb hunger.⁵³⁸ Baloch may eat from a single large bowl. Six or eight people sit near the bowl that usually contains a gravy of meat or milk. The most common eating method is to collect small portions of food with the fingertips, at times rolling it into a ball, before eating it. Bread may also be used to scoop food. Baloch will use their right hand to take food from the dish or to dunk bread into the gravy. When served, meat—usually goat, lamb, or mutton—may be in the gravy or in a side dish.^{539, 540}



U.S. Gen. D. Petraeus (right) with former Afghan Pres. Hamid Karzai (left) Flickr / cccicentcom

As most Baloch are farmers and livestock herders, cereals, and animal products are staples of their diet. In general, a Baloch meal usually consists of milk, bread (*naghan* or *roti*), and a main dish containing some type of meat, such as mutton, goat, or beef. Sheep and goat milk is also made into cheese,



Mashk, Baloch for "water bag," made of goat skin
Flickr / Philipp Manila Sonderegger CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

buttermilk, yogurt, and butter, and in summer, into a sherbet (lassi) with molasses and sugar. It is also sometimes brewed with green tea (*kahwah*).⁵⁴¹ Water is traditionally stored and kept cool in a waterproofed goat skin (*mashk*).⁵⁴²

Dates, wild fruit, and vegetables form an important part of the Baloch diet, especially in the highlands where melons, grapes, and apricots are readily available. Baloch people living on the coast eat grilled fish and a traditional bread made with fish.^{543, 544}

Wheat is ground into flour and made into a variety of naan-like breads, the most iconic of which is *kurnu*, or *kaak*.^{545, 546} Popular among the nomadic Baloch, traditional *kurnu* preparation involves covering large heated stones with dough. The result is a crusty bread that is hollow in the middle after the stone is removed.⁵⁴⁷



Chicken sajji, Quetta
Wikimedia / Ajmalahmedkhan

Well-known Baloch meat dishes include *sajji*, *rosh*, and *lahndi*. *Sajji*, a Baloch specialty, is salted quarters of mutton, lamb, or goat roasted on a vertical spit and enclosed by a fire. The meat is considered done when it is rare. It is sometimes marinated in yogurt and served with *kurnu*.^{548, 549} Lamb *sajji*, and more recently chicken *sajji*, and *rosh* (slow-cooked lamb or beef) with different seasoning variations, have gained popularity in Quetta, Karachi, and Lahore.^{550, 551} *Lahndi* is salted, dried lamb, beef, or camel, something like jerky. It is prepared in the summer for winter use. The meat is pickled in a mixture of salt and hing spice, which gives it a sour flavor, and then cut into strips and dried for up to 6 months.⁵⁵²

Dress Codes

Following Islamic and tribal customs, dress throughout the Balochi-speaking region is conservative. Loose-fitting pants and a long shirt are standard for men. Women wear loose-fitting garments that cover the entire body and scarves or shawls. In larger urban settings of Pakistan and Iran, middle class men and women may wear adapted Western-style clothing. In all cases, women's clothing is conservative; never sheer, provocative, tight, or revealing in any way. In any public place in Iran, women must, by law, cover their heads with a headscarf.^{553, 554}

Visitors should dress modestly and appropriately for the harsh climate of the areas where Baloch live. Both men and women should cover their shoulders and arms; women should cover their heads and upper

legs. Men should wear trousers, and women should consider full-length dresses and shawls. If a visitor is uncertain about what to wear, asking a local person for advice is a good policy.⁵⁵⁵

Traditional Dress

Baloch clothing is made for mobility and the inhospitable desert and mountain climates.⁵⁵⁶ Among the Baloch, colors are social markers, with the young and lower-class attired in more colorful clothing. For example, lower-status men wear bright colors of pale blue or rose. Young girls wear yellow shirts decorated with embroidery; adolescents wear black, white, or simple dresses with little embroidery; women of marriageable age wear scarlet; married women wear red or brown; and old women wear plain black dresses. Traditional Baloch clothing is distinguished from that of other ethnic groups by its decorative embroidery (*doch*). Known for its intricate geometric patterns and vibrant colors, there are about 70 embroidery motifs in Balochistan alone, each distinct to a specific region and each with its own name. Women's dresses and men's hats are the best examples of this handiwork.^{557, 558}

Men's Dress

Baloch men wear the typical south Asian loose-fitting, full-length pants and long shirt known as *shalwar kameez*. In informal settings, *shalwar kameez* colors and headwear vary from region to region; turbans, *topi* (skull caps), and *shemagh* (the traditional desert headwrap that can completely cover the face) are typical. In formal settings, Baloch men wear a traditional costume that is distinctive from that of other ethnic groups: the *shalwar kameez* and turban are white; shirts are traditionally shorter and more fitted than those worn by Baloch neighbors; the pants are much baggier, with multiple drapes and folds. Embroidered vests may be worn over the shirt, and it is common for men to carry a shoulder scarf (*pushti*).⁵⁵⁹ The *pushti* may be used as a rug for prayer or to protect the face from dust.^{560, 561}



Formal Baloch mens clothing
darya-e-man.blog.ir

Baloch turbans are twisted in numerous large rolls around the head and are larger than the turbans of other ethnic groups. The loose end drapes down and around the chin and is tucked back into the turban's folds. *Topi* caps are notched in front, allowing the forehead to touch the ground when praying. They are embroidered with colorful designs that sometimes incorporate tiny mirrors (*shisha*). Boys and young men wear only *topi*, whereas older men may add turbans over them.^{562, 563} Baloch men's shoes (*chawat*) are made to be durable and comfortable in rugged terrain: the tops are of heavy leather and the soles are often cut from used car tires.^{564, 565}

Women's Dress

Baloch women typically wear ankle-length trousers (*shalwar*), an ankle-length, loose-fitting shift dress (*paskh*), and a decorative head scarf (*dupatta*) or hijab, which they wrap around their heads and shoulders.^{566, 567} Though strict veiling (*parda*, *purda*) is not common among Baloch, most women will draw the corners of

their scarves across their faces when unknown adult males are near.⁵⁶⁸ In Iran, where the dress code is more conservative, Baloch women wear a long, open cloak (*chador*) over their clothing in public.⁵⁶⁹



Baloch embroidery
Flickr / Ninara

The most striking feature of female Baloch clothing is the colorful embroidery and tiny mirrors covering the front of the *pashk*, the cuffs of the sleeves and trousers, and the scarf.⁵⁷⁰ On the front of the *pashk* is an embroidered yoke covering the chest and a long, rectangular pocket (*pandol*) that runs from hem to waist, where it comes to a point. The *pandol* is the major ethnic marker of Baloch women’s clothing.^{571, 572}

Most Baloch women wear bright plastic sandals; in rural areas of the south some women still wear shoes made of palm fronds. Jewelry serves to indicate economic standing. Baloch women who can afford it adorn themselves with an assortment of ornamental jewelry, including bracelets, nose rings, toe rings, heavy necklaces (*tawk*), and large earrings (*dorr*).^{573, 574}

Is this acceptable to wear?		
Visitor:	eeshi gooR kanag shaR int?	Is this acceptable to wear?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

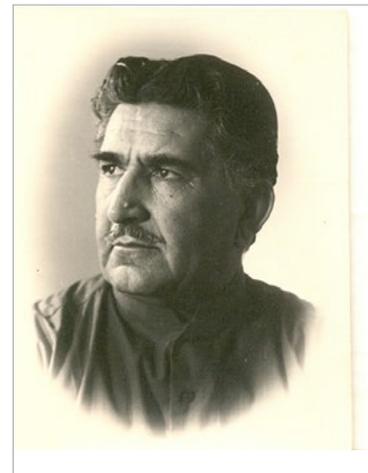
Exchange 10

The Arts

Literature

Until a century ago, when writing was introduced into Baloch society, oral literature was the most important literary form. It existed as songs performed on different life occasions by groups of professional singers, known as *pahlawan* (“singer of heroic deeds”) or *sawti* (“singer of short love songs”), as well as nonprofessional singers (*gwashinda*). The Baloch regard poetry as the highest form of literature, and there are many heroic and romantic epic and lyric poems. There remains a rich tradition of storytelling—men and women elders entertain villagers, mainly at nightly gatherings, with fairytales, legends, and fables.^{575, 576}

Baloch poems and folktales often feature riddles (*cac*, or among eastern Baloch, *bujjarat*). Some riddles are ancient and some are recently composed. Still a living art, men, women, and children enjoy riddle contests, and in some families such contests are arranged regularly.⁵⁷⁷



Gul Khan Nasir, poet
Wikimedia / Akbar sasoli CC BY SA 4.0

Since the mid-1900s, some written literature has emerged, mostly in Balochistan Province.⁵⁷⁸ Gwadar-born Syed Zahoor Shah Hashmi is one of three distinguished writers of modern Balochi literature of the 20th century. Hashmi wrote numerous poetry collections and, in 1976, published the first novel in Balochi, *Nazuk*. Poet and historian Gul Khan Nasir wrote about the themes of Baloch resistance, nationalism, and identity in both Urdu and Balochi. Atta Shad is considered the architect of modern Balochi poetry. His Urdu translations of Baloch folklore, romantic sagas, and poems introduced Baloch culture to the broader Pakistani population.^{579, 580, 581}

Music and Dance

Singing is an aspect of Balochmayar. Specific Baloch songs (*sooth*) and dances are usually tied to religious rites, festivals, or holidays, such as weddings, childbirth, circumcision, and date harvests (*hamin*).^{582, 583} Songs are always accompanied by one or more traditional Baloch musical instruments, such as a plucked lute (*tambura*), flute (*nal*), drums (*dohl*), and bowed fiddle (*suroz*), the last of which is considered the Baloch national instrument.^{584, 585, 586}

Many Baloch musicians consider the *zahirok* the basis for the Baloch musical structure. *Zahirok* melodies express loss or absence, and they are used in singing the traditional Baloch narrative song, or *šeyr*.⁵⁸⁷ Baloch *nur sur*, an ancient form of overtone or throat singing, is still popular in the Sulaiman Mountains of Balochistan Province.^{588, 589} In *nar sur*, a singer narrates a folktale in a single overtone accompanied by a musician playing the flute.^{590, 591}

The foundation of Baloch dance is the *chaap* (clap), which is a collective dance performed separately by men and women, and involving circling, clapping, and whistling, with little body movement.^{592, 593} There are also various types of dances performed in a trance as part of healing and exorcism practices along the Makran coast in Sistan and Baluchestan and southern Balochistan provinces.^{594, 595}

Non-Religious Celebrations

Pakistan Day

Pakistan Day is celebrated every year on 23 March to commemorate the Lahore Resolution of 1940, which called for greater Muslim autonomy in British India. This historic resolution set in motion a series of events that led to the creation of Pakistan 7 years later.⁵⁹⁶ In 2017, Pakistan Day was made an official public holiday, and all nonessential government offices, schools, and banks are closed. Pakistanis, including Baloch, go outdoors and enjoy local festivals, cooking, and celebrations.⁵⁹⁷



Stone tomb of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan Flickr / Muhammad Imran Saeed

Independence Day

Pakistan celebrates its Independence Day on 14 August. To celebrate, many Pakistanis dress in the national colors—green and white—and take to the streets to see parades and demonstrate their national pride and unity. Ceremonial changings of the guard occur at national monuments and other key sites.⁵⁹⁸ The media broadcasts special Independence Day programs, and people enjoy pageants, music, and shows dedicated to the holiday.⁵⁹⁹ Some Baloch boycott the celebration, but this is not the norm.⁶⁰⁰ Others informally celebrate Balochistan Independence Day three days earlier—the day when, in 1948, Baloch say they received independence from the British.^{601, 602}

Baloch Cultural Festivals



Baloch annual fair (mela), Sibi, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Awazsibi CC BY SA 4.0

Camel racing and horse dancing competitions are among the cultural events showcased every February at the cultural fair in Sibi, Pakistan.⁶⁰³ The event, known as the Sibi Mela, dates to the 15th century when the town was the regular meeting place for tribal chiefs in the area. The British later combined the meeting (*darbar*) with a fair (*mela*) that today draws thousands of Baloch and their animals for the week-long event.⁶⁰⁴

In addition to serving as a meeting place for tribal chiefs, the event is a place where the Baloch sell cattle and horses, handicrafts, terracotta pots, and silver jewelry. National song contests, poetry recitals (*mushaira*), exhibitions of folk dancing, and tent-pegging (*neza baazi*) are also part of the annual event.^{605, 606} Tent-pegging is an equestrian sport that originated in South Asia in the fourth century BCE. At that time, cavalry soldiers found that the only way to incapacitate armored elephants was to spear them in the toe. Played today in Pakistan as a test of a horseman's skill, tent-pegging requires the rider to pierce and carry away a small ground target with a lance while riding at a gallop.⁶⁰⁷

In cities inhabited by the Baloch people, Baloch Culture Day is celebrated on 2 March to draw attention to and promote Baloch history and culture. Baloch wear traditional costumes, perform traditional songs and dances, and serve traditional foods. Local politicians and community leaders make speeches highlighting the importance of Baloch culture and traditions.^{608, 609}

Nowruz

One of the most important secular holidays in Iran is Nowruz (“new day”), the Persian New Year. It is an ancient celebration—linked to the Zoroastrian faith—of spring, renewal, and fire that takes place every spring equinox (around 21 March). It is the biggest and most festive event of the year and the only one celebrated by Iranians from all backgrounds and religions, including Kurds, Pashtuns, and Baloch.^{610, 611} Nowruz is also celebrated in Afghanistan, where it is a national holiday.^{612, 613}

Preparing for Nowruz starts a few weeks before the equinox with a spring cleaning of the home. Families also set aside a space for the central *haft-seen* table (table of “seven things that start with the letter S”). Each item symbolizes a different hope for the new year.⁶¹⁴ The four Wednesdays before Nowruz are days of festivities commemorating the elements: water, earth, air, and fire. The most celebrated of these is the Festival of Fire (*shab-e chahar shanbeh suri*, “Eve of Red Wednesday”). Bonfires are lit in the streets, and in a joyful atmosphere people jump over the fires as part of a purification ritual to cleanse away the misfortunes of the past year.^{615, 616}



Chaharshanbe Suri (Festival of Fire), Iran
Wikimedia / sayyed shahab-o- din vajedi

The equinox celebration is followed by a weeklong holiday when households host relatives with a wide variety of sweets and trail mix (*ajil*), baklava, and cookies made from rice flour (*nan berenji*).⁶¹⁷ There are festivals throughout the country; in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, locals perform a sword dance (*raghs-e shamshir*), which dates back 3,000 years.^{618, 619} Nowruz festivities continue until the 13th day of the new year, a day for picnicking in the countryside.^{620, 621}

Dos and Don'ts

- Do** place your teacup upside down on the saucer to indicate you are finished.
- Do** keep the soles of your shoes hidden from public view when seated.
- Do** cross your legs under your body when sitting on the floor to eat.
- Do** thank the host for the food and praise the food's quality.
- Do** use only your entire right hand rather than a single finger when gesturing or summoning a person.
- Do** use only your right hand to eat, shake hands, or pass an object.
- Do** inquire about the health and well-being of a person when you first meet before turning to business.
- Do** remove your gloves before shaking hands.
- Don't** use the OK sign, which some understand as obscene.
- Don't** point directly at anyone; this is considered rude.

Dos and Don'ts - continued

Don't refuse an invitation to tea. It would be considered offensive to do so.

Don't enter anyone's home without receiving permission.

Don't be in a hurry when meeting with the Baloch.

Don't bluff when you don't know something because it may create mistrust.

Don't touch a member of the opposite sex.

Don't stare at or make advances to women in public or private.

Don't engage in overt expressions of affection with the opposite sex.

Don't touch another person on the head.

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Chapter 3 | Assessment

1. In Pakistan, the Baloch defer to the Islamic code for moral guidance in most matters.
2. Among Muslims, it is considered good manners to use only the right hand for greeting and eating.
3. When greeting a Baloch, it is considered poor manners to share personal information about yourself or your family.
4. The Baloch eat meals from a communal bowl.
5. The traditional long dress worn by Baloch women is called a purdah.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False



Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Flickr / Clement Bourse CC BY-SA 2.0

Chapter 4 | Balochi Cultural Orientation

Urban Life

Introduction

Predominantly rural, only a small fraction of Baloch live in Balochistan's few urban areas. The largest cities in Balochistan with significant numbers of Baloch are Karachi and Quetta, Pakistan, and Zahedan, Iran.^{622, 623}

Karachi is Pakistan's largest city, with 15 million people and more than 2.5 million Baloch.⁶²⁴ Quetta's population of 1.7 million consists of a significant minority of Baloch, making it one of the largest urban Baloch populations. Zahedan's population of 600,000 is majority Baloch.⁶²⁵

Because of the lack of investment in rural areas, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan are rapidly urbanizing. Pakistan's population is one of the fastest-growing in Asia—urbanizing faster than any other country in South Asia. It is estimated that by 2025, nearly 50% of Pakistanis will live in cities. By then, the population in Karachi will exceed 19 million.^{626, 627} Zahedan is now one of the fastest-growing cities in Iran.⁶²⁸ The

growth of urban populations has strained infrastructure, availability of safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and housing.⁶²⁹

Is there lodging nearby?		
Visitor:	idaa kashu kiRaa moosaafaR haan ast?	Is there lodging nearby?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 11

Urbanization Challenges

War, insecurity, and economic turmoil have led to rapid urbanization in Pakistan; rural Pakistanis seek refuge in the cities, hoping to find better jobs and better access to education and health care.⁶³⁰ But Pakistan's cities have grown so quickly that there are shortages in housing and energy, shortfalls in basic services and job creation, and insufficient public transportation.⁶³¹ Almost half of urban Pakistanis live in slums, with Karachi's Orangi town topping the list of the world's largest. Several households commonly share one latrine, and access to waste management services is poor.^{632, 633}



Street market, Mirjaveh, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Flickr / Robin Jakobsson

Balochistan Province has the highest rate of rural to urban migration in the country. In 2015, 27% of the rural population migrated to urban centers, significantly impacting urban development. In Quetta, urban sprawl has not only put pressure on essential services such as water, electricity, health, and education but also made urban space costly, leading to the creation of slums.⁶³⁴

Historically, Pashtuns make up the largest percentage of Quetta residents, with Balochi speakers being a small minority; migrants from across Pakistan make up one-quarter of the city's population. Quetta has become a multicultural city, which has also ignited tensions between indigenous and settler populations. This includes rivalry between the Baloch and Pashtuns and resentment towards the Punjabi settlers and incoming Afghan migrants. Where once cultural diversity was celebrated in Quetta, ethnic conflict, disharmony, and violence have become the norm.⁶³⁵



Street market, Quetta, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Najamuddin Shahwani

Rapid urbanization in Iran has fragmented families and weakened cultural ties and traditions. Housing shortages have forced most people into apartments, causing problems in social relationships. Additionally, a lack of educational opportunities and the presence of drug trafficking have polarized the social classes. According to activist reports, the law limits Sunni Baloch employment opportunities and political participation.⁶³⁶

Water

One of the most significant urban problems involves water. In Quetta, available supplies of groundwater are being depleted by irrigation. Untreated industrial and wastewater has also created a significant health hazard. Clean drinking water is in short supply, and 90% of urban water is unsafe to drink.⁶³⁷ In Karachi, approximately 30,000 people die from contaminated water annually. Because of the inadequate supply of public water, private tankers and privately owned groundwater wells are increasingly common, especially in Karachi, Quetta, and Gwadar.^{638, 639} Port construction in Gwadar has caused a population boom, and water scarcity has reached crisis levels.^{640, 641}



Tanker delivers water to Zahedan residents, Sistan and Baluchestan Province Tasnimnews.com/ Mahin Mohamadzadeh

Water problems are similar in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, where the groundwater has been depleted. Causes include drought, inefficient irrigation, population growth, and dams along the Helmand River in neighboring Afghanistan.⁶⁴² Women in Chabahar have to walk almost 30 minutes, 5 or 6 times a day, to fetch drinking water. Water quality in Zahedan has declined because of saline and chemical contamination.⁶⁴³

Health Care

Although Pakistan's health-care services industry has improved since independence, access remains a problem and many people suffer from treatable illnesses, particularly intestinal diseases. There are high incidences of Hepatitis A and typhoid in areas that lack safe drinking water, adequate sewage disposal, and proper food sanitation. Malaria and tuberculosis are also common.⁶⁴⁴ Women die during pregnancy and delivery from preventable complications, and care for newborns is unavailable in many parts of the country.^{645, 646}



Child diagnosed with polio, Karachi, Sindh Province Flickr / CDC Global

Primary care is available in major cities, but cleanliness and services are below Western standards. Quetta has several hospitals, specialized facilities, and clinics, but the quality of health care is generally poor.⁶⁴⁷

For emergencies, ambulances are not generally available in Pakistan, and they are rarely staffed with medical personnel. Although there are pharmacies throughout the region, name-brand medications may not be readily available. Many of the medications manufactured in Pakistan, India, and Iran are not reliable, and of low quality.⁶⁴⁸

Is Dr. Gulhan in, sir?		
Patient:	daaktaR gool haan hamidaay int waaja?	Is Dr. Gulhan in, sir?
Doctor:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 12

Do you know what is wrong?		
Patient:	to zaaney cheya haRaab int?	Do you know what is wrong?
Doctor:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 13

I have pain, Doctor. Can you help me?		
Patient:	tmanaa daRdeeya gipta tokomak kut kuney?	I have pain, Doctor. Can you help me?
Doctor:	hhawo, maa tey komak kanaan	Yes, I can help you.

Exchange 14

Overall, people’s health and nutrition are better in cities, though few people use public health services in urban areas. Most facilities require payment in advance or at the time services are rendered. Lack of clean drinking water contributes to the high mortality rate of children under five. Poor urban children in Pakistan are more likely to die young than rural children.^{649, 650}

Health care in Iran has improved over the last four decades. With the establishment of a national health plan (Tarh-e Salaamat) in 2014, 90% of patients’ medical bills at public hospitals are covered.⁶⁵¹ As a result of international sanctions, medications are in short supply.^{652, 653}

Is there a hospital nearby?		
Visitor:	idaa kishoo kuRaa ispeetaalee ast?	Is there a hospital nearby?
Local:	hhawo, shah-Rey neeyaama	Yes, in the center of town.

Exchange 15

Hospitals in Afghanistan should be avoided because the medical staff is often unlicensed and untrained. There are no emergency services in the country.⁶⁵⁴ Zaranj, the capital of Nimroz Province, is isolated and

hospital resources are limited.⁶⁵⁵ Furthermore, while many residents now have access to primary health care (including vaccinations), they lack access to most forms of costly secondary care, such as surgery or emergency treatment. Afghan returnees and other immigrants are adding pressure to already stretched health-care facilities.⁶⁵⁶ Secondary care is often only available in private hospitals, which are too expensive for most Afghans.⁶⁵⁷

In Afghanistan, none of the water is potable, and water-borne diseases are common. Other common health problems include typhoid, hepatitis, polio, rabies, pertussis, and tuberculosis.^{658, 659}

Education

Officially, primary education is free and compulsory in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but many people never receive any formal education. In recent years, primary and secondary school enrollment has expanded, and private schools in urban areas are on the rise.⁶⁶⁰ But educational opportunities for children in cities depends on the financial status of their families. Children who live in impoverished urban districts are far less likely to be enrolled than those from families of means, typically because their families need them to work. A family's proximity to a school is also a factor in whether children receive an education. Girls are more likely to be kept at home than boys because the culture prioritizes male education.⁶⁶¹



*Elementary school, Daak, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Najamuddin Shahwani*

In Pakistan, nearly half of children have dropped out of school to work by grade six.⁶⁶² The national literacy rate is low, and the disparity between male and female educational priorities is evident: 70% of males are literate compared to 46% of females.⁶⁶³

Do your children go to school?		
Visitor:	shumey zahgaan iskooley Rogint?	Do your children go to school?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 16

Balochistan Province has the lowest rates of school attendance and literacy in Pakistan.^{664, 665} Across the province, there are not enough schools or teachers, often because of deteriorating conditions in the province. Many existing schools lack basic facilities and teaching materials. As recently as 2017, one in two schools did not have clean drinking water, and three of four schools lacked classrooms, electricity, or toilets.^{666, 667} Balochi is not taught in schools (though Chinese is taught in Gwadar and may become compulsory).^{668, 669}

With few schools, literacy takes a back seat in Balochistan Province; fewer than 50% of Baloch can read and write. There are few schools for girls because women's education is discouraged in favor of household responsibilities. When parents do educate their daughters, they rarely allow them to complete their schooling.⁶⁷⁰ As a result, female literacy in Balochistan Province is the lowest in the country.⁶⁷¹

Single-sex education is usually preferred, but coeducation is common in cities. There are some private schools in affluent urban areas, especially in southern districts like Gwadar. There, coeducational private schools are flourishing, and female literacy is comparatively high. In recent years, though, attacks by Islamic fundamentalist groups have caused a surge in female drop-out rates.⁶⁷²



Boys receive religious education from a Muslim cleric, Kerman Province Wikimedia / Mostafameraji CC BY SA 4.0

Unlike those in Pakistan or Iran, the Baloch in Afghanistan do not face persecution for their ethnicity, at least not from the government. Today, Balochi is taught in several schools in Nimroz Province, and there is a Balochi department in the University of Kandahar.⁶⁷³ Still, just over half the children aged 6–13 go to school.⁶⁷⁴ Literacy rates are low: 35% of adults and 54% of youth can read and write. About 85 schools operate in Nimroz Province and there are no universities.⁶⁷⁵

In 2016, 86% of the Iranian adult population was literate.⁶⁷⁶ This is in stark contrast to the Baloch in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, who, like the Baloch in Pakistan and Afghanistan, face challenges in accessing education. There are fewer schools, with fewer facilities and poor infrastructure, and no Balochi curriculum. Rates of illiteracy in the province are the highest in the country: 65% of males and 46% of females can read and write.^{677, 678, 679}

Restaurants

Restaurants and teahouses are popular social venues in urban areas, although they are too expensive for many. Most restaurants in Pakistan and Afghanistan, whether a casual hole-in-the-wall or a more polished establishment, have a separate dining area for women and families. The separate area could be anything from a curtain-covered ledge in the back to a separate floor.⁶⁸⁰ Utensils are not generally used at restaurants. Instead, food is eaten using the right hand or scooped with bread.^{681, 682} There is typically no service charge added to a bill (except in high-end restaurants), though a tip of about 5% is appreciated.⁶⁸³ Restaurants in Iran are not segregated by gender, but women are not allowed to work in them.⁶⁸⁴

Because it is convenient and inexpensive, street food is extremely popular in all three countries.⁶⁸⁵ In Pakistan and Afghanistan, food stalls specializing in kebabs are common; mutton or chicken (*khaddi kabab*), from Balochistan Province, is popular in Quetta.⁶⁸⁶ Roadside cafes (*dhabas*) throughout Pakistan are a favorite among young people. Traditionally, *dhabas* serve tea and quick bites, such as Nutella-filled naan or parathas (a flatbread stuffed with a broad variety of ingredients), but as their popularity has grown, the

food offerings have broadened. Care should be taken when purchasing street food anywhere because conditions may be unsanitary.⁶⁸⁷ Iranian cities have a thriving restaurant culture; fast food, such as falafel and liver kabobs (*jigar*), are very popular.⁶⁸⁸

Because strict laws prohibit drinking alcohol in public, there are no bars in cities. Wine can be purchased in upscale hotel restaurants, although it is expensive. Carbonated drinks are widely available. Most restaurants offer a variety of drinks, including traditional chai.⁶⁸⁹

May I have a glass/bottle of water?		
Customer:	gilaasee aap Raseet?	May I have a glass/bottle of water?
Waiter:	hhawo, eja!	Yes, sir!

Exchange 17

I would like coffee or tea.		
Customer:	maa kaafee yaa chaay lotant	I would like coffee or tea.
Waiter:	yaakin	Sure.

Exchange 18

Marketplace and Street Vendors

Bazaars

Most of the major cities throughout the greater Balochistan region have a variety of shopping options. Quetta arguably has the best shopping in Pakistan's Balochistan Province. The main shopping hub is on bustling Jinnah Road.⁶⁹⁰ Additionally, there are two modern shopping malls and three main bazaars where visitors can find a variety of items, including Baloch carpets.^{691, 692} In the megacity of Karachi, there are numerous malls and countless bazaars. Tariq Road is famous for being one of the most diverse shopping districts in Pakistan.^{693, 694}

A popular bazaar among the Baloch is the Rasouli Bazaar in Zahedan, Iran.⁶⁹⁵ In the capital of Afghanistan's Nimroz Province, Zaranj, there are several main bazaars. Here, on the border with Iran, many stalls sell Iranian products. Transactions may be made in Iranian rials or Pakistani rupees.^{696, 697}

Can I buy a carpet with this much money?		
Buyer:	maa incho zaRaanee gon tapooRaa baa gipt kunaan?	Can I buy a carpet with this much money?
Seller:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 19

How much longer will you be here?		
Buyer:	chinka wahdaa to eedeya?	How much longer will you be here?
Seller:	deygaa sey ganta	Three more hours.

Exchange 20

Shoppers should examine an item carefully to be sure that the quality matches the price they are willing to pay. Shoppers should remain firm and impassive while bargaining. Ultimately, the customer can walk away or shop without having to buy the item. After a price has been agreed on, however, the customer should follow through with the transaction. It is inappropriate to withdraw an offer that has been accepted.⁶⁹⁸

May I examine this close up?		
Buyer:	maa eysheeya Raa nazeela chey deest kunaan?	May I examine this close up?
Seller:	yaakin	Sure.

Exchange 21

Do you have any more of these?		
Buyer:	tey kiRaa eeshaan chey deygaa ham ast?	Do you have any more of these?
Seller:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 22

Regardless of size, bazaars in Afghanistan can be dangerous because of the presence of the Taliban. In Balochistan Province, Sunni militants have been known to attack crowded bazaars.^{699, 700}

Street Vendors and Beggars

Street vendors working to support their families are everywhere in cities. From makeshift stalls, carts, and blankets along the sidewalk, these self-sufficient street hawkers sell a wide variety of items at prices the average local can afford: cheap jewelry and clothing, cooking utensils, fruits and vegetables, various street foods, and services such as knife-sharpening.^{701, 702}

What type of meat is this?		
Buyer:	ee chee gosht int?	What type of meat is this?
Seller:	goRaant	Lamb.

Exchange 23

Can you give me change for this?		
Buyer:	to manaa ishee pRishtangi dey?	Can you give me change for this?
Seller:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 24

Begging is a common phenomenon in any city in the region. In Afghanistan, beggars are often widowed women and small children from poor, rural areas.^{703, 704} In Pakistan, where urban growth and poverty is on the rise, beggars are often unemployed women and small children. According to the Asian Human Rights Commission, an estimated 1.5 million children live on Pakistan's urban streets.⁷⁰⁵ Many are runaways from abusive homes. In Quetta alone, approximately 15,000 children as young as 5 years old beg and sell assorted items on the street, or sort through garbage heaps for items they can sell to scrap dealers.⁷⁰⁶ Despite the government's efforts to clamp down on begging, it remains widespread.⁷⁰⁷



Tea seller, Quetta
Flickr / Robin Jakobsson

Please, buy something from me.		
Seller:	meheRbaanee beekan maneeyaa haatiRaa cheezey bigiR	Please, buy something from me.
Buyer:	bahel kin manee goRaa zaR na bachato	Sorry, I have no money left.

Exchange 25

Money, Credit Cards, and ATMs

Throughout Balochistan, most transactions are cash-only and in the local currency—rupees (Pakistan), afghanis (Afghanistan), and rials (Iran)—although upscale hotels and restaurants, airlines, and travel agents may accept U.S. dollars and credit cards. Access to ATMs is generally limited to large banks in urban areas. In Afghanistan, cash is required for payment, as credit card services are mostly unavailable; there is no ATM access in the Baloch region of Afghanistan. It is possible to exchange currency in the Balochi-speaking regions, but procedures and access vary. Money exchangers at airports, large banks, and local bazaars offer such services.^{708, 709}

Do you accept U.S. currency?		
Buyer:	to aamReekaa-ee zeR giRey?	Do you accept U.S. currency?
Seller:	inaa, maa paakeestaanee Roopee giRant	No, we only accept Pakistani rupees (PKR).

Exchange 26

Urban Transportation and Traffic

Travel throughout Balochistan requires planning as travel restrictions are in effect for Pakistan and Iran, specifically Sistan and Baluchestan Province.⁷¹⁰ Those visiting Balochistan Province in Pakistan must receive permission from the province's home secretary to travel to restricted areas.^{711, 712} Travel to the northern and western regions of the province should be avoided because of serious safety concerns. Travelers in Quetta should take added precautions because there have been occasional gun battles in the streets, and curfews are sometimes in effect.⁷¹³ Travelers should avoid coming within 100 km (60 mi) of the Afghanistan-Iran border.⁷¹⁴



Karachi Street, Sindh Province
Wikimedia / Fantaz

Public transportation should be avoided by Westerners. At the moment, U.S. mission personnel are not allowed to use any form of public transportation in Pakistan, where militants and anti-Western terrorist groups create security risks. Moreover, drivers of vehicles for hire, including buses, drive recklessly and cause numerous collisions. Urban police routinely take bribes to ignore traffic violations. Police forces are understaffed and cannot maintain an adequate police presence.^{715, 716}

Roads

Travel by car is difficult and often hazardous in Balochistan, where road conditions fall far below Western standards. In cities, there are few traffic lights, virtually no signage, no lane demarcation, and roads may be unlit at night. Roadways are not maintained, which can damage vehicles and create hazardous driving conditions. Accidents frequently occur as many drivers are unlicensed and traffic rules are often neither obeyed nor enforced. Most of the roads in Pakistan's Balochistan Province are dirt or gravel; paved roads in Quetta are more common.⁷¹⁷ In Pakistan, traffic flows on the left side of the roadway—the opposite of the United States.^{718, 719}



Vegetable market, Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Flickr / Clement Bourse CC BY-SA 2.0

In Iran, traffic accidents are the second most common cause of death. Because of occasional roadblocks handled by inexperienced personnel in Iran's cities, drivers should carry identification at all times.⁷²⁰ Land mines pose a different but potentially fatal hazard for drivers in Afghanistan, where the explosive devices may be planted on or along roads.⁷²¹

Locals may drive into the opposite lane of traffic to get to their destination more rapidly. There are few sidewalks and bike lanes; where they do exist, they are encroached on by traffic or crowded with street vendors. Drivers must share the road with animals, horse carts, three-wheeled rickshaws, bicyclists, and pedestrians.^{722, 723} Accidents involving foreign nationals may quickly escalate into confrontations. Typically, the foreigner involved is expected to pay for damages, no matter who is at fault.^{724, 725}

Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?		
Visitor:	eydaa kashu guRaa gaRdee aanee mastRee ast?	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 27

Is there a gas station nearby?		
Visitor:	eydaa kashu guRaa petRol pamp ast?	Is there a gas station nearby?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 28

Buses

There are no subways or commuter trains in Pakistan. Even larger cities like Karachi do not have a mass public transport system. This has led to a surge in private vehicles for hire, though they are unregulated and often too expensive for locals.^{726, 727} In Afghan cities, government-run buses (“milli buses”) can be found at transport depots. Milli buses do not have a fixed departure time; they leave as soon as they have collected enough passengers. Milli buses have a per-seat fare that is cheaper than any other form of transportation, but there are usually more passengers than seats.⁷²⁸ In Iran, most large cities have intercity and local bus service.⁷²⁹

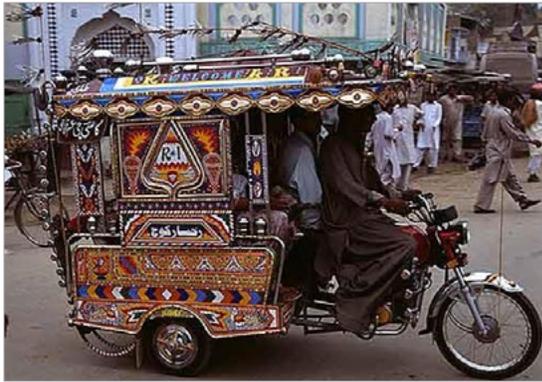
In all three countries, buses are segregated by gender. For women, getting around in Pakistani and Afghan cities, whether on foot or in a public bus, is difficult.^{730, 731} One study found that almost 85% of working women in Karachi had been harassed or assaulted in 2015.⁷³²

Will the bus be here soon?		
Visitor:	bas idaa zoot iket?	Will the bus be here soon?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 29

Taxis

In Iranian cities, taxis are widely available. Prearranged taxis are generally safer than those solicited on the street, and some reports of scams involving taxis have been reported.⁷³³ Shared taxis are available along the main city or tourist routes. Female-only taxis are becoming more widely available in Iran.⁷³⁴



Qingqi taxi, Pakistan
Wikimedia

In Pakistani cities, yellow taxis can be found at hotels and airports. For traveling short distances, auto rickshaws and horse-drawn carts (*tonga*) can be hired. Motorcycle rickshaws, called *chand gari* (“moon car”) or *qingqi*, are cheaper than taxis but can flip over around sharp turns.^{735, 736} Fares for all modes of transportation should be negotiated before boarding. Female-only taxis and rickshaws (in pink) are growing in popularity. Rickshaws, minibuses, and horse-drawn carts are often ornately decorated with colorful designs, advertisements, or political statements, which is a long-established tradition.^{737, 738}

Shared taxis are one of the most common forms of public transportation in Afghanistan. Service within major Afghan cities is cheap and easy to find, but traveling between cities can be expensive. Shared taxis do not have set rates or meters, so it is best to negotiate the price before entering. Extra precaution should be used when hailing cabs in Afghanistan, especially near sensitive locations like military bases. Private taxis are available for hire in some of the larger cities; passengers are expected to haggle, and foreigners may pay an “inflation” rate on top of the regular price. When traveling by taxi, it is customary for women to sit in the back seat.⁷³⁹

Can you take me there?		
Visitor:	to manaa oada buRt kuRt kuney?	Can you take me there?
Local:	hhawo, kut kaanaa	Yes, I can.

Exchange 30

Trains and Planes

In the Balochi-speaking regions of Pakistan and Iran, except in the southwestern provinces, train travel is generally well organized, comfortable, and secure. In the past, trains in Pakistan have been targeted by terrorist bombs.⁷⁴⁰ Presently, there is a rail link between Quetta and Zahedan, Iran.⁷⁴¹ A recently announced project will link the Pakistani port of Gwadar to China, which analysts observe will give China greater access to and control of the Persian Gulf.⁷⁴² Afghanistan’s railway system is still under development, and there were no passenger rail lines as of 2019.⁷⁴³

Is there a train station nearby?		
Visitor:	eydaa Reylwey steyshnan ast?	Is there a train station nearby?
Local:	inaa [hhawo]	No. [Yes.]

Exchange 31

Airports are in the major urban centers throughout Balochistan. International and domestic flights are available. The international airports in Balochistan Province are in Gwadar, Turbat, and Quetta.⁷⁴⁴ A new, Chinese-funded airport under construction just north of Gwadar's existing one is expected to become the second-largest in the country.⁷⁴⁵ In Sistan and Baluchestan Province, the safety of the aging fleet of planes is questionable. Such planes are used for domestic flights, which should be avoided.⁷⁴⁶ Concerns also exist about the safety of airplanes in Afghanistan, and travelers are advised not to fly. The European Union banned all Afghan airlines from its airspace in 2010 because of safety concerns.⁷⁴⁷



Zahedan Airport, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Flickr / Clement Bourse CC BY-SA 2.0

Is this airline safe for domestic travel?		
Visitor:	ey jahaaz kampanee safar kanagey mah-fooz int?	Is this airline safe for domestic travel?
Local:	hhawo, bilkul	Yes, of course.

Exchange 32

Crime

Pakistan

Violent crime, including murder, rape, kidnapping, carjacking, highway robbery, and burglary, is prevalent in many of Pakistan's cities. High levels of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy are the primary drivers of crime.^{748, 749} While the number of terrorist attacks decreased in 2018, Pakistan continues to experience significant terrorist violence, including sectarian attacks. In Balochistan and Sindh provinces, hotels and restaurants frequented by Chinese nationals are increasingly at risk.⁷⁵⁰ In reaction, Pakistani security forces have increased their presence across the country, and the Pakistan Army launched an urban counterterrorism operation.^{751, 752}

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Karachi as a critical-threat location for terrorist activity directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests, and a high-threat location for crime directed at or affecting

official U.S. government interests.^{753, 754} Balochistan Province is a locus of narcotics and other forms of smuggling. The Taliban and Islamic militant organizations operate in the region, where police presence is limited.⁷⁵⁵ Kidnappings and assassinations of foreigners are specific threats in this area.^{756, 757}

Afghanistan

Violent crime, such as kidnapping, car theft, highway robbery, and drug-related violence, has become more common in Afghanistan's city streets. In some cases, these acts are carried out by people posing as law enforcement or Afghan Army officers. While cities are generally safer than rural areas, violence has increased in recent years, primarily as a result of increased insurgent activity, civil unrest, and poverty.⁷⁵⁸ Suicide bombings and coordinated attacks against government offices, foreign embassies, and U.S. military installations are on the rise. Marketplaces are also vulnerable. Foreigners, and Afghans associated with them, are potential targets, including nongovernmental organization employees, local medical staff, and aid workers.^{759, 760}

Iran



Iranian rial, the currency of Iran
Flickr / . . . --- . . . CC BY NC 2.0

Major crime is not generally a problem in Iran. But robberies of foreigners do occur, especially purse-snatching. In some cases, criminals impersonate police. In urban and rural areas, the Revolutionary Guard and local police are frequent targets of militant attacks. More serious crimes are perpetrated by organized groups associated with drug trafficking and money laundering.⁷⁶¹ Security forces occasionally monitor telephone calls and search personal effects in hotel rooms.⁷⁶²

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Chapter 4 | Assessment

1. Nearly half of all urban-dwelling Baloch live in Karachi.
2. Hospitals in urban centers provide adequate basic care.
3. City driving in the Baloch regions of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran is hazardous.
4. Access to water is one of the main problems in urban areas.
5. Travel by air is generally considered safe in Afghanistan.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



*Weighing a young goat, Balochistan Province
Flickr / USAID Pakistan*

Chapter 5 | Balochi Cultural Orientation

Rural Life

Introduction

The Baloch regions of Afghanistan, Iran, and southern Pakistan are remote, predominantly rural, and mostly rock and desert. These areas are primarily agricultural, and lack access to electricity and piped water. Because paved roads and other infrastructure are absent, transportation and trade between rural communities has been facilitated by nomadic activity.⁷⁶³

The Baloch have historically defended themselves from foreign invaders by forming loose tribal unions. The unions are linked through trade, agriculture, and livestock. This cooperation also created social, political, and military alignments.⁷⁶⁴ About half the Baloch population is nomadic, moving seasonally with their herds of sheep and camels across the porous international borders.^{765, 766} Per Islamic law and tradition, land use

and natural resources are viewed as collective among the tribes; but land and resources are, in reality, often under the control of tribal chiefs.⁷⁶⁷

Though the Baloch are a hospitable and generous people, an influx of refugees from Afghanistan has damaged the fragile environment of the region and raised security concerns. The Baloch involvement in smuggling drugs and other contraband across borders also has raised concerns. Poverty is widespread among the Baloch.⁷⁶⁸ According to the United Nations 2017 Pakistan Human Development Report, Balochistan Province has the lowest average achievements in terms of people's health, their level of education achieved, and their standard of living.⁷⁶⁹ The province has a 50% literacy rate, and around one-third of the population is unemployed or underemployed.⁷⁷⁰ Despite rich mineral resources, including coal, copper, and natural gas, only 25% of Balochistan Province's population receives electricity. Less than 7% of the province's population has access to sanitation and piped potable water.⁷⁷¹

Tribal Distribution

Of the estimated 9 million Baloch, more than 6 million live in Balochistan Province, Pakistan, where they are divided among 46 tribes (*tuman*), plus subtribes and clans. The main tribes include the Bugti, Marri, Mengal, Bizenjo, Jamali, and Rind.^{772, 773} The largest and most politically important tribes in the province are the Marri and Bugti (central) and the Mengal (northwest). Both tribes have a history of military confrontation.^{774, 775, 776}

In Iran, roughly 2 million Baloch live in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, mainly along its borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁷⁷⁷ Tribes in these areas include the Saravan, Lashari, and Barazani. Along the Gulf of Oman live the Sadozai and Taherza tribes.⁷⁷⁸ An estimated 500,000–600,000 Baloch live in southern Afghanistan, concentrated in southern Nimroz Province, and to a lesser degree in Helmand and Kandahar provinces.⁷⁷⁹



Baloch sardars meet with British officials, Jacobabad
Wikimedia / Charls Metcalfe CC BY SA 3.0

Tribal associations tend to be fluid. The Baloch will accept anyone as Baloch who adopts their language and adheres to the authority of the tribal leadership.⁷⁸⁰ Consequently, many Brahui are considered Baloch and have assimilated into the tribes. The Baloch maintain broad networks based on kinship, with family affiliations stretching long distances and across international boundaries.⁷⁸¹

About half the Baloch live in permanent settlements, while the other half are nomadic or seminomadic, moving along seasonal migration routes.^{782, 783} The territory that a tribe or group may occupy during their migrations can shift every few years, sometimes from one side of a border to another.⁷⁸⁴ Droughts and other events can change settlement patterns, with those living in villages becoming nomadic in search of water, while those who normally make seasonal migrations settle close to a water source.⁷⁸⁵

Tribal Politics

In the pyramid of Baloch society, the *hakomzat* (elite) are at the top; they are members of a sardar's extended family and are referred to individually as a *hakim*. Next are the *baloc*—nomads or descendants of nomads who are considered to be the original Baloch—followed by the *šahri* or settled cultivators, with the *golam* or manual laborers and servants at the bottom.⁷⁸⁶ Apart from *golam*, who are the descendants of African slaves, mobility across class boundaries is possible, but it is relatively uncommon.⁷⁸⁷ Baloch society has been described as feudal and hierarchical, with no ethnic-unit distinctions. Although respectful of both men and women, the father's lineage determines any group or political action.^{788, 789}

Baloch tribal structure centralizes power in the hands of local tribal leaders or sardars, who historically were ruled by the Baloch khan.^{790, 791, 792} The position of sardar is passed from father to son. Historically, if the sardar was unjust or disliked, he could be removed by a council of elders known as the jirga. In the reign of Ahmadzai khans, the sardars' powers grew, and during the colonial era, British authorities gave them complete sovereignty over their tribes and paid them to establish tribal militias called "levies."^{793, 794}

Does your sardar live here?		
Visitor:	shumey saaRdaa idaa nishtag?	Does your sardar live here?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 33

Will you take me to your sardar?		
Visitor:	to menaa saaRdaaRey kiRaa baaRey?	Will you take me to your sardar?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 34

Today, the Balochistan Levies provide security forces in most rural areas of Balochistan Province. The Balochistan Police are the primary law enforcement in cities. Critics contend that the Levies forces have little training and are used by sardars to serve their own interests.^{795, 796} In 2019, the provincial government merged the Levies and police forces in the districts of Quetta, Lasbela, and Gwadar, citing the Levies inability to handle the increasingly charged security situation there.⁷⁹⁷

The jirga is one of the oldest institutions surviving in Baloch (and Brahui and Pashtun) communities. It is usually composed of older men who act as the legislative and judicial body at the rural community level. When there is a matter to be decided, a jirga is convened.^{798, 799, 800} Although the jirga does not have any legal authority,



Tribal leaders and Afghan soldiers meet, Afghanistan
Flickr / Resolute Support Media

decisions are generally respected by the conflicting parties. By and large, judiciary and local administrators have taken over the role, but the tradition is still active in rural areas. Disputes are resolved with penalties in the form of cash, land, or young women given to the other party in marriage (*vani*). Some prefer the Baloch *biradri* system, where the disputes are taken to the community's senior-most influential person.⁸⁰¹ Women never hold formal positions in Baloch, Brahui, or Pashtun tribal systems.⁸⁰²

Land Distribution and Ownership

Private land ownership in the Balochistan region is often difficult to determine because of the lack of government and private records, regime changes, land reform, and complicated inheritance laws that have left the land fragmented. Plots tend to be small. In Balochistan Province, the area is mostly rock and desert, with arable land found in small pockets. The only sizable pieces of farmland are found along rivers where the soil is rich enough to support crops. Land ownership is highly concentrated; almost half the farm area is owned by 7% of the population and worked by farmers who have agreements to use the land. The rest are farms of less than 10 hectares (25 acres).⁸⁰³ Balochs complain that ill-defined land ownership rights in the province have led to land grabs by wealthy developers and the Pakistan army, especially around Gwadar.⁸⁰⁴



Reed-covered huts, Nushki, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Najamuddin Shahwani

Much of the land being cultivated or used to raise herds is under the discretion of tribal chiefs. Land and natural resources are owned collectively by right of customary use—the tribe owns it because they have always used it, and they determine who else uses the land. The system of common use usually protects resources from overuse since a group will move on before an area is entirely exhausted, allowing pastures to recover.⁸⁰⁵

Women's ownership of land in rural areas is rare, despite provisions in customary and Islamic law that expressly provide such rights. Land ownership for women in northern Balochistan Province is nearly nonexistent as these tribes practice *mard bakhsh* (literally: "willed to a man"), meaning that only men with sons are permitted to own land.⁸⁰⁶

Do you own this land?		
Visitor:	shumaa zameena maalik et?	Do you own this land?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 35

Perhaps more important than land ownership is control over water sources. As with land, natural water sources are not considered private property—no one has the right to restrict someone else's access to the

water—but wells and other improved water sources are owned by whoever makes them.⁸⁰⁷ For example, a village or group of Baloch may band together to take on an irrigation project, and access to the water made available is based on participation in the digging or on financial contributions to the enterprise.⁸⁰⁸

Rural Economy

Agriculture

Balochistan remains largely rural and predominantly agricultural.^{809, 810} Farming is limited by the scarcity of water, power, and an adequate transportation network. Corruption, crime, political uncertainty, lack of infrastructure, and high costs of transportation discourage investment that would create wage-paying jobs and encourage economic growth.⁸¹¹

Most Baloch survive on small-scale subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Drought-resistant crops are grown on small plots near water sources.⁸¹² Even plots with improved irrigation are limited by variable rainfall, and few farmers have access to improved seed stock, fertilizer, pesticides, and modern farming equipment (as well as spare parts needed for maintenance), all of which limit yields.^{813, 814, 815}



*Three generations of farmers use oxen to plow
Flickr / Beluchistan CC BY-SA 2.0*

Wheat, sorghum, and rice are the major food crops; farmers also produce some vegetables (potatoes, carrots, and spinach) and nuts. Fruits (grapes, apples, pomegranates) are the principal cash crops.^{816, 817, 818} Some cotton and tobacco are grown, mainly in Afghanistan.⁸¹⁹ In Iran, pistachios are the primary horticultural crop, followed by date palms—98% of date palm production occurs in southern Iran, including Sistan and Baluchestan Province.⁸²⁰

Animal husbandry—cattle, goats, and sheep—employs a great majority of the population and occupies most of the land.^{821, 822} The Baloch of Afghanistan are known for raising camels, too.^{823, 824} Families consume the dairy products and sell the meat, hides, and wool. Almost all industry is small-scale, which includes cotton and woolen manufacturing, food processing, carpet making, textile and leather embroidery, small machinery and appliance manufacturing, and handicrafts.⁸²⁵

Following herds between water sources is generally seen as an adaptation to the harsh environment many Baloch inhabit. Because nomads move between water sources, they can support herds of 100–150 head and produce meat with a higher protein content than those animals raised on farms.⁸²⁶ In the greater Balochistan region, drought conditions over the last 20 years have caused severe water scarcity.^{827, 828} This has contributed to a loss of livestock, reduced farming productivity, and food insecurity.^{829, 830, 831}

Fishing has been a part of the coastal communities of southern Iran and Pakistan for centuries. In Balochistan Province alone, 40,000 fishermen earn their livelihoods along the coast. Since 2018, CPEC development has blocked access to the sea for many fishermen, prompting waves of protest from locals.^{832, 833}

Mining



Mining for chrome, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Trueblood786 CC BY SA 3.0

the last 18 years.^{835, 836} In the first quarter of 2019, eight workers lost their lives.⁸³⁷

Balochistan Province has the richest mineral resources in Pakistan.⁸³⁴ Many Baloch work in the coal mines of Pakistan, which are notoriously dangerous. Many of the mines are underregulated or illegal. They often operate without government control, ventilated air, and safety equipment such as respirators or protective eyewear. At least 75% of miners suffer from some ailment, with hepatitis and tuberculosis being common. Officially, there are at least 20,000 laborers employed across Balochistan Province in 2,500 mines. Unofficially, more than 100,000 people work in coal mines across the province, and over 1,000 coal miners have died in mining accidents during

The development of the Reko Diq mine, in the Chagai Hills, with gold and copper ore deposits valued at \$500 billion, has long been delayed by a dispute among international investors and the Pakistani government. As of 2019, the Pakistan Army will decide which investors develop the deposits, and an army-controlled engineering firm will be one of the developers. Baloch anger over the government's exploitation of the province's natural resources has been one of the key themes fueling the separatist insurgency.⁸³⁸

Smuggling

Neither farming nor animal husbandry is a secure source of income. To support themselves, most Baloch rely on a combination of agriculture and outside enterprises, which for many includes smuggling. Because the Baloch do not recognize international borders, they do not see smuggling as a crime. It is a legitimate and even prestigious source of income, seen by many Baloch as preferable to manual labor.⁸³⁹ Smuggling operations are well-organized and heavily protected. The governments of Iran and Pakistan officially consider smuggling a source of insecurity, but state and government officials, as well as parts of the military, participate in it, contributing to its persistence.⁸⁴⁰

Because Afghanistan currently accounts for 90% of worldwide illicit opium production, drugs are one of the top commodities smuggled from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran.^{841, 842} In addition to opium, smuggled goods include fuel, weapons, and common items, including food, that are taxed at a higher rate in one country compared to another.^{843, 844}

Human smuggling is a large business as well.⁸⁴⁵ Afghans often cross the border illegally in search of work in Iran and Pakistan. People often are driven to the border where they cross through mountain passes on foot to be met with transportation on the other side. Motorcycles and cars adapted to the rough mountain passes are also used. To curb this illegal activity, a security wall along the Iran-Afghanistan border has been erected, and biometric registration is used to track cross-border traffic.⁸⁴⁶

Gender Roles and the Division of Labor

Baloch men and women both typically work but take distinctive roles to sustain their families. Men tend livestock, plant and harvest crops, and hunt. They are in charge of providing their family with basic materials for survival. Taking grain to the local mill is considered a husband's responsibility (although where mills are not available, grinding the grain is the wife's responsibility). Baloch men also oversee the transportation of family goods (in nomadic groups) and are responsible for the defense of the family. Men may leave the family to undertake trading or to work for short periods. Raiding and smuggling are also men's work.⁸⁴⁷



Farmers processing a grape harvest, Balochistan Province
Flickr / U.S. Department of Agriculture

By comparison, women set up and take care of the household. They care for children and prepare food. In addition, they collect water and firewood, weave tent panels and rugs, churn butter, wash clothes, and generally maintain the family's belongings.^{848, 849}

Transportation

Paved roads are a rarity in any rural Baloch territory, with 73% of rural areas having no paved roads.⁸⁵⁰ More than one-fourth of rural areas lack roads accessible by motor vehicles, and 14% are cut off from vehicles for at least part of the year. Consequently, most transportation is by foot, with loads carried on heads and shoulders, or on animals. The average household (usually women and children) spends three hours per day traveling to collect water, fuel, and food.^{851, 852}

The longest national highways in Pakistan, of which only 50% are paved, extend through Balochistan Province.⁸⁵³ Most reported traffic accidents occur on the N-25. This route connects Karachi to Afghanistan via Khuzdar, Kalat, Quetta, and Chaman. More than 150 fatal crashes have occurred on this single highway from 2015 to 2017.⁸⁵⁴ Those driving the province's coastal highway encounter daily dust storms during the summer.⁸⁵⁵

Under development is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: a road connecting Gwadar with Karachi (Makran Coastal Highway) and into China via Islamabad. Eventually, seaports in Gwadar and Karachi will be linked with northern Pakistan, western China, and Central Asia.⁸⁵⁶ Before the construction of the Makran

Coastal Highway, travel between Gwadar and Karachi required several days over rough dirt tracks; it now takes six hours. Some Baloch criticize the building of roads for Gwadar development at the expense of social services and education.⁸⁵⁷ The Gwadar to Karachi road is dangerous and prone to Baloch militant attacks by the United Baloch Army and others.^{858, 859}

Highway travel is hazardous in Afghanistan. Rates of highway crime (attacks, extortion, kidnapping) are high, and road conditions are particularly poor in outlying areas.⁸⁶⁰ Destruction to the nation's roads and bridges have left large sections of the country physically isolated. While over 10,000 miles of roads and highways were built between 2002 and 2014, much of it has since been worn away by overuse or damaged by improvised explosive devices (IEDs).⁸⁶¹ In remote areas, there are often no roads, only trails. In Sistan and Baluchestan Province, the only road from Zahedan to the port of Chabahar has been the site of frequent attacks by Jaish al-Adl, a Baloch militant group.^{862, 863}



*Ornately decorated truck, Balochistan Province
Wikimedia / Trueblood786 CC BY SA 3.0*

Health Care

Most rural Baloch do not have access to health care. Poor security keeps doctors from practicing in outlying areas of Balochistan Province. As a result, it has the lowest ratio of doctors per capita in Pakistan—1 doctor per 2,000 people.⁸⁶⁴ Where clinics are available, health care is generally not used because of a lack of confidence in the doctors and facilities. Because one-third of the population lives more than an hour away from the nearest facility, distance plays a factor in Baloch not consulting health-care professionals. Other factors are cost and the shortage of female doctors and nurses to serve female patients.⁸⁶⁵ The vast majority of women in Balochistan Province deliver their children at home and most of those without a skilled birth attendant.⁸⁶⁶ As a result, pregnant women are three times more likely to die in Balochistan Province than the rest of the country.⁸⁶⁷ Despite additional provisions for remote areas, access in Sistan and Baluchestan Province remains limited, and there are fewer doctors and clinics compared to the rest of the country.⁸⁶⁸

Outside major urban areas, Baloch combine traditional healing practices based on folk beliefs with Western medicine. Practitioners may include *hakims*, midwives, and herbalists. Embedded in Baloch healing traditions are a variety of healing methods that are religious or spiritual, and villagers may seek *hakims* or sorcerers to address illnesses or conditions believed to have supernatural causes, such as being given the evil eye or possession by a jinn (spirit). Some Baloch believe that extreme fear, anger, or jealousy, for example, indicates possession.⁸⁶⁹

The largest source of health problems in Baloch rural areas is contaminated drinking water. Nearly two decades of drought have led to dust and sandstorms, which bring respiratory illnesses, tuberculosis, and shortness of breath.⁸⁷⁰ Around 13% of households in Nimroz Province had access to improved sources

of drinking water. Tanker trucks are the main source of water for cooking, washing, and other purposes; outside of Zaranj, it is the main source of water for 78% of households, though more than half the households use water from unprotected wells.⁸⁷¹



Collecting water, Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchestan Province tabnaksistanbaluchestan.ir

Malnutrition remains a problem in Pakistan, especially for children under 5 years of age. More than half the country's children show evidence of stunted growth. Lack of access to health facilities, food scarcity, natural disasters such as drought and flooding, and poor infrastructure are major factors in child malnutrition, which predominantly affects Pakistan's poor.⁸⁷² Stunted growth in children is extremely high in Balochistan Province, where four out of five households cannot afford a minimally nutritious diet.^{873, 874} Child mortality rates there are the highest in all of Pakistan, with 1 out of 10 children dying before their first birthday. More than half of these deaths occur due to communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases.⁸⁷⁵

Is there a medical clinic nearby?		
Visitor:	ee nazeenkaan klineek ast?	Is there a medical clinic nearby?
Local:	ho, odan	Yes, over there.

Exchange 36

Education

Long commutes and lack of roads particularly limit educational opportunities for rural students, who may live more than 5 km (3 mi) from the closest school; for some, the commute is more than an hour.⁸⁷⁶ In rural Balochistan Province, 75% of girls never attend school, and only 30% of boys are enrolled by middle school.⁸⁷⁷

Is there a school nearby?		
Visitor:	ee nazeenkaan iskool ast?	Is there a school nearby?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 37

It is also difficult to staff schools in remote areas, especially if they are considered unsafe. More than half of government primary schools operate with only one teacher.⁸⁷⁸ Rural schools are also poorly equipped; only one out of four have basic facilities like running water and latrines.⁸⁷⁹ Some are housed in crumbling structures or held outdoors.^{880, 881, 882}

In Nimroz Province, over half the children attend primary school, though attendance rates are higher among boys. By high school, only 15% of boys and 10% of girls are in school.⁸⁸³ Areas with a Baloch majority in Iran are underdeveloped and frequently face the problems raised by limited access to housing, education, health care, and employment.⁸⁸⁴

Nomadism

About half the Baloch are believed to be either nomadic or seminomadic.⁸⁸⁵ Moving from place to place according to rainfall and to avoid overgrazing is an essential adaptation to the harsh environment. Because the lack of infrastructure limits contact between rural communities, nomads often link communities socially and economically.⁸⁸⁶ Although efforts have been made in Iran to force the Baloch into permanent settlements, many have reverted to nomadism since the 1980s, partly because the nomadic lifestyle is a coping mechanism for political and environmental uncertainty, and partly because the Baloch embrace nomadism as part of their identity.^{887, 888}



Boys learning to weave palm leaves, Sarbaz, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
Flickr / Beluchistan CC BY-SA 2.0

Do you know this area very well?		
Visitor:	ee andaan shaReeya seRaa zaanee?	Do you know this area very well?
Local:	aho, maa idaa mazan gutad	Yes, I grew up here.

Exchange 38

Nomadic Baloch travel in groups of 4–10 families of the same kin group, with each family having a flock of sheep and goats (sometimes sharing a herd), depending on the resources of the area. They may plant fruit trees or crops on small, scattered plots that they harvest seasonally.⁸⁸⁹ The nomadic encampment (*halk*) is led by the *hakim*. Tents are organized around the his tent, which is usually located in the middle of the encampment. The tents of closer family are nearest to him, while extended relatives are farther away. Poorer relatives serve as shepherds.⁸⁹⁰

The nomadic Baloch traditionally live in tents (*gidam*) made of black goat's wool reinforced with woven palm mats or made with dwarf palm leaves.⁸⁹¹ During the winter months, sheep, goats, and chickens are kept inside the tents to protect them from the cold and to provide additional warmth for the people.^{892, 893}

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Borders between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran have official checkpoints. There are also military and police checkpoints throughout the Balochistan region, especially in the vicinity of Gwadar.⁸⁹⁴ Border officials may demand bribes.⁸⁹⁵

Where is the nearest checkpoint?		
Visitor:	nazeengkeen chokey kuj int?	Where is the nearest checkpoint?
Local:	do keelometeR idaa chey	Two kilometers from here.

Exchange 39

People making border crossings are expected to carry official identification and border passes. Baloch often have identity cards for two or three countries, frequently crossing borders illegally.⁸⁹⁶ Family groups and even villages straddle borders, and laws that restrict movement across borders are seen as interfering with Baloch ancestral rights.⁸⁹⁷ Because smuggling plays a key role in the Baloch economy, developing and maintaining ties on both sides of the border are considered economically important.⁸⁹⁸

In Afghanistan, roadblocks and checkpoints are controlled by Afghan security forces, and random insurgent checkpoints remain a problem. Security forces will shoot at vehicles that do not stop at government-run checkpoints. Providing the appropriate identification is generally sufficient to pass through the checkpoint.⁸⁹⁹

Is this all the ID you have?		
Soldier:	hamey shanaaKhtee kaaRd teRaa gon int?	Is this all the ID you have?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 40

Afghanistan-Pakistan Border

Afghanistan's porous border with Pakistan has one checkpoint, the Wesh-Chaman, that connects with Balochistan Province. Ultimately linking Kandahar and Quetta, the “Friendship Gate” is a major transit point for NATO supplies into Afghanistan and trade and smuggled goods between the two countries.⁹⁰⁰ The Baloch Levies is in charge of security at Wesh-Chaman and of escorting foreigners to and from Quetta.⁹⁰¹ Pakistan is increasing security along its side of the border with the construction of a 2,600-km (1,600-mi) barrier. As of 2019, a third of the fence was complete.⁹⁰²

Iran-Pakistan Border

Sistan and Baluchestan Province borders Balochistan and Nimroz provinces to its east. The border with Balochistan Province is unfenced and has few checkpoints. The main transit station sits between the small towns of Taftan (Pakistan) and Mirjaveh (Iran)—about an hour's



*Balochistan Levies Officer, Taftan, Balochistan Province
Flickr / Robin Jakobsson*

drive from Zahedan. The Taftan crossing is an active site for smuggling out of Pakistan; its border guards have been the target of several attacks over the last few years by Jaish al-Adl.^{903, 904}

Are you carrying any guns?		
Soldier:	teRaa toopang gon int?	Are you carrying any guns?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 41

Iran-Afghanistan Border

The main border crossing between Afghanistan and Iran lies between Milak, Iran, and Zaranj, Afghanistan. Zaranj is considered Afghanistan's main smuggling hub.⁹⁰⁵ To curb trafficking into Iran, the Iranian government built a 4.5-m (15-ft) wall and a system of trenches that runs more than half the length of its 147-mile border with Nimroz Province, to little effect.^{906, 907} Within Iran, foreign travel is strictly controlled by the authorities, and roadblocks and checkpoints are common. Travelers should not take any photos of the military, police, or border crossings.⁹⁰⁸

Please get out of the car.		
Soldier:	kaaReeyeh chey deRaa	Please get out of the car.
Local:	baley	Okay.

Exchange 42

Show us the car registration.		
Soldier:	kaaReeyeh kaagad aanaa peysh daaR	Show us the car registration.
Local:	baley	Okay.

Exchange 43

Landmines and IEDs

From the Soviets to the Taliban, numerous factions have used landmines and IEDs in Afghanistan and along the border with Pakistan. High estimates place the number of landmines scattered throughout Afghanistan in the millions.⁹⁰⁹ While aggressive demining operations continue, the resurgent Taliban continue to place mines and pressure-plate IEDs along main roads and highways, and around cities. These areas are sometimes marked with red-painted rocks, although many hazardous areas are unmarked.^{910, 911} There is also widespread abandoned and unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan; the most affected areas are the eastern and southern parts of the country. In 2017, there were 2,300 deaths from mines, IEDs, and explosive remnants of war, though experts believe these numbers are underreported.⁹¹²

In addition to landmines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war are known to exist in the Baloch regions of Pakistan and Iran.⁹¹³ Baloch militants use antipersonnel landmines, victim-activated explosive devices, and other IEDs for attacks in Balochistan Province and against Iranian security forces in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.⁹¹⁴

Is this area mined?		
Soldierr:	ee yandam maayn ast int?	Is this area mined?
Local:	hhawo [inaa]	Yes. [No].

Exchange 44

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Chapter 5 | Assessment

1. Roughly two-thirds of the Baloch are nomadic.
2. Access to water is more important than land ownership to the Baloch.
3. Baloch men are expected to provide the basic material needs for their family.
4. The Baloch do not recognize international borders and often carry identification from more than one country.
5. Although remote, most rural areas inhabited by the Baloch are served by paved roads.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



Father and son, Sistan and Baluchestan Province
qudsonline.ir

Chapter 6 | Balochi Cultural Orientation

Family Life

Introduction

Among Baloch, the value of family over the individual is almost universal, and there is a strong reliance on family in day-to-day functions and crises. Baloch social organization is based on blood kinship. Different groups mostly descend from a common ancestor, and members share common interests and threats. This has made the clan the basis of Baloch society. Every subclan (*paro*) represents a family, and a few *paros* constitute a clan. Several clans make a tribe (*tuman*).⁹¹⁴

While some Baloch tribes follow strict patrilineal descent, others subscribe to a more dual bond that acknowledges matrilineal kinship.⁹¹⁵ Balochi does not have different words for the maternal and paternal sides. Paternal relations determine cooperation in agriculture and war, and establish lineage. Maternal

relatives are better known for providing nurturing relationships.^{916, 917} Most Baloch treat their mother's and father's extended family as a pool of potential assistance when needed. Because of food insecurity and job shortages, a wide circle of friends is imperative.^{918, 919}

Although lineage bonds foster social and political cooperation, social cohesion is seldom achieved; lineages may split because of disputes. The older and more prestigious lineages are accorded greater authority within the Baloch community. Yet nomads inevitably interact with other groups, so power dynamics and hierarchies must be renegotiated.^{920, 921}

Typical Household and Family Structure



Baloch men in traditional dress
Flickr / rah331

Within families there is a tendency toward respect for age (male or female), reverence for motherhood, eagerness for children (especially sons), and avoidance of divorce. Rigorously honored ideals emphasize family cohesion. Except for a very few examples of urban nuclear families, the pattern of extended household life dominates Baloch society. In a nomadic settlement or village, it is not unusual for a household to consist of a husband and wife, their sons, their sons' wives and children, their unmarried daughters, and any elderly grandparents.⁹²²

The cohesiveness of the kin group (*khandan*) goes beyond immediate relatives and may include distant relatives, friends, members of the tribe, and neighbors, all who physically live nearby or in adjacent homes. In a region that has historically lacked nationwide public welfare, security, and education systems, the *khandan* is the primary social support for the Baloch.^{923, 924}

Male and Female Interactions Within the Family



Young boys in Balochistan often wear a version of the shalwar kameez Flickr / Beluchistan CC BY-SA 2.0

Baloch families are headed by a male authority figure. The role is filled by the father or, in the case of his death, the eldest son. The patriarch and male adults of the family are responsible for the family's financial security, safety, and adherence to social codes. Only a husband, father, brother, or son may enter a Baloch home unannounced. Others must give notice and provide time for women inside to seclude themselves.⁹²⁵

Women rarely work outside the home, though they may work in fields adjacent to the home, fetch water, and feed livestock. Women are expected to hold the family and home together through cultural wisdom. They are also

the primary caregivers, responsible for parenting, caring for elderly and sick family members, and the many tasks involved in operating the household.^{926, 927}

Men act as the family’s representatives in the public sphere. In urban areas, this involves working a paid job. Men also participate in local politics and serve in militias.^{928, 929} Though the patriarch is the outward head of household, privately, some women hold a greater degree of power. Women’s social status is strongly contingent upon being married, faithful, and rearing children.^{930, 931}

Status of Elders and Children

As in many South Asian and Central Asian cultures, the Baloch revere the elderly. Traditionally, the eldest members of a Baloch community serve as arbiters of communal disputes. Though this means of resolution is bound by tradition rather than law, most Baloch adhere to an elder’s decision.⁹³²

Respected khan, we need your help / advice / opinion.		
Visitor::	waajeh maa shumey madad to salaaya lotan.	Respected khan, we need your help / advice / opinion.
Local:	yaakin	Okay.

Exchange 45

Baloch families are typically large and often have more children than the national average.^{933, 934} Because of widespread poverty, children do not have many of the freedoms enjoyed by those in the West. In greater Balochistan, where it is difficult to find a job or to secure one that pays enough to provide for a family, child labor is common among poorer segments of society. Children from impoverished backgrounds often work rather than attend school.⁹³⁵ In rural areas, girls help maintain the household, fetch water, and do embroidery work. Male children as young as 7 years old help with family farms—cutting wheat, collecting kindling, and tending livestock. Baloch children from large families are expected to help families with fewer children.^{936, 937}

Are these people [children] part of your family?		
Visitor::	ee tey logey maRdum chuk int?	Are these people [children] part of your family?
Local:	hhawo [inna]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 46

Some boys from impoverished families are forced to work as coal cutters and cooks in Balochistan Province’s coal mines, where they are often sexually abused by adult miners.⁹³⁸ Others move to urban areas for employment, working in carpentry and welding shops, brick kilns, or selling fruit and vegetables in the markets.^{939, 940} Many are exploited by organized crime groups who force them to peddle goods, collect metal scrap on the street, or beg.⁹⁴¹ Children are also known to be picked up and transited into Iran to be sold into slavery.⁹⁴²

Do your children go to school?		
Visitor::	shumey zahgaan iskooley Rogint?	Do your children go to school?
Local:	hhawo [inna]	Yes. [No.]

Exchange 47

Marriage and Divorce

Islam permits a man to marry multiple wives. Baloch marriages in Iran and in some conservative communities in Balochistan Province are polygamous, though the tradition is fading.^{943, 944} Lifelong monogamy is the cultural expectation. Most marriages are within a particular social group, and among coastal Baloch and Zikri, marriage between cousins is common as such arrangements keep resources within the family.⁹⁴⁵ In Iran and Afghanistan, the minimum age for marriage is 13 and 16, respectively—well below the internationally recommended standard of 18. In Pakistan, despite laws that prohibit marriage for girls younger than 18, an estimated 21% of marriages involve underage girls.^{946, 947}



Baloch girls in traditional dress, Sistan and Baluchestan Province Wikimedia / رتشی ی CC BY SA 4.0

Marriage is used to build alliances.^{948, 949} This is especially true in rural areas, where marriages are often arranged to settle tribal disputes or debts between families.⁹⁵⁰ Under the Baloch practice of *swara* (a form of *badal*, or reciprocity), a young girl is given into marriage for a crime committed by a male relative as a way of settling a dispute. In this blood-for-blood practice, grooms are usually older than their brides; in some cases, they may be significantly older. The practice persists but is becoming less common. According to Pakistan's constitution, *swara* marriages are invalid, but no provisions have been made to criminalize the practice.⁹⁵¹

Both men and women can sue for divorce, and while it is uncommon among the Baloch to do so, men are known to divorce women when the couple is unable to have children. Divorced men have little difficulty in remarrying, yet Baloch culture places a great stigma upon divorced women. On the other hand, widows are not stigmatized. Traditionally, widows return to their birth home, and frequently are able to remarry.⁹⁵²

Family Social Events

Weddings

Marriage represents the passage from adolescence to adulthood, and as such, celebrations are rich in traditions and festivities extend over a few days. Weddings are also social contracts between families and tribes, with extensive financial obligations and social requirements. While many cultures of South and

Central Asia feature a dowry payment to the groom and his family, the Baloch do not. The groom must pay the bride's family a bride price (*labb*), which generally consists of livestock, cash, or other valuable tangible assets.^{953, 954}

Congratulations on your wedding!		
Visitor::	taRaa seed moobaaRak bibee!	Congratulations on your wedding!
Local:	tey idaa aaya gey minata zooRaan	We are honored to have you here.

Exchange 48

The vast majority of Baloch marriages are arranged. Upon reaching an arrangement, the engagement (*harbarsindi*) is announced. This binding agreement cannot be honorably broken.⁹⁵⁵ The expenses (*pardach*) are incurred by the bridegroom and paid before the marriage. Expenses include embroidered clothing, jewelry, and other essential articles for the bride.⁹⁵⁶ To help with wedding expenses and the bride price, the groom receives *bijjar* (cooperation, aid) from his tribal community (mainly relatives and friends). A few days before the start of the wedding ceremony, the groom will receive *bijjar* in the form of sheep, cows, goats, crops, and cash.^{957, 958}

The pre-wedding ceremony begins with the traditional *jol bandi* ("closing the curtain") ritual at the bride's home. During this ceremony, the bride is covered with a decorative cloth sown by the groom's family. This marks the beginning of the official wedding ceremony. On the night before the wedding, the camp (or family) will segregate by gender. The bride is secluded with her female relatives. The older women advise her on how to conduct herself as a wife and apply intricate henna (*mehndi*) patterns to her hands and feet. At the same time, the groom must present the bride price to the bride's father. Men will celebrate by singing and dancing the *dochapi* (a variation of the *chaap* clap dance).⁹⁵⁹



*Men dance in tribal clothing, Balochistan Province
Flickr / rah331*

At sunrise, the men enter the women's camp. While the mullah performs the wedding ceremony (*nykah*), the bride and other women remain in their tent. A Muslim holy man (*wali*) represents the bride outside the tent. The mullah stands close enough to the tent for the bride to hear him as he reads the marriage contract three times. After each reading of the contract, the mullah asks the bride if she accepts the contract. After the third reading, she responds affirmatively with a nearly inaudible "hā." Now that the couple have accepted one another, they are married.⁹⁶⁰ The celebrations include feasting, music and dancing, and the passing of a collection bowl to help pay for the wedding. During celebrations it is not uncommon for Baloch to fire guns in the air, especially in rural areas.⁹⁶¹

Birth

Like many cultures of the region, a preference for male children exists among the Baloch, and the birth of a son is a source of great joy. Celebrations called *sepat* involve female family members gathering and singing songs of praise for the child. After naming the child, the mother and child are ritually bathed. On the seventh day after the birth, an animal sacrifice is made, and the food prepared from the sacrificial animal is distributed among the community. In certain circumstances, the Baloch delay the naming of newborns in an effort to protect them from disease and the supernatural. In such cases, Baloch newborns are given a temporary or childhood name taken from those of trees, birds, or expressions of joy.⁹⁶² Baloch believe that during the 40 days following a birth, a mother and child are considered vulnerable to attack from evil spirits and the “evil eye.” Each is given an iron talisman for protection during this time.⁹⁶³ Various milestones in children’s lives are celebrated, including a child’s first steps (*padgami*) and a son’s circumcision (*burrak*).⁹⁶⁴



Young Baloch girl, Kerman Province
Wikimedia / Mostafameraji CC BY SA 4.0

Funerals

Baloch funerary rites generally follow common Muslim practices. The deceased’s family sends notice to friends and family, who come to mourn. While the deceased is ritually cleansed and garbed, women prepare a feast at the home of the deceased. As with most occasions of this magnitude, a bowl for donations to defray the burial costs is passed around while the guests eat. When a man dies, the women of the household lament with open and loud wailing. Others admonish these women to compose themselves. The widow is expected to give up proper bathing and grooming for at least 15 days, while she is secluded in the home to mourn. After this time, her female friends visit and give her a floral powder with which she must wash her head before resuming her everyday life.^{965, 966} Members of the tribe or extended family will show support by providing the deceased’s family with meals, tea and sugar, rice, or by giving livestock or slipping money under a carpet in the home.⁹⁶⁷

I offer my condolences to you and your family.		
Visitor::	maa shey haandaaney soogeh gama shReeg int	I offer my condolences to you and your family.
Local:	shumey idey boowagey minat waaRan	Thank you for being with us.

Exchange 49

Naming Conventions

Among the Baloch, names are a symbol of honor and pride, providing a sense of belonging to the past. Baloch naming conventions, a mixture of Islamic and pre-Islamic traditions, are more complex than in the West. The complexity is compounded by the fact that many Baloch change their names, sometimes multiple times, throughout their lifetimes.⁹⁶⁸

Many Baloch personal names are associated with nature, days or months of birth, and colors.⁹⁶⁹ Additionally, women's names may derive from pre-Islamic folk traditions such as Parizad and Mahpari, both derived from *pari*, meaning “fairy.” Muslim names have also been commonplace. The use of family names is more recent and is largely imposed on the Baloch by national governments. These family names are frequently derived from village, tribal, or ancestral sources, with a form of the word “Baloch” being common.^{970, 971}



Infant boy, Balochistan Province
Flickr / Zest-pk

A child may be given a temporary name, which is typically diminutive and associated with nature. Common temporary names are Kauro (acacia tree) or Diluk (little heart) for boys and Guluk (little rose) or Tutuk (little parrot) for girls. If a son dies, and another is born soon after, he may be given the name Badal (exchange). Children retain these names until they come of age, at which point they are given an adult name. This is the age of circumcision for boys (7 or 8) and the time of marriage for girls.^{972, 973}

Baloch are often given their father's most commonly addressed name, as in Chakar-i Saihakk (Chakar son of Saihakk) or Haibitan Murad (Haibitan son of Murad). Traditionally, a Baloch woman's last name comes from her father and does not change with her marital status. A wife may avoid speaking the name of her husband until they have a child, calling him *mani mard*, “my husband” in the belief it will prolong affection. After the birth, she will call him “father of [child's name]”.^{974, 975}

It is not uncommon for Baloch to change their names in adulthood. Reasons vary from using a pseudonym in the ongoing Baloch insurgency to believing that a “heavy name” can negatively impact one's health and fortune. Baloch faith healers, who practice astrology, often prescribe a name change for those who have chronic ailments, stress, or other misfortune.^{976, 977}

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Chapter 6 | Assessment

1. Baloch women are seen unveiled only by their closest relatives.
2. Tribal identity permeates Baloch cultural, personal, and familial identity.
3. Many Baloch look toward the elder members of their community for mediation of disputes.
4. As in most South Asian cultures, the parents of a Baloch bride must pay a dowry to the groom's family.
5. Baloch girls can be sold into marriage as a way of settling disputes among tribal members.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True

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Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Final Assessment

1. The region in which most Balochi speakers live is spread across parts of three nations.
2. The southern Afghanistan provinces have no significant rivers.
3. The similarity of the Balochi language to several other languages of the Indian Peninsula supports the hypothesis that the Baloch migrated westward from northern India to their current location.
4. Under Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan I Ahmadzai, much of the Balochi-speaking regions came under the authority of the Khanate of Kalat.
5. The Baloch are treated similarly in each of the three countries they occupy.
6. The Baloch people prefer a distinct separation between religion and the practice of politics and government.
7. The Baloch in Afghanistan are part of the majority religious sect.
8. Fundamentalist Muslims see the Baloch as highly devout Muslims.
9. If a person has been given refuge (*bahut*) by a Baloch tribe, under the Baloch code, the person may still be released to state authorities if requested.
10. In Baloch communities, the jirga has the authority to remove a tribal chief.
11. The Baloch do not shake hands.
12. The Baloch freely invite visitors into their homes.
13. Every February, Baloch tribal chiefs meet at an annual fair in Tehran, Iran.
14. Buses and taxis are unsafe in Baloch areas.
15. The literacy gap between males and females throughout the Baloch region is high.
16. Gwadar is an agricultural area in Iran.
17. Most Baloch own their land.

Cultural Orientation | Balochi

Final Assessment - continued

18. Smuggling is a major source of income for many Baloch families.
19. Droughts can change settlement patterns of the rural Baloch.
20. Most Baloch have access to health care.
21. Among the Baloch, the penalty for adultery is death.
22. Baloch families tend to be small.
23. During a Baloch wedding, the bride remains secluded with her female relatives while a *wali*, a Muslim holy man, represents her at the actual ceremony.
24. A common feature of major Baloch social events is the passing of a donation bowl to help pay the costs of such elaborate undertakings.
25. Quetta's minority Baloch population is one of the largest urban Balochi-speaking groups in the Balochistan region.
26. The majority of Baloch are fighting to establish a separate Baloch state.
27. In Pakistan, it is appropriate for a man to initiate a handshake with a woman.
28. *Sajji* is an important tenet of Balochmayar.
29. The Baloch Liberation Army has been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department.
30. Violence based on ethnic and religious differences is common in the regions inhabited by Baloch.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False; 6. True; 7. True; 8. False; 9. False; 10. True; 11. False; 12. True; 13. False; 14. True; 15. True; 16. False; 17. False; 18. True; 19. True; 20. False; 21. True; 22. False; 23. True; 24. True; 25. True; 26. False; 27. False; 28. False; 29. True; 30. True