

# REMOTELY COLONIAL

HISTORY AND POLITICS IN BALOCHISTAN



NINA SWIDLER



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# Contents

<i>Note on Spellings and Transliterations</i>	vii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Maps</i>	xiv
1. Introduction	1
2. Kalat Before the British	32
3. The Birth of the Balochistan Agency	48
4. The Politics of Space	79
5. The Politics of Culture	117
6. The Space of Politics	149
7. The Averted Gaze	194
8. Seeking the Imaginary Balance	215
9. The Politics of Change	244
10. The Afterlife of Paramountcy	290
<i>Coda: Gwadar</i>	301
<i>Bibliography</i>	305
<i>Index</i>	315



# 1

## Introduction

'Remotely Colonial', is an intrinsically relative phrase, with both physical and cultural resonance. It is relative in the sense that the quality of remoteness implies an external, metropolitan location, far away, in both time and space, from the place of the subject and the people who occupy that place. Colonialism, too, is relativized in the phrase. It introduces a comparative dimension; it suggests a colonialism that is significantly different from other colonialisms. Remote colonialism implies relatively little investment because the colonizing power sees little or no opportunity for profit. Geopolitically driven colonization is perhaps the clearest example of the economics of remoteness. The goal of such colonization is security with self-sufficiency: the colony should be enabled to meet the costs of adequate security as defined by the state. Such colonization encodes a paradox of remoteness as it is distant in some sense, while figuring centrally in the strategic interests of a metropole. Typically, there is less attention to economic issues. The colonial population is present largely for military and administrative purposes, and there are few, if any, settlers.

In most parts of the formerly colonized world, the notion of remote colonialism carries an ironic resonance: for the local people subject to it, colonialism was never remote. The post-colonial consequences of remote colonialism have been as destructive as any other form of colonialism, especially as remote areas have become incorporated into new states. Populations of such areas entered the new national



arena with several disadvantages: little economic development, low rates of literacy, and locally distinctive forms of governance. Even had they had the will to do so, governments of most post World War II countries were poorly equipped to integrate such people, as they struggled with inadequate capital investment and political rivalries fostered during colonial rule.

As 'remote' is intrinsically relative, it is not surprising that it has acquired new meaning in the contemporary globalized world. If it once carried resonance of distance as encoding culturally exotic otherness, today it is more subversive, even threatening to the states that dominate the global flows of economic and political power. In a world of states, remote is a marker of incomplete state integration, of government failures, and local resistance to incorporation in the new body-politic. The condition of remoteness is often associated with the persistence of local leaders in continuing to provide some services such as representation or intervention, when the demands of the state conflict with local interests. In this aspect, remoteness is a problem for the state that includes such a space. In some instances, remote areas have come to serve as staging grounds for organizations that challenge the authority of national governments. In Pakistan, for example, dissidents repeatedly mount attacks on posts manned by such agents of the government as the police and the army. When such organizations mount an operation against distant, globally dominant states, like the recent bombings in European or American cities, they generate new tensions and international realignments.

Topographical features such as rugged mountain ranges and unforgiving deserts, contribute to the sense of remoteness. Travel is difficult and limited to routes around the natural barriers. Despite these obstacles, another paradox of remoteness is the presence of outsiders, as Ardner (1989: 218) points out. From the

point of view of the inhabitants, remote areas, historically, have been vulnerable to strangers engaged in conquest, usually elsewhere, or dislocated people seeking new territory. Today, remoteness is marketed to tourists seeking cultural authenticity.<sup>1</sup>

Both the past and the present of Balochistan exemplify the condition of remoteness. Historically situated in the distant reaches of the Persian and the Indian empires, it was periodically, and tenuously, attached to one or the other. Conquerors seeking the riches of South Asia have marched through it, from Darius and Alexander to the Portuguese and the British. It has been a new homeland for different people, as even the Baloch, who gave their name to the region, came from elsewhere. In the times when imperial reach was intermittent and limited, Balochistan was part of a larger frontier region structured by small polities and unstable zones of contestation. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Balochistan has been both remote and strategically important to world powers, first to Britain and now to the US. The British sought to secure the north-western borders of Imperial India when they established a permanent presence in what is now Pakistani Balochistan. They restructured regional space when they essentially imposed international borders upon Iran and Afghanistan. Incorporated into Pakistan in 1958, Balochistan remains remote to most Pakistanis, who know it primarily as the impoverished backwater of the country. Similarly, Pakistan remains a distant place for those Baloch who have never travelled beyond their provincial borders.

Kalat was a remote border chiefdom when it was drawn into British Imperial strategies in the nineteenth century. The ruler, Mehrab Khan, exercised a limited authority over a fractious array of sardars (tribal chiefs), largely through the tactic of divide and dominate. The Kalat Khanate comprised the highland areas of Sarawan and



Jhalawan, and the lowland plain of Kachhi, while Makran, on the southern coast, was tenuously connected to Kalat. The small enclave of Lasbela, with the port town of Sonmiani, was effectively independent. Most of the inhabitants of Kalat were pastoral nomads. A string of villages existed along a caravan route that stretched from the coast to Kandahar. Since Kalat lacked any defined borders, there were disputed zones between the rulers of Kalat and the Sindhi rulers to the east, Pushtuns to the north, and Persians to its west.

In 1837, a British delegation met Mehrab Khan with the intention of obtaining his cooperation in the British invasion of Afghanistan. The Khan, reluctantly, signed a safe-passage agreement, but many of the sardars failed to observe it, raiding the British Indian army as it marched through the region. The British, in retaliation, mounted a punitive attack on Kalat town, and killed Mir Mehrab Khan. Despite this unpromising beginning, the British and the Sardars ended up creating what the British termed as 'tribal governance', a political system that endured until 1958.

Balochistan's remoteness has been produced and reproduced over the centuries. It was restructured by the British when they established Quetta as their provincial headquarters and made it the centre of a rail and road network. The integrity of Kalat, deemed a native state by the British, was undermined when Sarawan and much of Kachhi were drawn into the British sphere of influence, while the remoteness of Jhalawan and Makran was reproduced in the new colonial order. This was not deliberate, but rather the result of strategically located transport networks. Thus, though the whole of Baluchistan was remote vis-à-vis the Government of India, the British presence restructured internally remote spaces.

Remoteness is often a negotiation, especially in recent times. It is sometimes imposed on an area and its inhabitants, and arguably it was imposed on Jhalawan and Makran by the British investment in infrastructural development. At present the Government of Pakistan, with outside financial and technical assistance, is engaged in constructing a large port city at Gwadar (Makran). The project involves extensive infrastructure development, with a new international airport, a rail-link, and a coastal highway. As the plans have developed, the project has become more ambitious, even fantastical. Its backers envision Gwadar becoming another Singapore or Dubai. For a time coastal resort communities advertised the good life, but they fell victim to the collapse of the property bubble in 2006. This is a transformational project with the potential to catapult Makran from remoteness into a transfer point for Pakistani and global markets. It is not surprising that there has been considerable local resistance to the project, which has the potential to restructure Makran from a remote area to a site of deracination and extreme economic inequality.

### NATIVE STATES

As the British moved across north India from east to west, they annexed some lands in direct rule. Elsewhere, they established treaty relations with principalities that became known as the Native or the Princely States. The rulers of these states were subordinated to, and protected by, the British. Although variable in detail, these treaties assured the ruler and his heirs a protected throne in exchange for British rights over foreign relations and other privileges. This form of indirect rule was called paramountcy. In 1864, the juristprude, Henry Maine, argued that sovereignty was divisible, providing a legal rationale for paramountcy (Ramusack 2004: 95–6). There was a fiction at the heart of paramountcy: although the ruler was accorded the formal status of the head of



state, he ruled at the pleasure of the British. This fiction was normally obscured as paramountcy, placed great emphasis on diplomacy rather than the direct exercise of force. Diplomacy, however, was backed by the presence of the military, which was mandated by the British, but whose cost was, usually, paid by the state. As Coen (1971: 14) put it, '... if challenged, the British Government acted, in Indian States, by no mere reference to treaties or usage but by the strength of its right arm.'

Despite some highly publicized exceptions like Hyderabad and Baroda, many native states had limited resources. The British appropriated much of the most-productive land of India. Within the states, the ruler in turn retained the best tracts for his own use. Rulers were accustomed to distributing some of the royal estate in *jagirs* (land-grants to loyal nobility) or other grants designed to strengthen the throne.<sup>2</sup> The rulers of many native states were accustomed to retaining power by engaging in alliances with aristocracies, internal and external. Paramountcy discouraged direct contact between colonial officials and the ordinary subjects of native states. These factors, combined with the reluctance of the Congress (Indian National Congress) to establish serious relations with the princes, contributed to the political marginalization of the states in the independence movement.

In the first-half of the nineteenth century, colonial authorities generally observed the distinction between internal and external relations, and there was little interference in the domestic matters of the state. Dalhousie, who served as the Viceroy from 1848 to 1856, however, pursued a more activist policy towards the states, breaching the boundary between internal and external affairs. He annexed those states whose rulers died without a natural heir and also the ones where the British deemed the government to be ineffectual, corrupt, and resistant to reform. Despite these

challenges, most Indian States remained loyal during the uprising of 1857. They were rewarded by assurances that the government would abandon the aggressive annexation of previous administrations. When Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1877, there were more than 600 Indian States. They ranged from Hyderabad, some 82,000 square miles in size, to some states less than ten square miles, 'estates rather than true states' (Allen and Dwivedi, 1986: 2). The Nizam (title of the hereditary ruler) of Hyderabad was one of the richest men in the world, while the revenues of the small landlord, the *talukdars* and the *jagirdars* (land-owners) barely met their expenses. Ramusack (2004: 8) estimates that only between sixty to ninety of these princely rulers played a significant role in the politics of the colonial period.<sup>3</sup>

The Struggle of 1857 was a crisis for the British rulers (Metcalf, 1995: 43). With the end of the East India Company and the banishment of the last Mughal king, London assumed direct responsibility for the Indian Empire. The British found themselves presiding over two categories of subjects with different administrative structures and law codes, such that the British head of the Indian state had two titles: Viceroy and Governor General, the latter indicating his responsibility for the Native States.

British officials, in collusion with the native princes, maintained a conservative form of cultural remoteness during the course of the nineteenth century. Imperial politicians in London and Calcutta fostered the construction of an ancient, exotic India (Cannadine, 2002: 46). For many British officials, the rulers of the large princely states embodied the 'real India'. As the nineteenth century advanced, the contrast between the states and British India became more consciously drawn. The Imperial Assemblage of 1877 embodied the British vision of a distinct relationship between the Queen-Empress and her Indian subjects, with special attention to



the princes. It was designed to display British authority and splendour (Cohn, 1987[1983]). The British created a new honours order, the Star of India, which quickly acquired three ranks, open to Britons and Indians alike. British officials manipulated honours both as rewards and punishments. There was some maneuvering for honours among the tribal elite in Kalat, but it seemed predominately related to the ranking competition among the chiefs.<sup>4</sup>

Many princes shared an interest in horsemanship and hunting with the colonial officials. These activities were markers of masculinity in both India and Britain. Princely India was famous for large, elaborately staged, hunts. Invitations to a hunt or shoot hosted by a major prince were highly valued in colonial society. 'The Gwalior tiger shoots, organised with meticulous precision so that the largest tigers always seemed to put in an appearance opposite the right shooting butt at the right time, ensured that Madhav Rao dealt direct with Viceroy's rather than their Agents' (Allen and Dwivedi, 1986: 71). The princes saw the advantage of waiting long hours for game with the Viceroy or a Chief Commissioner (Allen and Dwivedi, 1986: 90-104; Ramusack, 2004: 161).

#### KALAT EXCEPTIONALISM

On the face of it, Kalat had the attributes of a major native state. It was a treaty state, formally entitled to direct relations with the Viceroy. It was a 'salute state', with a nineteen-gun status, and only six states ranked higher. Yet it is barely mentioned, if at all, in the literature dealing with the native states. In fact, located at the far reaches of the British Indian Empire, Kalat had little in common with the other native states. Ahmad Yar Khan, ruler of Kalat from 1933 until 1955, rejected the status of an Indian State on the grounds that there was nothing Indian about Kalat. In some ways

he was right because Kalat was far from exemplifying the 'real India', despite the pageantry of the annual Sibi Fair. The British, however, dismissed Ahmad Yar Khan's argument as Kalat had already become a princely state with the treaty of 1876. However, over time, Kalat's formal status became increasingly at odds with administrative practice, producing what can be called Kalat exceptionalism.

The basis of this exceptionalism was created in the interaction between the colonial officials and the tribal elites. It began with the *sardari* resistance that culminated in the Kachhi raids of 1871. These raids occurred during a debate over Kalat policy between William Merewether, Commissioner of Sindh, and Robert Sandeman, Deputy Commissioner in the Punjab, and they strengthened Sandeman's position of dealing directly with the tribal chiefs (see Chapter 3). Kalat exceptionalism was extended in the deposing of Mir Khodadad Khan in 1892, which is discussed at length in Chapter 6. The Khan probably did not expect to lose his throne when he challenged British authority. The Government of India, far from the scene in Calcutta, was hesitant, as a matter of policy, to depose the princely rulers. Had they been able to intervene at an earlier stage, Khodadad Khan might have retained his position, and had the government not forced him off the throne, Calcutta might have entertained deposing his son, Mir Mahmud Khan, instead.

Mahmud Khan, who succeeded his father, occupied the throne but refused to rule. His tactics of avoidance and delay led the British to violate the general norms of paramountcy and step further into the governance of Kalat, thus increasing the British dependence on the state's tribal administration.



What the British assumed to be a solidified native state was actually an unstable chiefdom based on the exchange of tribute for protection, in which power was decentralized. There was a weak central ruler and a number of sardars who led pastoral nomadic tribal formations and maintained landed-estates in Kachhi. Ethnic specialists—Hindu merchants, Afghan traders, and tenant cultivators were the tribute-paying clients of the Khan and the local sardars. The overlapping networks of trade and finance linked Kalat with Kandahar, to its north, in Afghanistan, and the town of Shikarpur, to its south, in Sindh. The contractual networks placed Kalat within a regional structure while contributing to the lack of political centralization. Two factors produced Kalat's instability: the tribesman's right to relocate and transfer political allegiance, and the contested borders of the Khanate. These underwrote the inability of the ruling Ahmadzais and the Sarawan sardars to precipitate a more stable tributary state.

British power and geostrategic concerns might have pushed Kalat toward greater centralization had the British understood the Kalat polity, a position which was espoused by Mereweather. Calcutta's decision to back Sandeman and tribal government, allowed important decisions, such as the status of Makran, to be finessed, and ad hoc arrangements, such as entering into direct relations with Kharan, to take place. These would become serious problems as decolonization got underway in the 1930s.

The British stabilized a fluid polity. This had distinctive consequences for different parts of Kalat. The differences generated by the British reflected pre-existing variations in tribal formations and agrarian resources. Sarawan sardars, who controlled more prosperous estates than most of their Jhalawan counterparts, worked out parameters of cooperation with the colonial administration that ensured the success of tribal governance. However, they asserted

intent to insulate women and tenants from colonial authority. The limitations of tribal governance became apparent in Jhalawan. The effectiveness of *jirga* (tribal court) decisions depended on compliance. Factionalized, the *sardari* lineages and ambitious *takkris* (section heads) were not prone to compliance.

Makran had different problems, as various branches of a conquering lineage controlled oases settlements and engaged in chronic hostilities with one another. After several unsuccessful attempts to control the unsecured border with Persia, the British turned Makran over to a *nazim* (administrator), who was formally employed by the Khan, a technicality that allowed the Agency's officials to keep a distance from Makran affairs. This was convenient, as the *nazim* kept the order desired by the British with methods unacceptable to both London and Calcutta.

The marginalization of the Khan and rise of 'tribal government', were the consequences of a series of events. Some, such as the First Afghan War (1839–42), were international in scope, while others, such as the protracted efforts of the Sarawan sardars to repossess their Kachhi estates, confiscated after the war, and enter into direct relations with the colonial state, were national in scope. Still others, such as the Khan's relations with the sardars, were local. Being remotely colonial at the borders of the Indian Empire, meant that the treaty which designated the Khan as the ruler of the Kalat State, could be repeatedly finessed in favour of tribal governance. The Khan would be accorded all the protocol extended to the native princes, but his throne would be no seat of power. The Pax Britannica might have led to the decay of tribal organization and *sardari* authority, had the British been willing to engage directly with the tribespeople and the tenants, but paramountcy discouraged



this option. Agency officials were not averse to violating paramountcy, and the turn to tribal governance itself, was a fundamental breach of that principle. Dependence on the sardars further discouraged direct dealings with the natives and elicited sanctions on officials who ignored the policy.

During the course of several postings, Terence Keyes repeatedly attempted to secure freedom for slaves. His efforts elicited two reprimands and several cautions from his superiors.<sup>5</sup> Managing the contradictions attendant on a Princely State, that was governed through a tribal confederation, led to tensions between Calcutta, determined to maintain the appearance of the state, and Agency officials coping with conditions on the ground.

In the 1930s, the growing power of the Congress persuaded the British to develop a new arrangement for power-sharing in the Government of India. It was a federation of provinces and the Native States and each princely ruler was permitted to decide whether to federate his state. Decades of decisions postponed, issues tabled, and compromises made, resulted in Kalat being deemed ineligible to join the proposed government. In fact, the Agency's officials, charged by Calcutta to produce the constitution of Kalat, had great difficulty naming what they and the tribal leaders had created over time. Was it a form of 'feudalism' as the Treaty of 1876 suggested? Was it a 'tribal confederation', a term reluctantly accepted by Calcutta in the early years of the twentieth century? Or was Kalat *sui generis*, a 'multiple federal state', as Keyes had suggested in 1926? However the British characterized the Kalat that they and the sardars had created, their commitment to it precluded their treaty obligations. When the activist ruler, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan was installed in 1933, the Agent to the Governor General (AGG) argued that the British could not honour the terms of the 1876 Treaty that pertained to the powers of the Khan. These

difficulties disrupted post-war negotiations for the transfer of power. Remotely colonial meant that ad hoc decisions designed to maintain order rendered Kalat an exception to other Native States.

Calcutta, with an eye toward London, relentlessly upheld the appearance of paramountcy, even while authorizing Agency breaches of it. For much of the colonial period, the British blamed their problems on the Khans, claiming that their character defects necessitated departures from policy. Mir Khodadad Khan's excessive greed and brutality were used to rationalize his deposition in 1892. When Agent to the Governor General (AGG) Browne, deposed him, he drew on a discourse of the defects of the princely ruler. When he sought the support of the sardars for the abdication, he set Kalat on its distinctive trajectory. Similarly, Agency officials cited indolence and immaturity as explanations for Mahmud Khan's unwillingness to cooperate. It is obvious that the structure of paramountcy did not generate rulers responsive to the needs of their subjects. Despite rare exceptions, the princes, their thrones guaranteed by British power, were not committed to the political and economic development of their states.

#### THE PROBLEM OF TRIBE

Tribe has a problematic history in anthropological discourse, with a semantic domain that oscillates between a universalizing generality and an ethnographic specificity. In its more inclusive aspect, tribe has been used to designate general category of societies in which kinship orders social and economic relations. The universalizing tendency in tribal discourse reached a peak in the early 1960s when American neo-evolutionists proposed a tribal stage in cultural evolution (Sahlins, 1968; Sahlins and Service, 1960; Service, 1971). The tribal stage generated a debate that highlighted the varied and inconsistent usages of tribe (Fried, 1967).



The anthropological discourse of 'tribe' was critically shaped with the publication of *The Nuer* in 1940. For Evans-Pritchard, tribes were territorially-based political groups, in which the balanced opposition of lineage segments served to maintain public order in the absence of formal leadership. Egalitarian tribal society, though orderly but without formal leaders, became the other of the hierarchical, bureaucratic state. Tribe, in the sense of an organic solidarity derived from a lineal base, became an established 'prestige zone' in anthropological theory (cf. Appadurai 1986), as a number of ethnographers applied, modified and adumbrated Evans-Pritchard's concept of a 'tribe' (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Middleton and Tait, 1958).

The mid-twentieth century turn to evolution and functionalism served to exclude historical process. White (1949: 8–11) argued that evolution, a non-repetitive temporal-formal process, was superior to purely temporal history on scientific grounds. Thomas (1989) has argued that the exclusion of history was more than a mere oversight, that it was necessary for producing a subject—a discrete society with a distinctive culture—amenable to the professionalization of anthropology as a distinctive discipline. Indeed, Evans-Pritchard's determination to reveal the structural principles of Nuer society led to him exclude or downplay socio-economic differentiation (Gough, 1971), and the impact of traders dealing in slaves and ivory (Sacks, 1979). The extensive scholarship generated by Evans-Pritchard's Nuer research is a testament to the breadth and depth of his work and also to its historical moment.

With the consolidation of post-colonial states throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, tribal discourse came under increasing attack. Fried (1967: 5) noted the connections between racism and tribalism that formed the basis of a sustained critique from indigenous scholars and officials of the new governments. Even today, in the

popular press, tribe is often used to indicate the rejection of ethnic pluralism in the context of state failure, as, for example, in the breakup of Yugoslavia. A descent into tribalism is a violent challenge to civilized life. Thus the negative connotation of tribe in contemporary usage amplifies the post-colonial critique of tribe. Today, 'tribe', often comes adorned with quotes that mark its ambiguous yet indispensable qualities. 'Tribe' signals an irony: tribe has served as the signifier of a stable past persisting in a dynamic present, and in the post-colonial moment, 'tribe' critiques the colonial construction of the past.

Evans-Pritchard's Nuer analysis influenced Middle East ethnography and generated a debate regarding tribes and segmentation. Abu-Lughod (1986: 30) suggests that the attention devoted to segmentation and tribal politics reflect a congruence of gender-based interests between male anthropologists and their informants. The focus on structural analysis of tribal formations tended to exile tribe from history in a region where tribe and state have a long and complex relationship. This trend was reversed by scholars such as Garthwaite (1983) and Beck (1986), who studied the great tribal confederations of Iran. The specific form that tribal structures took was determined by factors such as state relations, the presence of long-distance trade, competition for pastoral resources, and circulation of tribute. Bradburd (1994) argues that export trade has figured significantly in the political economy of Komachi and other small tribal formations in Kerman (Iran), for several centuries.

A recent study by Salzman (2008) demonstrates the difficulties of extracting 'tribe' from history. Salzman proposed a view of tribe and state as inevitably opposed structures, each of which constitutes a dialectical constraint upon the other (2008: 61). This consigns the Middle East, and its extension into Southwest Asia, to a timeless repetition. The '... brief European imperial and colonial



disruptions in the Middle East . . . have come and gone', and failed to alter the tribe-state dynamic (Salzman, 2008: 194). When historical events become critical elements of what is essentially an ahistorical analysis, they take on an arbitrary quality. European colonialism becomes a marginal event in Salzman's argument, while the violence associated with the eighth-century Arab expansion becomes central.

Tribe, as a contemporary issue in Balochistan, has something in common with 'tribe' in the anthropological discourse. Both discourses, in radically differing contexts, are profoundly ahistorical. In the former, the role of the state is obscured, while in the latter, tribe is still enmeshed in the disciplinary heritage of evolution and functionalism. There is a male, kin-based autonomy, at the heart of most tribal formations, but variations derived from the common base reflect different times and places. When abstract tribe is opposed to abstract state as in Salzman's analysis, time and place are obliterated. This results in what Cooper (2005: 17) calls 'ahistorical history', a relating of past to the present through abstract forces that erase the particular dynamics of time and place. Under these conditions, the tribe in contemporary Balochistan, existing within a post-colonial state, is essentially the same as it was during the British times. To be sure, there is some apparent continuity. The tribes of today's Balochistan are still led by sardars, lineage and collective responsibility continue to shape the lives of most tribespeople, and there is still a significant degree of autonomy in most of Balochistan. Should this be understood as timeless resistance to centralized authority? Or should the state be faulted for colluding with sardars and failing to provide basic services and opportunities?

### TRIBAL GOVERNANCE

British dominance in Balochistan was directed towards security of borders and maintenance of an acceptable level of public violence. Paramountcy favoured chiefs who could keep their followers in line, and cooperate with their counterparts in resolving inter-tribal disputes without British intervention. These chiefs retained considerable control over internal affairs and over the disposition of disputes. The sardars of Sarawan were notably more successful at this than their counterparts in Jhalawan. Their success was determined by structural, historical, and political factors. The smaller size of the tribes of Sarawan enabled their sardars to keep a firmer hold on section leaders, and their authority was enhanced when they accumulated *hamsayas* (new, unrelated followers) as cultivating tenants on lands made secure by the Pax Britanica. These sardars had been the core of the Ahmadzai support in Kalat and were rewarded for their loyalty with productive estates. They had engaged in protracted negotiations with the British early on, first for direct relations and later for the return of estates confiscated after the First Afghan War. Historical experience predisposed the sardars of Sarawan to value limited cooperation with the British.

The colonial institutions of tribal governance were the *jirga* and the levies. The *jirga* was a deliberative body convened by an official of the Agency to consider cases. *Jirga* deliberations produced recommendations, based on which the Agency officials made their final decisions. They usually accepted the recommendations in principle, although sometimes modified the terms. The levies were native employees whose various tasks were linked to *jirga* maintenance. Robert Sandeman, first AGG of the Baluchistan Agency, established this form of tribal governance, and it is sometimes referred to as the 'Sandeman system'. Sandeman found certain aspects of tribalism—*sardari* authority and collective



responsibility—admirable, and he sought to strengthen and improve them.

*Jirga* is a Pashto word that refers to gatherings—Barth (1959: 67) calls them assemblies—that can be called for by any landholding male Pushtun. Pushtun *jirgas* have no leader and all men are free to speak. They are called for a wide variety of reasons, and the issue to be considered usually determines the level of *jirga* assembled. The British appropriation of *jirga* as the deliberative body for Kalat's governance is ironic in several ways. What in Pushtun society is an egalitarian meeting called by any landholding man, became in Kalat an institution convened by a colonial official who framed the issue and conducted the meeting. From the beginning, the *jirga* was seen as a means of strengthening the sardars' authority and aligning them with the colonial state.<sup>6</sup> The notion that the British had preserved ancient tribal governance grew stronger over the decades until it became an unexamined truth. British officers in Quetta, reading of the growing challenges to colonial authority in India, took comfort in the belief that traditional, i.e. tribal, ways retained their hold on the people of Baluchistan.

If history predisposed collaboration for the sardars of Sarawan, it had a contrary effect on the chiefs of Jhalawan. Their large tribal formations provided space for *takkri* (section head) intrigue and factionalism, and the *jirga*-levies system proved incapable of devising effective resolutions for the chronic succession contests in the Zehri and Mengal formations, discussed in Chapter 8. The British desire to record tribal and *takkar* units led to a rise in tribal factionalism as the headmen of large sections maneuvered to separate and be recognized as independent sardars. Agency officials sometimes turned to *takkris* for internal tribal intelligence, a move that further contributed to instability. The already limited legitimacy of the *jirga* was further undermined when the British



were forced to call repeated *jirgas* to deal with the same problem. In pre-colonial times, succession disputes had usually led to violent resolutions, but the British could not sanction such action. They turned to the *jirga* to punish dissidence and violence through assessment of fines, bonds for good behaviour, and occasional imprisonment.

Kalat exceptionalism was produced over many decades. It involved the actions of multiple players with complexly-layered agendas on both sides of the colonial relationship. Agency officials and Calcutta were united in maintaining colonial dominance, but they often differed with regard to staffing, budget and tactics. The chiefs were not a unitary force, and probably never had been. They varied in terms of resources, organization and followers, and their ranks were cross-cut by shifting alliances and enmities. The Khans were accustomed to maintaining power by manipulating various *sardari* factions, and, on occasion, ordering the murder of an especially recalcitrant chief, an option no longer available to them. Remote colonialism in Balochistan was profoundly political. Occasionally, an official would initiate a small-scale project—like the unsuccessful silkworm cultivation in Mastung, or tree-planting in Quetta, but there was no real interest in sustained economic development, as the principles of paramountcy supported 'traditional' economic production. The emphasis on governance rather than development has had a pervasive influence on anti-colonial and ethno-nationalist movements which have generally focused more on politics than economics.

#### COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE

There is a growing literature on colonial knowledge, much of it arguing that the collection and classification of numerical and ethnographic data became an important adjunct to colonial



governance during the nineteenth century (Cohn: 1987, 1996; Smith: 1996; Bayly: 2001; Dirks: 1987, 1997, 2002; Stoller: 2003, 2009). The British Government at Calcutta mandated an extensive series of volumes dedicated to enumeration, classification and ethnography of the provinces and the princely states. In 1902, Calcutta directed the AGG to produce an Imperial Provincial Gazetteer, together with a Baluchistan District Gazetteer series.<sup>7</sup> The format and subjects to be covered were set by Calcutta, following the precedent of similar compilations for Indian provinces developed in 1901 for an ethnographic survey of the principle tribes of India. This project was extended to Balochistan, where 'an accurate and systematic account of the customs of the various tribes in Baluchistan, in addition to its scientific importance, would also prove a valuable aid towards efficient and sympathetic administration.' The survey began as an undertaking independent of the District Gazetteers, but constraints of time and staff led to the ethnographic material being incorporated into the Gazetteers.

It is unlikely that agency officials welcomed the project at the time. Much of Kalat was still largely unknown, and in British Baluchistan, district organization was still a process in progress, as the territory acquired in the 1879 Treaty of Gandamak had not yet been fully absorbed. In fact, the new district of Loralai was created as the data was collected, necessitating the increase in volumes from eight to nine. It is not surprising that the deadline for completing the project was extended twice. The report meticulously documented expenses, the dates that specific volumes were completed, and noted the officials involved with their areas of responsibility. However, when it came to the methods used for the the actual collection of the data, the report was silent.



The preface of each district volume indicates that local officials were posted to the districts for periods ranging from four to fourteen months to collect data, but how they did this is unstated. These men provided drafts, which were then edited by the British officials. It is not surprising that the Gazetteers have some serious shortcomings. The sections dealing with marriage and the status of women are uniformly shallow and formulaic. Slavery was dealt with by obfuscation (Chapter 7). Where there were relatively few slaves as in Sarawan and Kachhi, they were either ignored or classified as 'servile dependents', a category that also included craftspeople and entertainers. In Makran, Kharan, and Lasbela, where slaves were more numerous and visible, they were represented as living under relatively comfortable conditions. The population figures were, also, essentially, unreliable estimates. Nonetheless, the Baluchistan District Gazetteer Series is an impressive achievement. The economic data regarding land tenures, sharecropping contracts and irrigation technology, is extensive and very detailed. The geology, and the flora and fauna, are extensively covered.

The District Gazetteers reveal both the centrality of tribe in British administration and the difficulties in conceiving tribes as stable and bounded units. There is virtually no tribe that is a genealogically homogeneous body with uncontested boundaries. Tribes are internally marked by distinctions of *takkars* (founding and new-comer sections). These indicate the ability of tribesmen to relocate and shift political allegiance from one sardar to another without abandoning their genealogical identity. This complicated the British desire to assign a clear tribal status to all the tribespeople. At the tribal and *takkar* levels, the British appear to have followed political allegiance. Thus the British distinguished three independent but related tribes of Mengal: Zagar Mengals who resided in Chagai, the Mengals of Jhalawan, and the Bolan Mengals (GOB Chagai: 62). The dominant *takkar* of the Jhalawan Mengals contained lineages



claiming Persian, Pushtun and Raisani origins (GOB Jhalawan: 82). The British excluded Raisanis located in British Baluchistan, along with the Mengal Raisanis, from their enumeration of the tribe in Sarawan (GOB Sarawan: 51).

The British thought of tribes as belonging to one of the three racial-linguistic groups: Pushtun, Brahui, and the Baloch. Yet Hughes-Buller, in charge of the 1901 Census of India, found that the heterogeneity of the Khetran sections made it impossible to classify the tribe as either Pushtun or Baloch (GOB: Loralai: 98). This openness across linguistic and tribal boundaries was generated by large-scale migration, such as the movement of Baloch into the area in the fifteenth century as well as by the more recent small-scale movement of families and lineages within the territory. Mobility underwrote a masculine autonomy while contributing to a systematic instability. The Gazetteers inscribe the British struggle to bound a tribe and enumerate its sections, even as the Pax Britannica opened new tracts to cultivation, sparking increased movement across tribal boundaries. The tribe was a locus of status (genealogy) and contract (allegiance to a sardar). The capacity to integrate heterogeneous sections suggests that tribes were fluid and inclusive rather than exclusive structures. Under these conditions it seems appropriate to speak of tribal formations (Swidler, 1992).

What the British came to call tribal governance was in fact Agency-sardari governance. Aside from the tribal elite, the British avoided interaction with individuals. Although some British officials engaged in invidious comparisons of Brahui, Baloch, and the Pushtuns, it was the subject status, not 'race', that was the important identity. Subject status was the foundation of legal procedures, as it defined which law code would apply and which body would adjudicate these. Status determined who was authorized to represent tribespeople, clients and tenants. The



inability of ordinary Baloch to speak for themselves and to present their cases to Agency officials, was a critical source of the sardars' power within the tribes. Ideally, subject status—tribesperson, tenant, or client—fused political and economic relations. When this was not the case, when tribals cultivated the Khan's land, or where village lands were apportioned among overlords from different tribes, there was space for challenges of several sorts. In some instances cultivators challenged the overlords' rights (Mastung case, Chapter 4). In others, overlords and their agents contested one another's rights (Makran, Chapter 8).

If one were to ask the question, as to who were the real subjects of Kalat, one would find no simple answer. The Khan had subjects, most of whom cultivated his lands. Similarly, the sardars had their own tribal subjects. Ethnic specialists—Jat and Dehwar cultivators, Hindu shopkeepers, moneylenders and petty traders, and the Afghans who were in charge of long-distance trade—all, were clients of a Khan or a sardar. It would seem that there were no proper subjects of Kalat before the British. British recourse to Kalat subjecthood was limited to international relations. Makranis became Kalat subjects, rather than subjects of the *hakoms* (local chiefs), when the British assessed responsibility for raids and murders across the Persian-Makran border. Similarly, the tribals also became subjects of Kalat when the British demanded their extradition as persons wanted for criminal activities. The status of 'Kalat subject' had no meaning for local people, accustomed to moving freely across the newly-established international borders that bisected cultural-linguistic groups. Although the concept of a national status as either a Kalati or a Persian was meaningless on both sides of the border, the British, for their own convenience in administration, needed to assign a specific 'nationality' to everybody in order to distinguish internal and external subjects.



Domestically, one was never a subject of Kalat, as subjecthood was divided into tribal and ethnic-client identities. After the death of Ido (Chapter 5), determining his subject status was essential to the course of action. Was he an employee of the Agency at the time of his death, or was he simply a subject of the Khan? If the former, the Agency was obliged to investigate; if the latter, they were not.

Although international borders were a priority for the British in the late nineteenth century, internal borders were established as the need arose. The British were fond of pointing out that politics in Kalat was personal, that it was based on relations among the tribal aristocracy rather than on political institutions. The space of Kalat was, in effect, the outcome of these relations. The *bakoms* of Makran were subordinate to the Khan when he raised a *lashkar* (tribal army) and marched to Makran to collect the revenue due him, as otherwise he would not get it. The sardar of Kharan, located on the borders of Kalat, Afghanistan and Iran, was at best a nominal ally of the Khan. The borders of Kalat were the precipitate of aristocratic relations and shifted dramatically from time to time. British administrators dealt with the problems arising from personal politics in an ad hoc and pragmatic way. They established direct relations with the sardar of Kharan, in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the 1876 Mastung Treaty. The intractable hostilities among the Makran *bakoms* of oases settlements led Agency officials to install their own candidate to govern Makran in the Khan's name. The dominance of the personal at the expense of the institutional produced a rather de-territorialized Kalat, insecurely anchored at its margins.

Some years ago I came across an intriguing document at the Indian Office Records Library (now a part of the British Library). It was a report by an Assistant Political Agent sent to investigate a charge that Baloch men were selling women to Sindhi men.<sup>8</sup> I imagined

the setting in the guesthouse of a locally prominent man, who had been given the task of rounding up the men suspected of engaging in such dishonourable behaviour. None of the participants wanted to be there: neither the junior official who had been sent off to the hinterlands, nor the men accused of dishonourable acts. The object of the investigation, the young women, were absent. The document records an investigation that no one wanted, except perhaps the unnamed informant, whose accusation had initiated it. Yet the investigation duly took place, was written up, and remains in the archive.

The report reflects the conditions of production as it is a mixture of detailed facts and overarching ambiguity. The names of the women in question, were recorded, but they were spoken for by a male relative. The APA appeals to the common knowledge that Baloch men sell their women in marriage. This made it impossible for the investigator to make an authoritative distinction between accepted cultural practice and trafficking in women. Under the circumstances, his superiors might prefer to view it as cultural practice, although he would continue to monitor the situation.

This report is an example of what Stoller (2009: 247) calls 'contrived ignorance'. Read in the post-colonial context, its plaintive appeal to the opaque indeterminacy of native ways is absurd. The spurious difficulties of telling a slave from a wife are discussed at some length in Chapter 7. Here I want to highlight the complex interweaving of bureaucratic form and the carefully constructed ambiguity that underwrote deliberate ignorance. The junior official offered a provisional resolution—the women were given in marriage rather than sold into slavery—while, simultaneously, providing details that would support a contrary conclusion, should more facts come to light, or should his superiors wish to pursue the issue further.



Contrived ignorance about women was particularly significant in colonial Balochistan. The emphasis on border security and the principles of paramountcy, amplified by local gender practices, produced exclusively masculine colonial spaces. The intrusion of women into these spaces was always disruptive. Although male cooperation across the colonial divide predominates in the case above, intruding women, more typically, produced tension between the colonial officials and the tribesmen. A woman who succeeded in representing herself before an official had breached cultural barriers. The official was obliged to recognize her, even though her presence was a potentially embarrassing challenge to his diplomatic skills.

By the turn of the century, British officials had come to regard disputes involving women as particularly volatile. The fear that such conflicts could spiral into violent feuding led to the policy of establishment levy-posts as safe-havens. A woman who fled to a post was to be protected until the PA could hear the particulars and decide a course of action. Female slaves in colonial spaces were especially disruptive, as slavery had been abolished in Britain before the Agency was established. Thus, a female slave, who got to a court in either British Baluchistan or the Agency Territories, had a right to her freedom. However, she was often persuaded to relinquish this right when officials brought family members who begged her to return.

Fear of scandal in Britain amplified the difficulties of local women in colonial spaces. Abuse of native women was an ongoing concern of several feminist and reform movements. While the construction of the enslaved, helpless native woman was necessary to the self-fashioning of British women as agents struggling for their own liberation (Burton, 1994: Chapter 3), the 'debased native woman' trope became critical to contrived ignorance in Baluchistan: she is

debased in slavery, debased in marriage. The brutal life of a tribal wife was asserted repeatedly in the Gazetteers, where she was often described as 'chattel'. Despite clear economic differences between the *sardari* lineages and the tribespeople, only the Jhalawan Gazetteer notes a difference between the lives of wives married to prosperous men and those with poor husbands. While I don't wish to underestimate the hard domestic labour of tribal wives, the formulaic qualities of the Gazetteer descriptions indicate lack of knowledge. The figure of the tribal wife as sold in slavery or enslaved in marriage served to absolve the British. Tribal society itself had created the conditions of her life, blurring the distinction between a slave and a wife. Female slavery complicated the British position because they were obliged to follow the law. Slavery, when found, had to be addressed; marriage did not. Thus, the perceived ambiguities between exchanges in marriage and outright purchase allowed the AGG to sign off on the case above, categorizing the women as wives, not slaves, and noting it required no further action.

This study is provisional, and it could hardly be otherwise, as it is built upon colonial archives that are compromised at the point of production (Trouillot, 1995), and must be read against, across, or along the grain (Stoler, 2003, 2009). I hope that it will encourage other scholars to revise and expand the historical narrative of Balochistan. The colonial Balochistan archive is notable for its exclusions. Paramountcy precluded the kind of intrusive investigation of native life and habits reported by Thomas (1994) for Fiji, and Stoler (2009) for the Indies. Local cultural practices further discouraged the development of domestic knowledge, which relieved the British from pursuing troubling questions about women and slaves. The distance separating Quetta from Calcutta compounded the cultural distance of paramountcy. Indeed, structured ignorance in some areas such as slavery and the



condition of women was deliberately maintained, as is evident in Chapter 7. With virtually no permanent European residents, Baluchistan in general, and Kalat in particular, were free of the sorts of concerns—pauperization of Dutch settlers and the status and character of mixed bloods, for example—that were ongoing concerns of Dutch colonial officials (Stoler, 2009).

There was no civilian society capable of mediating British policy and practice. Missionary activities were limited to Quetta in Baluchistan, and Jacobabad in Sindh, and the medical services, which these missionaries provided were arguably more important, certainly more successful than their efforts at proselytizing.<sup>9</sup> British recruitment of lower-level clerks and railway labour from India, served to exclude tribals from colonial administration and wage-labour. The commercial sector of Quetta originated in merchants already known to the British being granted provisioning contracts. Kalat paramountcy was a politics of fixed social locations. The kind of forced modernization enacted in parts of India was absent in Kalat.

The official British archive was marked by a narrow focus on governance, of the institutions and personnel that constituted their control. The rationale for a just and reasonable domination, and the means necessary to maintain power, are the fundamental subjects of such archives. There is considerable room for manipulation in the requirement to report, to narrate events and identify participants to superior officials. The ability to shape events was amplified by a commonly shared sense of what could, or should, be omitted. In the Kalat archive the rational agency of natives is perhaps the clearest, most consistent silence. Khans and sardars acted, but their actions were often reported without the need to attribute motives. Only in the most troublesome instances did an official acknowledge agency, and then usually he offered a



trivializing motive that denied the ability to plan and implement rebellious acts. A template of the native as irrational, arbitrary and opaque shared throughout official ranks, defined their motives as unknowable. In Baluchistan this template was applied to tribal elites and it served to depoliticize resistance, even rebellion.

On one level the Kalat archive is a narrative of tension between the principles of paramountcy and conditions on the ground. This is an official debate within British colonialism, framed within the discourse of Indian native states. It is a dialogue between the various bureaucratic levels of colonial rule. The dialogue covers a range of items: there are the hierarchical exchanges involving routine administration, such as nominating a successor when a sardar dies, there are agency arguments for staffing increases, responses to Government of India inquiries for information, and Agency reports of official tours to various outlying areas. I have privileged these documents over the annual reports of the Agency as the reports tend to occlude the anxieties and differences among local officials coping with events unfolding on the ground. Anxieties were high when the actions of Kalat elites drove the discourse.

The government created, in the interplay between constraining officials in Calcutta and Agency officers on the ground, and between the work of the Agency officials and the factionalized sardars, a Kalat that could no longer function as a native state. It was deemed unfit to join the nascent power-sharing Diarchy in the 1930s. After the war, with independence looming, the British determined that they could not honour the terms of the treaty they had signed with the Khan of Kalat in 1876. In effect, colonial authorities in Calcutta and Baluchistan had, over time, often in response to local challenges, replaced the central paramount ruler



with tribal governance, and the fiction of paramountcy could no longer be sustained.

When Ahmad Yar Khan acceded to the throne in 1932, he was the first Khan to have received British military training. He had served in the Zhob Militia, was fluent in English, Urdu, Persian, besides several tribal languages, and his interests in motoring and hunting were typical of Indian princes (Baluch, 1975: 111). He consistently avowed loyalty to the British. Yet he could not be granted the rights accorded the Khan in the 1876 treaty because the Kalat government was in fact, constitutionally unclassifiable and unnameable. Furthermore, it was irreversible; there was no way back to implementing the original treaty, nor was there a clear way forward.

### Notes

1. There is a growing literature in cultural tourism. Stronza (2001) provides a survey with a useful bibliography.
2. The conventional definition of *jagir* is a land-grant whose taxes support the *jagirdar's* troops. *Jagirs* could be granted for a specified number of years or for a lifetime, and were held on condition of loyalty to the ruler. In 1965 a prominent sardar, who was in the middle of arguing a land-case with the government, defined *jagir* as 'that property which used to be taxed. . . . If anyone could prove that we were ever taxed and then forgiven the tax, then the land would be *jagir*. We never paid any tax to the Khan at all.'
3. Ramusack (2004: 2) points out that the category, 'Native State', contained considerable diversity, reflecting changes in British policy over the course of the nineteenth century. She limits her history of the states to those that maintained a degree of sovereignty and whose rulers participated in the Chamber of Princes, an advisory body instituted by the British in 1921. Kalat, which met the first condition, was not a member of the Chamber of Princes. Mir Ahmad Yar Khan declined repeated British invitations to join.
4. In 1894, shortly after the investment of Mir Mahmud Khan as the Khan of Kalat, the Agent to the Governor General (AGG) proposed that he be awarded the highest rank in the Star of India order. His rank at that time was the same as that of several prominent chiefs. The AGG argued that he



would not wear his order unless he was elevated. AGG Browne to Secretary, Government of India, 25 May 1894, HSA Sec. 2, File M-2, Basta 2.

5. MSS.Eur.F/131/24, IOR.
6. In a further irony, the Kalat *jirga*-levies system was exported to British Baluchistan where it became the means for administering the Pushtuns.
7. This discussion is based on a report from the AGG to Foreign, 27 February 1909, HSA, Sec. 3, File M-3, Basta 4.
8. Assistant PA Jhalawan to PA Kalat, 7 August 1932, IOR, R/1/34/48.
9. The first Christian convert was ostracized by his Pushtun community and then murdered by his family (Holland, 1958: 72-3).



## Kalat Before the British

Wolf (1982: 76) suggests that all human societies of which we have records are 'secondary, indeed often tertiary, quaternary or centenary'. This is especially apt in the case of that region where eastern Iran, South-Western Pakistan and Afghanistan, come together. It is a frontier region, remote from the imperial regimes located in Persia and India, but periodically incorporated, albeit tenuously, in one or the other. Places remote from imperial polities have complex and elusive histories, often of great depth. As places along a way, they appear intermittently in the histories of conquering armies. Despite the ecological factors underlying their remoteness, such spaces attracted settlers early on. Notwithstanding the mountains and the general aridity of Balochistan, scattered areas amenable to cultivation were occupied by the seventh century BCE (Possehl, 1990: 261). Excavations at Mehrgarh in Kachhi, indicate contacts with Harappa to the southeast, and also with Central Asia (Ratnagar, 2006: 17), and Ratnagar speculates that Mehrgarh was the site of a chieftdom.

The Harrapans appear to be the first of a long line of peoples exercising varying degrees of control in Balochistan. As Balochistan became the borderlands to the great empires of Persia and India, the region served as a refuge area for peoples uprooted by successive waves of conquerors, like the Archaemids, Arabs, Ghaznavids, Mongols and the Mughuls, most of whom were seeking the riches of Delhi. The history of Balochistan is one of repeated upheavals

and multiple cultural influences. It is unlikely that Balochistan was a unity during these many centuries, as different localities had distinctive histories. During periods of imperial expansion, portions of Balochistan were loosely attached to either the Persian or the Indian empire and were required to provide tribute and warriors, usually, on an irregular basis. Provincial governors, stationed in these outposts with limited military support, administered through local leaders. Northern Balochistan was subject to more influence from northern India, while coastal Makran was linked to ports along the Persian Gulf (Fiorani, 2003). Differing imperial influences, combined with geological variations, contributed to considerable variation among the local polities that arose within Balochistan. The fundamentals of a persistent spatial organization seem to have emerged by the end of the third millennium. Settled communities rose and fell within networks that linked settled peoples with pastoralists, and some form of trading relations moved desirable commodities from Central Asia through Balochistan to India and Mesopotamia. This pattern endured, albeit considerably altered, into the twentieth century.

During the sixteenth century large numbers of migrants moved into Balochistan as a protracted three-way contest between the Safavid, the Uzbek and the Mughul forces gave rise to a 'Pakhtun diaspora' (Ahmed, 1980: 58). At roughly the same time, conditions in Persia pushed the Baloch eastward, into the territory to which they gave their name. Imperial conflicts generated widespread regional instability as new migrants competed with the already settled residents for local resources (Baloch, 1987: 27-99). The weakening of Safavid rule during the seventeenth century, and the Mughuls experiencing a similar decline in the eighteenth century, fostered the rise of local polities. Although imperial authority was generally nominal in Balochistan, two policies had important consequences for local polities. First, in repeated efforts to subdue



unruly pastoral nomads, the Safavids had periodically relocated large populations. Second, the ethnic compartmentalization of military, administrative, and mercantile functions, characteristic of Mughul India, allowed the merchants and the bankers to operate across political borders, and their networks stretched from India to Central Asia (Masson, 1974[1842]: II, 107).

The migrations instigated by the Persian rulers initiated conflicts with the local people, some of whom had themselves been earlier migrants to the area. There was, consequently, an unstable regional environment. Tribal formations in Balochistan reflect this instability. They are similar to tribal formations throughout the region in that a genealogical idiom is used to express political allegiance. The founders of most tribal formations had migrated to Balochistan, and tribal charters acknowledge the heterogeneous origins of component sections. Tribes were not clearly bounded entities, but rather the precipitate of multiple migrations, the fortunes and misfortunes of battle, and the choices of families seeking economic and political security.

Lindner (1982) suggests that security was a major issue for pastoral nomads living beyond the reach of the state. He believes that political allegiances were more important than kinship because violence was a more or less a constant threat. The importance of numbers in an unpredictable environment encouraged policies of inclusion rather than exclusion. Baloch tribes were historically inclusive, incorporating peoples of Pushtun, Sindhi, Punjabi and Persian backgrounds. Barth (1981[1963]) has contrasted the assimilative capacity of Baloch tribal formations with the exclusionary practices of the neighbouring Pushtun groups. Although Balochi and Brahui were the predominant tribal languages, language was not a critical signifier of identity.<sup>1</sup> Those amongst the Rinds, who had settled in Kachhi, spoke Jatki, the

language of the people they had settled with (Masson, IV: 347). Masson (IV: 60) reported that the Sasoli sardar spoke Sindhi rather than Brahui, although Sasoli was a Brahui tribe.<sup>2</sup> The multilingualism prevalent today is probably a longstanding phenomenon. It indicates considerable interaction across tribal and linguistic borders. As Spooner (1988: 599–600) points out, even Islamic sectarian differences did not bar assimilation, nor undermine Baloch identity. Inclusiveness was balanced by a strong preference for close kin-marriage, which produced kin-based camp communities.

Political allegiance and genealogy are ideologically linked in the concept of *shad-i-gham* (joy and sorrow), the obligation to participate in the good and the bad times, to share joy and sorrow at all levels, from the life crises of the family to the defence of tribal land and honour. An ideology emphasizing collective rights and responsibilities, *shad-i-gham* has material correlates in the household estate and the tribal territory. It is the existence of the latter that gives concrete meaning to *shad-i-gham* at the tribal level. In *shad-i-gham*, descent and alliance are fused; brotherhood is created in action as well as through descent. Typically, one or more immigrants to the area are said to have given rise to the *takkars* (primary sections), which formed the nucleus of the tribe. Other families joined the latter as *barok* (newcomers) or *hamsayas* (neighbours). When they or their descendants proved themselves through participation in *shad-i-gham*, they were granted grazing territory and expected to provide warriors at the sardar's request. At this point they became full-fledged members of the tribe, but their origin was not suppressed. Although the tribe represented itself in a genealogical idiom, the principle of contract was not abandoned. Contract—or alliance—and descent, co-existed, sometimes in manifest contradiction, as when the tribe was said to have descended from 'brothers' of differing origins. In using the metaphor of 'brothers' whose fathers could not have been agnates,



tribesmen pointed to the dual nature of the tribe as something both 'given and made' (J. Anderson, 1983: 123).

The history of the Kalat Khanate can be divided into three periods.<sup>3</sup> The period of confederation, roughly 1666 to 1740, was characterized by a combination of military campaigns and political alliances that served to establish Kalat as a local polity. Confederation was followed by a period of consolidation during which Kalat incorporated the fertile Kachhi plain. The Khanate entered a crisis period around 1800 when succession disputes weakened Kalat. British intervention in 1839 marked the end of the Khanate era.

The emergence of Kalat as a regional polity was the outcome of processes initiated from below and above. From the mobility of pastoralism and the chronic contestation that shaped regional history, men joined together in contingent military alliance and obtained recognition from their neighbours. In 1666, forces led by Ahmad Khan with Dehwar<sup>4</sup> support took control of Kalat town and established the Ahmadzais as the ruling dynasty, who endured until Kalat was incorporated into Pakistan in 1955.

The confederacy period ended around 1740, when the Khan allied Kalat with the Persian conqueror Nadir Shah. Nadir granted Kachhi to the Ahmadzais as compensation for the death of Abdullah Khan, killed in battle with the Kahlora rulers of Sindh. A large territory, some 5,000 square miles, Kachhi provided an agrarian surplus that consolidated the Khanate. All major cultivation in Kachhi depended on irrigation provided by large earthen dams and channeling the spring floodwaters into fields. When sufficient water had been channeled into the fields, the dam was broken and the water passed down to the next dam. The annual repair and occasional replacement of these dams required a major

commitment of animal and human labour. British records indicate that one hundred yoke of bullocks working for a month was not uncommon (GOB, Kachhi: 103). Land rights, water rights, labour, and the provision of seed, animals, and tools were combined in a wide variety of ways, with the specific combinations determining the division of the harvest. The crop was generally divided between three major groups: the overlords, the proprietors and the cultivators. The tributary overlords were the Khan, the sardars, and the tribal sections granted a tributary right by their sardar. The proprietors and cultivators were Jats.<sup>5</sup> This basic division of the agricultural process probably developed while Kachhi was subject to Sindhi domination. The common dependence on a labour-intensive irrigation system made each village a collective production unit, which was manifest in the *batai* (division of the harvest). In a pattern common in much of Mughul India, grain piles were subject to intricate public division (cf. Neale, 1957), in which, in addition to the major division, shares were set aside for irrigation costs, for the revenue officials, and for some village specialists. The overlord had first claim on the harvest, thus forcing the villagers to bear the costs of administration and irrigation.

The acquisition of Kachhi established the Ahmadzais as a landlord dynasty. The ruler Nasir Khan I granted portions of Kachhi to the loyal tribes that had participated in the battle against the Kalhoras at Aliarshar. The sardars, in turn, distributed overlord rights among the tribal sections. Like the Khan, the chiefs retained the most productive tracts. The sardars of Sarawan, who were the core of the Ahmadzai support throughout the confederacy period, received the most productive tracts. Nasir's reign, which lasted for almost fifty years, was the golden age of Kalat. Nasir established a relatively stable alliance with Kandahar, which allowed him to turn his attention to his southern borders. Kalat attained its maximum



territorial expansion by the conquest of Makran, Lasbela, and Kharan.

Nasir's military exploits and Muslim piety underwrote his great personal authority. According to Gul Khan Nasir, Nasir Khan expanded commodity production on his permanently irrigated lands. In addition to encouraging increased production of indigo, cotton and *ghee*, Nasir collected cuttings and seeds from Kandahar and India and cultivated large orchards in Kachhi (Nasir, 1953 I: 171). After Nasir Khan's death in 1794, the Khanate entered a difficult period. The successions of his son and grandson were challenged by their cousins, who were supported by various *sardari* factions. These conflicts were in part due to the internecine struggles between Kandahar and Kabul, which destabilized the whole region.

Trade, which had expanded under Nasir, declined after his death. Kalat was not a major trading centre in the Gulf trade, but it was enmeshed in important, albeit secondary, regional trade between the southern port towns and Kandahar. The bulk of the commodities which passed through the Khanate were in transit, produced outside its limits and destined for distant markets. The port town of Sonmiani, in Lasbela, became a trade and manufacturing centre, specializing in the production of cloth and carpets for the coastal trade. Dyestuffs and hides were exported to Muscat—('Muscat' nowadays) (Hughes, 1877: 131–2). Babi Afghans, resident in Kalat town, organized the caravan trade. Caravans paid transit taxes as they moved through the tribal territories. When security was particularly problematic, the caravan leader would hire tribal guards. Although petty theft in transit appears to have been common enough to be treated as a business cost, actual raiding seems limited only to several anarchic localities where *sardari* authority was weak. It is likely that, despite its

chronic factionalism the aristocracy usually cooperated in discouraging caravan raids.

As in Mughul India (Leonard, 1979), Hindu bankers provided loans and luxury goods to the aristocracy and financed the village shopkeepers, who traded in a variety of goods. Shop rents and a range of fees and taxes were a source of income to the tribal elite. Hindus were under the protection of the sardar who taxed them and were, therefore, normally spared in tribal raids. Although Hindus were concentrated in the towns of Kachhi, Lasbela, and Makran, they sent agents to shops in the highlands during the summer and petty peddlers to the pastoralist camps. The grain market was in the hands of the wealthier merchants (Masson, (2001[1844]: 292). On occasions, the Hindus would purchase the annual tax-farming contracts as well (Pottinger, 1986[1816]: 9).

Hindus were also moneylenders of the Khanate, usually loaning against mortgaged crops rather than land (GOB, Kachhi: 87). Their defence against oppressive demands was collective withdrawal of service: they would close their shops. Masson (2001[1844]: 84) reported an instance when the Khan's brother arbitrarily demanded money from a Hindu in Kotru, and when it was not forthcoming, he seized the Hindu's property. The Hindus, in response, closed their shops. After tense negotiations, the Hindus gave Rs400 to the brother, and the shops were opened. Although Masson does not provide the amount of the initial demand, it was probably in excess of the Rs400 which was finally accepted. Payments of various kinds, like transit fees, debt installments and arbitrary assessments were subject to negotiation. It is likely that high interest rates on loans and mortgages reflected the frequency of negotiated partial payments.



Both Henry Pottinger, who travelled the Sonmiani-Kalat route in 1810, and Charles Masson, who followed him a few years later, provided useful information about the Hindu and Afghan communities and the caravan trade. Although Pottinger was impressed by the commercial activity in the port town of Sonmiani, a resident Hindu told him that business had not yet recovered from a recent raid by pirates who had looted and burned the town (Pottinger, 1986[1816]: 11). The Jam (ruler) of Lasbela received Pottinger graciously, apparently ignoring reports that Pottinger was not, as he claimed, an agent for a Bombay merchant sent to purchase horses, but was instead a British spy. The Jam was curious about British interlopers, and asked Pottinger many questions about them. He provided letters to various notables along the route and arranged for the Bizenjo sardar to provide Pottinger with an escort to Khozdar. The Jam's cooperation was related to his fear that Sindhis wanted to appropriate Lasbela, to counter which, he hoped to enlist the British as his allies (Masson, (2001[1844]: 17).

Merchants based in ports where there was adequate security and trading taxes were not excessive. In 1839, Haji Abdun Nabee found the Makrani port of Jiwani abandoned. He was told that many people had moved to Gwadar to escape the oppressive demands from the ruler of Kech. When he reached Gwadar, he found the merchants there complaining about the duties imposed on them (Leech, 1991[1839]: 325-6). The early nineteenth-century importance of Sonmiani port was in large part due to favourable custom rates set by the Jams to encourage merchants to locate there rather than Karachi, which was under Sindhi's control. The Jam also underwrote Sonmiani as the port of choice for the relatively lucrative horse trade by exempting horses from duty (Masson, 2001[1844]: 303-4.) Before the First Afghan War, as many as two thousand horses moved through the port annually (GOB, Bela: 130). Caravan trade flourished when the customs rates were kept

at a level that made the Sonmiani-Kalat route competitive with the Karachi-Gandava route, and the Khan succeeded in maintaining security along the way.

Although Pottinger travelled during the winter, off-season for the caravan trade, he met merchants from Kandahar or Shikarpur in each town along the way. He was impressed by what he saw as the 'influence' of Hindus in the settlements he visited. It was not the Kambrari *naib* (revenue agent, representative, deputy) who locked the gate at Khozdar each night but a Hindu (Pottinger, 1986[1810]: 37). Pottinger found six Hindu peddlers at Nushki, which was then a semi-permanent encampment of about three hundred tents. The Hindus were accompanied by their families, suggesting that they trusted the sardar's word of protection (Pottinger, 1986[1816]: 124-6). The Hindus of Kalat town had been granted the right to levy a small tax on imported goods for the upkeep of their temple (Pottinger 1986[1816]: 78). Baloch (1987: 73) notes that a Hindu served as financial agent for Mir Mehrab Khan, and died beside him when the British attacked Kalat in 1839.

Pottinger spent about three weeks in Kalat town, which he described as having around 2,500 houses within the walls, and some 1,300 houses outside. The heterogeneous population of Kalat included the Brahuis, Baloch, Dehwars, Hindus and Afghans. Dehwars guarded the three gates into town, and also provided palace guards (Pottinger, 1986[1816]: 50). During Pottinger's stay, Roohollah Beg, a wealthy Babi Afghan, was killed in Gandava by the Khan's brother. The Afghan's sons in Kalat were imprisoned, and his property seized. Pottinger was told the Afghan was believed to be spying for the Amir in Kabul. A large party of the Amir's horsemen turned up, seeking to protect Roohollah Beg's sons, which Pottinger took to substantiate the charge (Pottinger, 1986[1816]: 97). He reported no protest about the killing from the Babi community.



Charles Masson was perhaps the most interesting of the British who travelled the frontier before the First Afghan War.<sup>6</sup> Although he spent several years as a British intelligence agent, he was primarily interested in the antiquities of the region. Masson was a harsh critic of the officials whose policies led to the war. His comments were so caustic that publication of his journeys was held up until he moderated them (Whitteridge, 2002: 175). Masson spent some twenty years in the borderlands travelling on his own and by attaching himself to caravans whenever he could.

Masson travelled twice from Sonmiani to Kalat, first time in 1831, and again in 1832. On his initial trip he had the good fortune to meet Kalikdad, a Babi Afghan from Kalat, who was a partner in a trading firm with offices in Karachi and Kandahar (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 24), and travelled the Sonmiani-Kalat route annually. He came to Masson's aid several times over the years. As with Pottinger's party earlier, the road between Bela and Wad was judged to be the most dangerous part of the trip. The Mengals and the Biznjos operated, essentially independent of the Khan, and sometimes raided the caravans. When the caravan cleared the Mengal hills without incident, Kalikdad stopped and sacrificed a sheep in thanks (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 36–7). Khozdar, which had a large Hindu population when Pottinger had visited some twenty years earlier, was in decline when Masson visited it, and many of its traders had relocated to Wad, a smaller and less well-located village (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 42–3).

Masson's depiction of Kalikdad provides a sense of the challenges in a trader's life. Masson reports an instance where the Khan attempted to impose a new caravan-tax but the merchants banded together and persuaded him to rescind it (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 89). Merchants balanced the burden of multiple taxation by disguising the amount of commodities being transported.

'Kalikdad, who would be esteemed a fair-dealing man, and who pretended to be a very loyal subject, had smuggled away several loads of raisins, besides ingeniously packing three loads upon two camels, and other expedients.' (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 123). Sometimes these merchants negotiated the number of loads liable to payment at a figure below the actual loads (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 170). Merchants occasionally supported tribal claims for taxes in exchange for chiefly responsibility for any losses incurred (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 155). When security was not effectively guaranteed, local tribesmen were hired as guards (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 166).

Security had declined on Masson's second trip. He reported an escalation of transit fees in the tribal territories. (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 167–8). The Khan was apparently unable to control excessive demands from the sardars, and he interdicted the route from Bela to Khozdar. A caravan from Kandahar successfully ignored the ban, which inspired a caravan from Sonmiani to hire guards and travel the interdicted route. Four men, one a son of the Mengal sardar, were guards (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 166). In 1840, a caravan approached Kalat town just as the Sarawan forces were preparing to attack Khan Nawaz Khan. In an effort to protect their merchandise, the traders cached it in the nearby hills (Masson, 1997[1842] IV: 121).

Pottinger and Masson describe an austere landscape structured by towns along trade-routes that linked Kalat to the larger region. These towns had ethnic residential quarters, a bazaar, and a fortified compound for the sardar (Scholz, 2002: 71). Information, especially with regard to security and markets, circulated widely, carried from town to town by merchants with regional interests. News of neighbouring polities Sindh and Kandahar, was also disseminated, along with news of British interlopers. Trade and



commerce underwrote the development of towns as locations where regional and tribal interests were negotiated.

Early nineteenth-century Kalat can be seen as an aggregation of parceled spaces, each controlled with varying degrees of effectiveness by a sardar or the Khan. Kalat was a loose confederation of pastoral tribes with a structurally weak, paramount Khan. The population of Kalat was notably mobile. Mobility is a constant with pastoral nomads, but Afghan and Hindu enclaves employed a tactical mobility, shifting from one town to another, one patron to another, or even leaving Kalat altogether. The space of these specialists in trade and commerce extended to the region beyond Kalat. Afghans looked to Kandahar, while the headquarters of Hindu finance was Shikarpur (Sindh). Even the tenant-cultivators were mobile. They would abandon settlements when security broke down and they were no longer protected from marauders. Abandonment continued during the British period, when it was often disputes about property or succession within the sardar's lineage that rendered cultivators vulnerable to raiding, which was probably more common in earlier times, and is reflective of the availability of cultivatable land combined with the lack of security.

Patronage integrated the tribal sector and ethnic specialists and thus was the relationship that underwrote the Khanate. It was a form of what Wolf (1990: 586) called, tactical or organizational, power. Patronage organized economic relations across social boundaries and linked Kalat into a system of regional polities. It structured the flow of tribute and enabled trade and commerce. Patronage was based on the payment of tribute for various forms of protection. The need for protection derived from a general insecurity based on the decentralized power that made a sardar, effectively, a ruler of his tribe's territory. Tribal boundaries were ill-defined and often contested. Raiding within the tribal and trading sectors was a

constant threat. Unprotected travellers were at risk of theft, as Masson's first caravan journey demonstrates. Travelling as a stranger from Kandahar to Shikarpur, he was robbed repeatedly, first of his possessions, then of his money, and finally of his clothing. He survived the trip thanks to a kind caravan-guard, who gave him a *posteen* (sheepskin coat), and the several men who shared their food with him (Masson, 1997[1842] I: 249–324).

Clientage is a form of dependency, but not all dependents were alike. Clientage within the tribal population, which occurred when a family or lineage sought to ally themselves with a new sardar, was reversible. If the newcomers demonstrated their allegiance by participating in both good and bad tribal times, they became full members of the tribe, entitled to a share of the tribal estate. Merchants and traders were protected clients of a sardar or the Khan, to whom they paid assorted rents and fees, along with the occasional arbitrary demand. The clientage of Hindus was not reversible; they could switch allegiance from one sardar to another by relocating to the new chief's village, but neither they nor the traders could operate without a patron. The merchants could also withhold valued services by closing their shops or leaving the village, which gave them some means to redress offences to community members, as was clear in the case above.

Amongst the cultivators, Jats were, probably, subject to the harshest clientage. They were periodic victims of tribal raiding and dynastic conflicts within the *sardarkhels* (chiefly lineages). Dehwar cultivators in the highland valleys of Sarawan had a higher status, probably because they had, reportedly, allied with Mir Ahmad Khan, the founder of the ruling dynasty. As noted earlier, they provided guards for the entry-gates in Kalat town but the Jats held no similar Khanate office. In a similar fashion, patronage was an axis of differentiation within the elites of the tribal sector.



The sardars of Sarawan, along with several northern Jhalwan sardars, held the most productive estates, rewards for their loyalty to the Khan. Patronage in Makran was complicated by the concentration of agrarian wealth in the oases complexes that allowed the sedentary elites (*hakoms*) to dominate the pastoralists.

Patronage was not simply a contractual relation, as *sardari* honour was manifest in the execution of the somewhat conflicting obligations to protect their subordinates while punishing any possible challenge to their personal authority. The honour code was egalitarian in that it was attainable by all persons who could fulfill the obligations related to family and lineage. It was similar to tribal honour codes, elsewhere, in its principles: blood-feud, protection of guests and dependents, hospitality, death for adultery. Protection is second only to avenging blood, according to Baloch (1987: 82). However, a Baloch folktale recounted by Dupree (1973: 127–8), suggests the situational priority of protection when it conflicts with the obligation to avenge a death. A man unknowingly hosts a traveller who has killed one of his sons. Another son knows the guest's identity and kills him. The host then slays his son for dishonouring the family. A more appropriate response would have been to exercise emotional restraint and take vengeance after the guest departed and was no longer under the protection of his host. The patronage system, essential to the existence of Kalat, was legitimated and enhanced by its assimilation to the honour code. Extending the protections of the code to relations with non-tribal clients provided some sardars with the means to strengthen tribal organization and entrench their position as the chief by maintaining a generous guest-house. The honour code mediated the contradictions between equality and hierarchy and blurred the differences within the patron and the client groups.

Kalat was a tributary chiefdom characterized by a strategic use of relocation. It was an unusually decentralized example of what Wolf (2001: 46–7) termed the feudal variant of the tributary mode of production. Aside from the core areas of Sarawan and Northern Jhalawan, the Khanate was tenuously anchored to the land. Kalat had zones of contestation rather than borders. The reports of Haji Abdun Nabee and Henry Pottinger indicate that relocation was a widespread tactic when security declined. Tribal charters indicate considerable movement among tribes. Even Kachhi villages were abandoned when inhabitants were not protected from raiders. Mobility was, simultaneously, enabled and constrained by patronage, and while men could switch their allegiances, that still has to be done while remaining within the patron-client system.

#### Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, Baloch includes Brahui-speaking tribes.
2. This may have been a function of the social context, and the sardar may well have spoken Brahui as well.
3. See Swidler, 1992, for a discussion of the Khanate period.
4. Dehwars are a local extension of the Tadjiks of Afghanistan.
5. The Jats of Kachhi are a western extension of people resident in Sindh and Punjab. They are largely cultivators.
6. An army recruit named John Lewis arrived in India in 1822. After five years of service, Lewis, for reasons unknown, deserted, and assumed the name of Charles Masson. He claimed to be a traveller from America. When he was unmasked as a deserter, the British offered him a pardon in exchange for his services as a 'newswriter' (intelligence agent). Masson provided diligent reports for several years. He was eventually allowed to resign and devote full-time to his archaeological interests. Masson spent some twenty years in the borderlands, and he was certainly more knowledgeable about Afghan politics prior to the First Afghan War than the British Political Agents in the area.



### 3

## The Birth of the Balochistan Agency

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the remote lands west of the Indus became the borderlands in the expanding British territorial control of India. The Russians, too, were expanding into Central Asia, and this raised British anxieties about border security. Border debates consumed the attention and energy of many British officials during the first half of that century. These debates focused on the location of the border itself and on relations with polities across it. They were shaped by a number of officials whose interpretations of events were at odds, often because of personal rivalries, and frequently derived from the selective use of limited and unreliable information. Policies proposed at the local level by the Political Agents in the field, could run counter to interests in Calcutta and Bombay. These colonial governments, in turn, were subject to the agendas of London-based politicians who were attempting to balance domestic politics and international affairs.

The polities west of the Indus had their own histories of shifting borders and sporadic hostilities. Control of major centres—Kabul, Kandahar, Peshawar and Lahore—provided a ruler with the resources to enlist the support of those tribal militias whose shifting loyalties shaped a volatile distribution of power. The centres were linked to one another and to smaller local polities in alliances that were as often repudiated as they were acknowledged. The presence of a new and powerful player in border politics put new pressures on the local rulers and intensified the chronic intrigue among them.

These polities were little known to the British Company at the start of the nineteenth century and British strategic concerns fueled a major intelligence project to map the borderlands. The Foreign and the Political Department of the Government of India recruited ambitious young men, usually with some facility in local languages, to serve as envoys to the rulers. Beginning in 1809, the British sent a number of agents throughout the border region, and by the 1830s they had mapped the major trade routes and topographical features of the region. The border was rife with agents and double-agents as rulers, court advisors, and British agents sought to obtain sources of reliable information on one another's alliances and strategies. Political Agents, responsible for furthering British interests, had, as Yapp (1980: 183) points out, 'a vested interest in inducing their governments to look beyond the frontier.' For their part, local rulers sought to enlist British support in their conflicts.

The British government followed a closed-border policy during the early decades of the nineteenth century, as its main concerns lay elsewhere—with the Marathas in the Deccan and the Indian states in the south. The colonial government had buffered the North-Western border with a series of treaties with Punjabi, Afghan and Sindhi rulers. The border was set at the Sutlej River, and:

The new north-western frontier consisted of an inner belt of directly administered territory shielded by a strong string of states over whose foreign relations the Company possessed complete control, whose military forces were substantially at its disposal, and over whose internal affairs it possessed a varying influence.

(Yapp, 1980: 175)

However, by the 1830s concerns about Russian ambitions prompted London to reassess its border policy, and Afghanistan came to be seen as crucial to a secure border for India. British overtures to Dost Mohamad, ruler of Kabul, foundered on the



question of Peshawar, a Pushtun-dominated town which remained under his control till 1834, when Ranjit Singh, exploiting endemic hostilities within the Afghan ruling aristocracy, secured it for the Sikhs. Dost Mohammad sought British assistance in restoring Peshawar to the Afghans. The Rajput ruler, Ranjit Singh, had been a cooperative ally for many years, and he had influential friends in the colonial government. The status of Peshawar would not be negotiated.

In 1839, the British decided to depose Dost Mohammed, and place the more amenable Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk on the throne.<sup>1</sup> An army division charged with this task would march through Sindh and Kalat, and preceding the division's move an envoy was dispatched to Kalat to obtain a safe-conduct agreement from the Khan. Mir Mehrab Khan had little confidence in Shah Shuja's ability to hold Kabul, and he was reluctant to sign the treaty, which obliged him to supply provisions as well as guarantee the safe passage of the troops. His difficult relations with the sardars, especially those of Sarawan, which was on the route of the British forces, gave him little hope of enforcing the latter's compliance with the treaty. However, the Khan had little room for maneuver, as his cousin, Nawaz Khan, a pretender to the Kalat throne, had already joined Shah Shuja's forces.

Mehrab Khan signed, but the treaty was not honoured by the tribes who harassed and plundered the British along the line of march. Sita Ram (1988[1873]: 88–9), a sepoy in Shah Shuja's forces, described various forms of harassment. Baloch raiders stole whole strings of camels; and when the troops passed through the Bolan Pass, boulders were rolled down upon them. Water courses were blocked and some wells deliberately polluted. The British assumed bad faith on Mehrab's part and, once they had secured the passage of the major part of their army to Kabul, undertook a

punitive expedition to Kalat town, and killed the Khan in the ensuing battle. Although documents obtained later by the British absolved Mehrab Khan of conspiring with the tribes, the British denied the throne to his son, appointing Shah Nawaz Khan, instead. The new Khan succeeded to a dismembered Kalat as the British annexed much of Sarawan and Kachhi to Afghanistan, and political Agents were stationed in Sarawan, Kalat and Kachhi. The sardars of Sarawan revolted, and sent for Mehrab's young son, Nasir Khan II, who had taken refuge with a distant chief. Nasir Khan joined his supporters in laying siege to the Kalat town. The campaign, which was marked by vacillation on Nawaz's part, inconsistency, if not duplicity, on the part of the resident Political Agent, and numerous intrigues by factions on both sides (Masson, 2004[1843]: Ch. 3), ended in Nawaz's submission to Nasir Khan. Accepting the *fait accompli*, the British recognized Nasir as the new Khan and returned Sarawan and Kachhi to Kalat.

#### THE 'CLOSE BORDER' YEARS: 1854–76

Initially the British had not intended to establish permanent relations with Kalat, and the troops were withdrawn in the aftermath of the First Anglo-Afghan War, but the annexation of Sindh in 1843 and of the Punjab in 1849, advanced the imperial border to Kalat, which required a new, consistent and effective policy regarding Kalat. In 1854, Nasir Khan signed a treaty that obliged him to protect the trade routes, accept British management of his foreign relations and gave the British the right to station troops in Kalat. In return the Khan agreed to an annual subsidy of Rs50,000 (Aitchison, 1809 XI: 352–4).

The British desired a good neighbour, one that would defer to their regional interests and respect state borders. The policy that guided British–Kalat relations through much of the nineteenth century was



called 'Close Border'. It was based on formal relations, usually stipulated by a treaty between the Government of India and the ruler of an unincorporated territory. Colonial authorities treated the border as a state boundary, and officials were not to engage in actions that would extend the border (Thornton, 1977[1895]: 18; Bruce, 1900: 14). Many Close Border advocates believed that the Indus River marked a defensible Western imperial border. Close Border had worked quite well with Princely States in India, where it was informally known as 'masterly inactivity'. However, by the late nineteenth century this policy was challenged by officials who argued that imperial interests were better served by advancing into the hills and controlling the mountain passes. This became known as the Forward Policy. Its supporters advocated alliances with tribal leaders having the long-term goal of controlling the highland tribes.

The concept of a territorial border that distinguished between the subjects within and the others without, was alien to Kalat. The chiefly subjects within were accustomed to appealing to their counterparts for support in factional disputes among themselves and with the Khan. The struggles over succession to the khanship in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had been exacerbated by Kandahari participation. The effective boundaries of Kalat reflected the reach of the Khan, by his ability to persuade or coerce the submission of local chiefs. This reach varied from one incumbent to another and even during a single reign. In short, Kalat did not have borders in the British sense; it had instead ill-defined tracts, zones of contestation, whose inhabitants often raided neighbouring groups and where the authority of local chiefs rose whenever the Khan's rule weakened.

Nasir Khan II died in 1857 and was succeeded by his sixteen-year old half-brother, Khodadad Khan. Although Khodadad was the sardars' nominee, relations quickly soured when he declined to

return lands confiscated by his predecessor to the Sarawan sardars. The British treated the Khan as a head of state and encouraged him to behave as such. Khodadad Khan used part of his subsidy to raise a small mercenary force composed mainly of Afghans, thus attenuating his dependence on the tribal forces controlled by the sardars.<sup>2</sup> When the Zarrakzai (Zehri) sardar died without a son or brother to succeed him, the Khan attempted to install his own young son as the chief.

The sardars saw these actions as strengthening the Khan's power at their expense. The period from 1855 to 1876 saw Kalat riven with strife as the sardars opposed the Khan's efforts to extend his power with British backing. The sardars, however, had rarely, if ever, engaged in unified action, and their tactics were shifting and uncoordinated. In 1858, some Sarawan and Jhalawan sardars lent their support to the Khan. Their forces engaged insurgents in Makran and the Marri hills on his behalf. However, Khodadad Khan declined to reward this loyalty by restoring their lands and allowances. In 1863, several sardars conspired with Khodadad Khan's half-brother, Sher Dil, to depose Khodadad. Sher Dil's reign, however, was short, as only fourteen months later he was assassinated by his own guards and Khodadad Khan was reinstated.<sup>3</sup>

Mullah Mohamad Raisani, ranking sardar of Sarawan, played a prominent role in tribal affairs during this period. The major sardars of Sarawan had a common interest in regaining their Kachhi estates, and perhaps this predisposed a coalition of some stability and duration, but Mullah Mohammad's skillful maneuvers were critical to their effectiveness. Although he had participated in the conspiracy that deposed Khodadad Khan, he had also helped the Khan escape, and supported his subsequent recall after Sher Dil's death. Mullah Mohammad made a favourable impression on Sir William Merewether, Commissioner of Sindh, when they first



met in 1854. Merewether described the Raisani sardar, then about twenty years old, as 'handsome, frank and of most gentlemanly demeanor.'<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1860s, local uprisings had produced anarchy in Kachhi, Lasbela and Makran. Production declined, cultivators' situation was desperate, and sardars were hard-pressed to maintain their accustomed way of life. In 1868, Mullah Mohmmad Raisani, along with some other chiefs, sought British assistance in mediating their differences with the Khan. The British agreed on the condition that the Khan would also agree to their mediation and that both parties would accept their decision. In March 1869, Col. Phayre, Political Superintendent of Upper Sindh, met with Mullah Mohmmad and the Kurd sardar, and recorded their grievances. The sardars made a number of complaints against the Khan: he had failed to consult with the sardars as was the custom; he had confiscated lands and other property and used them to support his mercenaries; he had suspended their allowances; he had failed to give compensation for the deaths of several notables. This meeting confirmed Phayre's sympathy for the sardars; support for their grievances is manifest in the report he transmitted to Sir William Merewether, who, as Commissioner in Sindh, was responsible for Kalat.<sup>5</sup>

A staunch supporter of the Close Border policy, Merewether was dismissive of most of the sardars' complaints. He argued that confiscation of property and suspension of allowances was an appropriate response to rebellion. In any case, the issue became moot when the Khan, who had only reluctantly agreed to mediation, withdrew from the process. This put Mullah Mohammad in a difficult position, as he had counseled Sarawan's sardars to suspend their hostilities in favour of mediation. In 1871, a tribal force under the Raisani sardar, raided Mastung, Quetta, Dadhur and Bhag. The sardars again sought British mediation,

but Merewether refused on the ground that acknowledging their request was rewarding their rebellion. A tribal force raided a large caravan en route to Kandahar with considerable loss of life and property.<sup>6</sup>

Merewether's support of Close Border remained firm despite escalating disorder. However, the policy was challenged by Robert Sandeman, Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan in the Punjab. Sandeman's district bordered the Marri (a Baloch tribe) territory, who raided there as they did along the Sindh-Kachhi border. In 1867, Sandeman had entered into direct negotiations with the Marri leaders. His success in controlling raids on the Punjab border led him to advocate a similar policy for Kalat. The Khan had refused responsibility for the Marri raids on the Sindh border, saying that their *tumandar* (chief) did not acknowledge his authority. There was some truth to his assertion, as Marris' submission to Kalat had been nominal even under the strong Khans.

With Punjab's annexation, British dealings with the Marris were split between the governments of Sindh and Punjab, and the Marris were quick to take advantage of policy differences between the provinces. Merewether's complaint that pacification along the Punjab border had increased Marri raiding in Sindh and Kachhi, was probably accurate. He was particularly distressed that the tribal chiefs were being rewarded with subsidies from the Government of Punjab, while the Marris were raiding Kachhi. Merewether wanted all the Marris to be placed under a single authority, and in 1871 the government of India put the Marri-Bugti affairs under Col. Phayre, and Sandeman was to report to him in all matters regarding the Marris. Until he was transferred in 1872, Phayre's reports supported Sandeman's reading of the grievances underlying tribal unrest. But Merewether complained that their actions



encouraged *sardari* intransigence, and accused them of deliberate subversion of Close Border.<sup>7</sup>

Differences between Merewether and Sandeman continued when Merewether took Mazarani Marris into service for the protection of the Bolan Pass. The Mazaranis had been settled for some years on the eastern side of the pass and were effectively separate from the rest of the tribe. Sandeman argued that subsidizing the Mazaranis would lead to new disturbances as the Brahuis resident around the pass and other Marris would not accept the privileged position of the Mazaranis. Sandeman's assessment was supported when a Brahui force raided the Mazaranis and captured many of their animals and in May 1872, the Mazaranis looted an Afghan caravan in the Bolan Pass. Sandeman was confident that he could obtain restoration of the looted property through direct negotiations with Marri leaders. Merewether, who prevailed, insisted that all relations with the Marris should cease until the plunder was returned.

Restoration of the plunder was a complicated issue as it was discovered that several parties had received a share of it, as was evident from the fact that some non-Mazarani Marris had also joined in the raid. Additionally, a party of Kurds had intercepted the raiders and obtained a portion of the spoils, as had the Marri *tumandar* (chief) and the *naib* (Khan's agent) of Mastung. Involvement of the *naib* implied that the Khan had either condoned the raid or that he was unable to control his own officials, although the latter was more likely. Under the 1854 treaty the Khan was responsible for protecting trade, but he resisted British pressure to make any restitution and, in turn, threatened to withdraw his subsidy. During the impasse, relations between the Khan and his chief minister became so tense that the minister appealed to the British for protection. The Khan, in response,

turned to other advisors, men who were distrusted by the British. When the British insisted on their dismissal, the Khan protested that these men had served him faithfully.<sup>8</sup> After the British threatened to withdraw the political agent at Kalat, the Khan finally agreed to compensate the merchants, discharge the suspect advisors and restore the chief minister to favour. The dismissed advisors were taken to Sindh, placed under surveillance, and threatened with arrest if they caused trouble.

Khudadad Khan's appointments continued to trouble the British. In 1873 he approached Azad Khan, the Nausherwani chief in Kharan, about becoming the *naib* of Makran. When the Political Agent strongly advised against the appointment, the Khan said the British could do what they wished, that he had lost interest in governing.<sup>9</sup> At the same time his letters to Merewether became increasingly evasive. However, all the while that he was making these statements, the Khan was also seeking to increase the size of his army, a move noted with so much displeasure by the British, that Merewether, finally, withdrew the Political Agent at Kalat on 8 April 1873.

The Khan made an immediate overture to Mullah Mohammad Raisani, who responded with a customary deference but refused to present himself. Raisani, instead, wrote to Merewether, complaining that the Khan was not living up to his agreement to treat the sardars fairly and enclosed the communication between himself and the Khan:

It is evident that his Highness the Khan is not able to manage the country, and will never be so. We Sirdars, Sarawans and Jalawans, &c., lament exceedingly, and feel surprised that, notwithstanding the repeated cautions of the British Government, the Khan fails to carry out their wishes, and has been unable to maintain peace in his country. Now all we Sirdars are particularly obedient to the British Government,



and would be satisfied with what that paramount power may wish to do for our welfare. We are all quite disgusted with the Khan's acts, but hope to continue to meet the wishes of the British Government.<sup>10</sup>

Although the British were officially neutral regarding the Khan and the sardars, Mullah Mohammad's cooperative behaviour produced a slight tilt toward the sardars. Merewether was maneuvered into direct, albeit limited relations with him, as a refusal to do so might have undermined his influence with the other chiefs or inspire him to return to raiding, as he did in 1871.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, Merewether and Sandeman continued to disagree about the Marris. The Punjab Government had dealt with them as an independent tribe since 1867. Although Merewether acknowledged that the Khan had little influence with them, he still argued that they were the Khan's subjects and should be persuaded to behave as such. Further, the Marris had returned only a portion of the plunder from the caravan raid in 1872, and Merewether believed that they should be punished for this, and in order to do so, he proposed blockading Marri territory. Sandeman, backed by Punjab's provincial officials, argued that a blockade would cause suffering among the tribespeople and would not prove effective along Punjab's border.

Merewether had little hope that the Kalat sardars would remain friendly indefinitely. He feared that a failure to force the Khan to compose his differences with them would lead to anarchy and impel the British to intervene militarily. Given this probability, Merewether proposed a limited military intervention to force the Khan and the sardars to resolve their differences. He argued that such an action at that moment would be less costly than a subsequent intervention, but the Government of India rejected the military alternative on the grounds that it might upset relations

with Afghanistan and adversely affect security on the Punjab border; they authorized Sandeman, instead, to negotiate with the Marris.

In November 1875, Sandeman, accompanied by an entourage of Marri notables, Sikh infantry and Punjab Cavalry, set out for Kalat. He was authorized to investigate the quarrels among the Marris and to mediate between them if possible, to explore ways of securing trade through the Bolan Pass, and to assess the Khan's willingness for restoration of friendly relations with the British. The timing of Sandeman's mission was not auspicious as Mullah Mohammad Raisani was enlisting Marri support for an uprising against the Khan. The Marri *tumandar* (chief) claimed that it would be difficult to curb raiding in Kachhi until peace was restored, and in the prevailing state of unrest, Kachhi was a temptation that the Marris could not resist. Sandeman went on to meet with Mullah Mohammad Raisani and the Sarawan sardars who assured him that they were willing to settle their differences with Mir Khodadad Khan. Without such settlement, they asserted, there was no way to secure trade through the Bolan Pass. All the notables consulted by Sandeman, assured him that peace between the Khan and the sardars was fundamental to resolving the issues he had been authorized to investigate, and he took this as a mandate to write to Khodadad Khan for setting up a meeting.

Khodadad Khan's response to Sandeman's letter revealed suspicion of the mission:

... since the British Government through Sir W.L. Merewether, Commissioner in Sind, settled the differences between the Brahooes and my Government, I have maintained peace with the Brahooes and caused them no injury. Notwithstanding this, they (the Brahooes) have broken faith with me, have attacked my people, plundered their property, and destroyed their crops. When the above-named British



officer settled our differences, the Brahooes bound themselves to return the plundered property taken from my people and from *kafilas* [caravans] during the rebellion of 1872, but as yet they have not done this.<sup>12</sup>

The Khan knew that Merewether had opposed Sandeman's visit, and the fact that Sandeman had consulted the chiefs prior to seeking an audience with him, certainly, could not have pleased Mir Khodadad. The meeting was a failure, as the Khan refused to guarantee the safety of caravan trade through the Bolan Pass and questioned Sandeman's authority to settle his dispute with the sardars. However, the Khan agreed to accept the submission of the sardars accompanying Sandeman, although he was clearly dubious about the loyalty professed by the Marri chiefs. Before accepting their submission, he whispered to Sandeman, 'Nothing but the sword will ever cure the Murrees.'<sup>13</sup>

A month after this *darbar* (a gathering of chiefs; a royal gathering), several of the attending sardars sent Sandeman a petition:

According to the ancient custom of the Khelat State we humbled ourselves before the Khan, making our submission to him, and asked for peace and forgiveness. . . . The Khan then told us to take comfort; that he had some matters to refer to the British Government, and after getting a reply he would arrange a fair settlement of our case according to the ancient State laws, and would in the meantime prevent his troops injuring us and our people. He asked us to promise not to injure his people, and this we agreed to.

This matter being settled we were indulging the hope that all was well, when suddenly, when you were still in Khelat, news was received . . . [that] the Khan's troops attacked our people, killed five, and carried off some property and flocks. . . . The Khan fully admitted to you that by his orders his troops had injured our people. On our arrival with you in the Bolan Pass, after leaving Khelat, news reached us of the

death of [Sardar] Noordeen Mingul and several of his followers at the hands of the Khan. . . . It is clear to us that the Khan's object is to gradually destroy his Sirdars and take possession of their lands. He desires to rule the country by means of his slaves and servants, and to resume all *jagirs* and revenue free grants. . . . Since the British Government gave our Khan arms and guns he has used them with the objects (*sic*) of destroying us, and from that day the ruin of the country commenced.<sup>14</sup>

Although Sandeman had failed to negotiate peace in Kalat, his mission did intensify the political debates about British policy and the divisions within Kalat as well, as the passage above demonstrates. The sardars were legitimated as parties in any future efforts, because they had represented themselves as willing to make peace, while at the same time depicting the Khan as subverting this desire. Their petition represented a moral claim to the British to follow through on Sandeman's initiative. The Government of India (GOI), forced to mediate policy differences between Sindh and Punjab, authorized Sandeman to make a second trip to Kalat and make another effort at mediating the differences between the Khan and the sardars.

With this 1876 decision, the Supreme Government abandoned the Close Border policy that had guided relations with Kalat for some twenty-five years. It was a bitter defeat for Merewether. Four years earlier he had vigorously argued against Sandeman:

. . . I would respectfully ask, has not my forecasts of events been exactly fulfilled? Captain Sandeman has all along been misled by the belief that he has only to get within the circle of Khelat politics to be able to arrive at once at the centre, and set all things to rights. But, as I have repeatedly pointed out, he really knew little of the character of the Khan of Khelat, or of the true merits of the case between the Khan and his Barons, therefore he was not able to judge how it could best be adjusted. His arrival in Kutchi stopped a revolution which promised to bring about the adjustment of affairs which Government was



waiting for. . . . The most unfortunate event of all . . . has been the treacherous behaviour of the Khan so immediately after the visit of Captain Sandeman, in having Noordeen Mingul attacked and killed. . . . If the breach between the Khan and Sardars was wide before, it is infinitely so now, and quite unclosable (*sic*), while grave disturbances must follow.<sup>15</sup>

A historical parallel informed Merewether's position. 'It is the state of our own country over again. . . . The chiefs must be made to understand that the Khan is regarded as their sovereign. . . .'<sup>16</sup> Merewether saw the subordination of the sardars as critical to progress in Kalat, just as the submission of the barons to the king underwrote the political development of England. He envisioned colonial support as the mechanism of progress for Kalat. The British should judge the loyalty of the sardars and distribute rewards and punishments accordingly. The flaw in his argument was his undue optimism about what it would take to persuade the sardars to accept subordination. Since the Government of India was not persuaded, they relieved Merewether of his responsibility for Kalat, transferring authority to the Punjab.

The dispute between Sandeman and Merewether was an instance of the chronic antagonism between Calcutta and Bombay, and the differences between frontier officials and imperial administrators. Merewether and Sandeman had been trained in different schools of frontier policy. Merewether had served under Commissioner John Jacob in Sindh. As a young officer, he had been responsible for policing and administering the border between Sindh and Kalat from 1844 to 1862. Merewether rose through the colonial ranks, serving as the Deputy Collector and the Political Superintendent of the Frontier District in Sindh before his appointment as the Commissioner of Sindh. Sensitive to hierarchy and punctilious about protocol, his actions were guided by the formalities of office.

He strove for consistency, as is evident in his approach to the Marri issue, and in his support of the office of the Khan despite disapproval of Khodadad Khan's behaviour.

Sandeman, on the other hand, was schooled in the ways of peripatetic, hands-on administration, established by Henry Lawrence in Punjab. Tribal custom was considered important in assessing administrative action. Punitive raids by colonial troops were guided by the concept of collective responsibility, with little or no attempt to ascertain the actual identity of lawbreakers.<sup>17</sup> Sandeman took a pragmatic approach to resolving disputes. His willingness to subvert bureaucratic hierarchy was apparent early on when he first persuaded the Superintendent of Upper Sindh, who was subordinate to Merewether, to give the sardars a sympathetic hearing.

The Sandeman-Merewether dispute persisted over a decade, during which the diverse subjects of this dispute—the Khan and the sardars—pursued their own tactics in contesting the terms of Kalat's relations with India, and their actions critically shaped the outcome of the dispute. While the emergence of Sandeman as an effective spokesman for tribal interests can be seen as historically fortuitous, his effectiveness was contingent on the sardars' capacity to recognize an ally in their long struggle for official recognition and the restitution of their Kachhi estates. The Government of India desired a cooperative and strong ruler in Kalat, but their unwillingness to back the Khan militarily, as Merewether had urged, doomed Close Border.

#### BRITISH RELATIONS WITH THE KHAN

The rhetoric of Close Border acknowledged the Khan as ruler of an independent state, but this contradicted the politics and history of the region. The khanship was essentially a performative office,



as a Khan attracted *sardari* support by demonstrating that he was deserving of it. Leading successful military campaigns, manipulating *sardari* factions, and delivering swift and often violent retribution to sardars suspected of disloyalty, were the keys to a successful khanship. There was a radical disjuncture between British notions of institutionalized rule, and local ground realities in the way power was gained and held.

The British, accomplished practitioners of royal protocol, were punctilious in referring to the Khan as His Highness and to their own role as advisors. They represented themselves as patient troubleshooting mediators at the service of the Khan. When frontier officers reporting to superiors at Bombay and Calcutta found themselves in the difficult position of accounting for deplorable events occurring during their watch, they appealed to the iconic figures, the oriental sovereign and the 'perfidious' court advisor. The unreflective ease with which these figures were deployed to explain the Khan's resistance to their sensible advice reflects a confidence that their superiors would readily understand and accept such an explanation.

The Governor of Bombay, writing to Calcutta in 1871, characterized Khodadad Khan as follows:

Whatever his other faults may be, the Khan may be considered a temperate ruler, who has shown himself . . . invariably willing and anxious to be guided by our advice. On the whole he may be considered, I think, a favourable specimen of an oriental sovereign. . . .<sup>18</sup>

The classificatory economy of the final phrase bespeaks the shared perception that rationalized British supremacy in India. The oriental sovereign was an unstable figure whose only consistency was in being located as the other of a European ruler. To the British mind, Oriental sovereigns governed by arbitrary and, often cruel,

whim, and raised in dissolute harems, they were given to excess and self-indulgence.<sup>19</sup> British relations with the rulers of the princely states had established the type with its variant specimens, marked by a tendency to radical mutation that could transform the favourable to the unacceptable with great rapidity.

Khodadad Khan was not, often, assessed, in the relatively favourable terms above, as British officials had professed disappointment with him from the beginning of his reign. John Jacob, Commissioner of Sindh, observed in 1858:

Having smoothed the way for him, removed all serious obstacles to the establishment of his authority, placed good and faithful ministers around him, recruited his finances, brought his proudest nobles to his feet in a state of cordial obedience, and connected him by marriage with the best and most influential families, Major Green [Political Agent, Kalat] wishes the young Khan to try and go alone a little and govern his people like a prince; but hitherto the proposal does not appear encouraging. The young Khan will not as yet assert himself; while his feudal Chieftains, seeing this, are inclined to despise him, and look up only to Major Green. There is no doubt that the Khan does not treat his Chieftains properly. . . . His Highness cannot, as Major Green explains, rule without them. The truth is that these men are a rough, bold, manly race, whom a man [emphasis in original] can govern readily but not a feeble false and cunning boy (Khelat Affairs: 189).

This passage is marked by insight and contradiction, both unrecognized by Jacobs. His confident assumption that skillful British diplomacy established a firm foundation for effective rule is blind to the likelihood that these maneuvers in fact undermined Khodadad Khan's authority by casting him as a British puppet. Instead Khodadad's difficulties are attributed to a failure of masculinity. Jacobs indeed knows a truth about the manly Baluch:



They do defer to leaders of proven masculine accomplishment. But Jacobs misunderstands his insight, as he fails to see that the British presence constrained 'khanly' performance, thus undermining his authority.

In 1872, some fifteen years later, Merewether echoes Jacob's complaint:

... it is clear that his Highness the Khan has given himself over to the worst of advisors, discarding those who have been true and faithful to him. This is the first time, since we have had a political agent at his court, that the advice of the latter has been so disregarded. The Khan's present procedure would appear to be more than that of a man who had completely lost his senses, than of a person having the position he now holds. Everything has been lately smoothed for him; his rebellious Sirdars have been reconciled to him, even the last, Noordeen Mingul, had been made to surrender on terms which were most favourable to the Khan, while the terms which had been imposed on the Sirdars of Sarawan, though fair and liberal to them, were in no way degrading to him, and ... were in the main points what he himself had granted on a previous occasion.<sup>20</sup>

In the fifteen years separating these passages, *sardari* insurgency and the Marri problem had put steady pressure on Close Border and elicited an unrelenting stream of advice from British officials. The 'true and faithful' advisor mentioned by Merewether, was, Shagassi Wali Mohammad, whom Merewether consistently termed a British ally. When Shagassi was finally forced out of office, the British rewarded his loyalty with a pension. Since the British treated him as a man in their service, it is likely that the Khan did too. Nor does the Khan's effort to enlist advisors independent of the British appear to have been insensible behaviour. Official reports assumed that a rational ruler would understand his interests to be identical to British interests. Thus, they denied Khodadad Khan rational

agency when he resisted their counsel. This enabled the oscillation between the acceptable oriental sovereign and the hopelessly flawed, perhaps even insane, ruler, to be accepted without question in Bombay and Calcutta.

A more informed reading of Khodadad Khan's performance suggests that he was neither feeble nor insane. His efforts to expand his power by enlarging his personal forces and placing a son within the sardari ranks were sensible attempts to strengthen his position vis-à-vis the sardars and test the limits of British support. As to the cunning and false traits attributed to him by the British, duplicity was likely a tactical response to their advice, especially when it was unsolicited.

Relations with the British were particularly tense when the Khan abandoned Shagassi Wali Mohammad for the three controversial advisors mentioned earlier, and this may have disposed Khodadad Khan to seek the counsel of men un beholden to the British. The disposition of these advisors became an increasingly divisive issue. The Khan's unwillingness to dismiss them highlighted the importance the British placed on their surveillance of the court. It was only when they threatened to withdraw the Political Agent at Kalat that the Khan acceded to the British demand for their dismissal. After their departure, the Khan made persistent efforts to restore them to his court:

Lately it was the pleasure of the English Government to deport three of my servants from Khelat. Although they had committed no fault, each of these men performed their respective duties without interfering in any other person's business, they served me well in every possible way. The removal of these men has injured my reputation throughout the country [emphasis added]. ... On visiting the Governor Sahib [the Viceroy], I hinted regarding the release of my three servants. ... Seeing no attention was paid to this trifling request, I considered how



other representations would be treated, and remained silent. I have just visited you, my friend, at Shahpoor, and how often did I speak to you regarding my three servants. As you would not listen to what I had to say, no benefit has resulted, and my name has been disgraced (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup>

Merewether, who took calling the viceroy 'Governor Sahib' as a deliberate insult to the British Government, responded with a stern admonition.

I have received your Highness' letter . . . and regret that its contents can only be regarded as most unsatisfactory in that they clearly show that you are unable to save yourself from the trammels of evil advisors, and that you pay more attention to the idle talk of foolish persons than to the sound advice of those who work only for your good . . . It is unbecoming to further discuss the removal of these three men, your Highness having been distinctly informed by his Excellency the Viceroy that the decision arrived at in regard to them could not be altered.<sup>22</sup>

The Khan then assumed the posture of indifference, stating that the British were masters and they could do what they wished. This withdrawal appears to have been a response to feeling dishonoured by the British. Earlier Khans had pledged loyalty to Kandahar without loss of honour, and courtly intrigue was the rule in Kalat. Thus British efforts to vet courtiers and collect palace intelligence had historical precedents. What was distinctive about the British was their determination to maintain steady, reliable surveillance of the court while barring advisors suspected of harboring anti-British inclinations despite the Khan's repeated requests to retain them. The struggle over appointments was surely known to the sardars who had their own sources of intelligence. This abridgment of 'khanly' authority was particularly dishonouring as the sardars were free of such interference. The British complained from time to time about one sardar or another being influenced by undesirable

advisors, but Close Border discouraged formal intervention in their affairs.

Close Border was fated to fail on several grounds. It was predicated on the presence of a strong central ruler, but the ruler it required could only have been preserved in his position by the deployment of British troops. Calcutta's refusal to authorize a military campaign was inevitable, given their limited geopolitical concerns. Much of Kalat territory was essentially unknown to the British, and the tribal resistance encountered between 1839 and 1872 indicated that a military campaign would be protracted and costly. The sardars, less constrained by British oversight, used resistance in pursuit of direct relations with the British. When Sandeman emerged as a persuasive advocate for such relations, Calcutta had an attractive alternative to Close Border.

#### SANDEMAN AND THE FORWARD POLICY

Authorized to make a second effort at mediation, Sandeman returned to Kalat in 1876 and turned his considerable energies to securing the Bolan Pass. The pass had long been important to the tribes of Kalat, because it linked the Sarawan highland to the Kachhi plain and was seasonally crowded with tribal groups moving their animals to winter or summer pasturage. The Bolan Pass also enabled the caravan trade from the Makran coast to Kandahar. Its military importance to the British had been demonstrated in the First Afghan War. Sandeman proposed enlisting tribal assistance in assuring safe traffic through the pass and gave Mullah Mohammad Raisani responsibility for the overall management. The Kurd sardar, Raisani's brother-in-law, was given the duty of providing caravan escorts through the pass, and Sandeman entertained a stream of visitors paying their respects or seeking mediation.



For Khodadad Khan, ensconced in his palace at Kalat town, Sandeman's activities prior to their meeting were a clear sign that Close Border had ended. The Khan expressed his displeasure in a letter to Sandeman:

I am very anxious to meet you, but on account of the appearance of cholera in your camp, it is only right and proper to delay our meeting until the danger of infection is passed. . . . I notice what you say about the caravans having been escorted to Shawl Kot [Quetta] by Sirdar Moola Mahomed, Raisani, and the other Brahooee Sirdars. I would have preferred had troops escorted the caravans, as it is due to the folly of the Brahooees that the Bolan Pass has ever been closed to trade. In reference to what you say about the produce of the Brahooee lands. . . . I have attended to your wishes in the matter . . . and have directed my *Naibs* not to interfere with the Brahooee lands in any way, although I should have preferred waiting before giving the order until we had met, because you are aware of the bad conduct of the Brahooees and the injury they have done to Kutchi.<sup>23</sup>

Khodadad Khan clearly understood that Sandeman's negotiations with the sardars had undermined his position. There are echoes of Merewether in the Khan's indirect criticism of Sandeman's actions as ignoring, if not rewarding, tribal misconduct, but Sandeman was not sympathetic:

I am greatly disappointed to find that your Highness hesitates coming to meet me according to our agreement made when I was in Khelat. I was in hopes that your Highness would be so highly gratified at hearing of my mission and of the high consideration of the British Government for your Highness . . . [that] your Highness would have shown your great appreciation by readily appointing Mustung, as proposed by me, for our place of meeting. . . . Your Highness must be perfectly aware that the object of the mission I am conducting is pregnant with results connected with the welfare of the Khelat State, and that before rejecting my proposal naming the place where we should meet, you

should give the subject your Highness' most complete and careful consideration.<sup>24</sup>

Following a third exchange of letters, Khodadad Khan finally met Sandeman at Mastung. He was persuaded to sanction Sandeman's arrangements for the Bolan Pass, with the annual costs of security to be met from the tolls collected from caravans at Quetta and Dhadur, although he complained that this would decrease his own Bolan revenue. In return, Sandeman agreed to propose a raise in the Khan's annual subsidy.

The sardars of Sarawan and Jhalawan made their submission to the Khan in a *darbar* on 13 July 1876. Sandeman and Khodadad Khan signed an agreement that restored all customary rights and privileges of the sardars and empowered the British to mediate disputes arising between the sardars and the Khan. After the *darbar* (meeting of the sardars headed by the Khan), a number of *sardari* complaints against the Khan were settled, most of them in the former's favour. Almost all of these disputes were about land-rights and taxes, and several revealed arbitrary appropriations on the part of the Khan's *naibs* (revenue deputies).

The terms of the Mastung Agreement were incorporated in a new treaty between the Khan and the Government of India, which was signed in December 1876. Other terms of the treaty authorized the permanent stationing of British troops in Kalat, construction of rail and telegraph lines, and free-trade between Kalat and India. The Khan's subsidy was raised to one lakh (100,000) rupees. He was presented with a gift of Rs300,000 and informed that the advisors, whose removal had been a source of the earlier controversy, would be released from their detention in Sindh.

The treaty was the culmination of Sandeman's activist Forward Policy. Sandeman was clear that preserving peace in Kalat would



depend on 'the direct interference of the British Government acting as the paramount power. The Khan, his Sirdars, and civil and military administrators know this perfectly.'<sup>25</sup> Though Sandeman's proponents later depicted the Forward Policy to be the antithesis of Close Border, Lambrick (1975: 412), a political officer in Sindh during the 1930s, disputed this. He argued that Sandeman and those associated with the Forward Policy implemented many of the projects—the occupation of Quetta, construction of the railway through the Bolan Pass, and employing levies to protect the pass in Kachhi—advocated by the Sindh administrators associated with the policy of the Close Border. The visions of the Forward Policy and the Close Border differed radically, however. The Forward Policy was confidently expansionist while Close Border was focused on attaining borders that would secure the Indian Empire. The apparent convergence of the two policies in the above noted projects adopted by Calcutta—the occupation of Quetta, the construction of the railroad through the Bolan Pass, and the employment of levies to protect the Pass—reflect the interplay of imperial goals mediated by fiscal stringency, local ambitions, and the distinctive political structure of Kalat.

From Calcutta's perspective, Baluchistan was a distant frontier that had little to offer economically, but border politics dictated continuous oversight, backed up by a permanent military presence. In February 1877, the Government of India appointed Sandeman as the first Agent to the Governor General (AGG) for Baluchistan. Political Agents were appointed for Quetta, Jacobabad and Kalat town. The permanency of the British presence was marked by beginning a rail-line linking Jacobabad in Sindh to Quetta in Balochistan, and the construction of barracks in the Quetta cantonment. The Governor General in Council, reporting to the Secretary of State for India, explained the advantages of the Forward Policy:

If it be conducive to British interest, as we have no doubt it is, to influence the tribes and peoples who live beyond our border, we must be in contact with them. It is by the everyday acts of earnest, upright English gentlemen that lasting influence must be obtained; not by spasmodic demonstrations nor any sudden and temporary influence purchased by money and presents. If, at length, we succeed in binding more closely to us the people of Khelat, by making them feel the benefits of peace, and the power for good exercised by the British Government, we shall have added an additional bulwark to our Empire.<sup>26</sup>

The high moral tone of this passage echoes Sandeman and reflects his belief in frontier service as an activist, interventionist enterprise. However, there is a hint of ambivalence about Sandeman's success. Although he was certainly earnest and upright, it was other aspects of his character that made him the ideal official to initiate the daunting task of domesticating Baluchistan. His impatience with bureaucratic procedures, his willingness to take risks, and his confidence and energy were compatible with the performative nature of tribal leadership. Thornton (1977[1895]: 65) reports that Sandeman, while serving in Punjab, had violated official policy by travelling without a military escort into the Marri Hills to negotiate the return of cattle obtained in a raid. When the chiefs objected that returning the cattle would expose them to British imprisonment, Sandeman offered himself as a hostage for their safe return. He remained a guest of the Marris until the chiefs gave back the cattle without incident. Sandeman's performative style surely raised eyebrows and anxieties in Calcutta. Despite his argument that subsidies strengthened the collective responsibility of the tribe, there was a fine line between subsidies granted for service and the purchase of loyalty, a line that would soon be crossed when Agency officials withheld payments as punishment for non-cooperation.



Before Sandeman could turn his attention to administering the agency, further Russian expansion in Central Asia provoked new concerns about Afghan loyalties.<sup>27</sup> In 1878, when the Afghan Amir, Sher Ali, resisted British efforts to check growing Russian influence in Afghanistan, British and Indian troops again marched on Kabul. One contingent moved through the Bolan Pass, and occupied Sibi and Pishin without incident. Sandeman organized transport and provisions for this army, besides negotiating for the support of notables in the area. British forces defeated the Amir at Kabul and Kandahar. In May 1879, the Amir signed The Treaty of Gandamak that ceded territories that became British Baluchistan—Thal-Choatali, Pishin, Harnai and Sibi—to the British. Despite their military success, the British goal of an Afghanistan united under a friendly ruler, proved elusive. The British had to settle for the expedient recognition of Abdur Rahman as the Amir of Kabul.

In 1880, before completing their troop withdrawal, the British-Indian forces suffered a costly defeat at Maiwand, near Kandahar. The Afghan victory inspired uprisings in Pishin, Sibi and Zhob, forcing the British to withdraw temporarily from Zhob and Loralai. Ayub Khan, architect of the Maiwand victory, appealed to the Khan, but he and the sardars of Kalat refused Ayub their support, instead, they mobilized transport and supplies for the British army. Ayub Khan's defeat marked the end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, and both Sandeman and Khodadad Khan were granted honours in recognition of their wartime efforts.

The British were for a time undecided about the status of lands ceded to them under the Treaty of Gandamak, but Sandeman argued for their retention, and in 1887, they were incorporated into British Baluchistan and administered by the AGG serving as the Chief Commissioner.<sup>28</sup> Sandeman, using carrot and stick tactics, steadily brought British Baluchistan under control. He was

quick to visit disturbed areas where he would call an informal *jirga* (council of notables) and attempt to settle local disputes. He offered protection to any group who sought it. However, any serious challenge to British authority brought swift military action. When dissident leaders decided to seek Sandeman's adjudication, he treated them leniently, usually balancing a fine with a reward, often a subsidy, or rarely, a land-grant as well. By 1890, British Baluchistan had been organized into districts. The relatively peaceful districts were administered by Political Officers and levies, the others from military posts. The government became the landowner of record in British Baluchistan, taking the share of the revenue formerly owed to the Amir of Afghanistan. *Jagirs* (estates) conferred by the Amir were generally confirmed by the British. A few new *jagirs* were granted, primarily to the Jogezi Kakars, with the aim of securing their support.

Robert Sandeman died suddenly on 29 January 1892, at Lasbela, where he had gone to broker a reconciliation between the Jam (hereditary title of the Lasbela ruler) and his son. Sandeman was buried in Lasbela, and the Jam had a dome constructed over the tomb with an inscription naming him the Jam's 'kind and beloved friend'. Alfred Lyall recalled Sandeman:

He was absolutely without any fear of responsibility, and consequently he was rather impatient of control, so that his very considerable administrative capacities were best seen in a rough half-subdued country where he could have his own way, chose his own methods, and bring into full play his special faculty of influence over Asiatics. For laws, financial rules, and official regulations generally he had no predilection. (Thornton, 1977[1895]: 291)

Sandeman served as the AGG for almost fourteen years, during which he established a mode of governance that persists even today, albeit within the constraints of the Pakistani state. There was a



fortuitous congruence in Sandeman's activist official and the performative nature of *sardari* politics.<sup>29</sup> Sandeman's hands-on style of diplomacy, his willingness to travel and spend hours fostering alliances resonated with many sardars. This mutual respect enabled the creation of two institutions—*jirga* and *levies*—that became central to a colonial administration in remote Baluchistan.

#### Notes

1. Shah Shuja had signed a treaty with the British in 1809, when he was ruler of Kabul, but lost the throne shortly thereafter. After several years as a prisoner in Kashmir, he was freed by Ranjit Singh and spent several years as a fortune in gems, including the Koh-i-Noor diamond, which Ranjit appropriated.) Shah Shuja eventually settled under British protection in India, where he spent his years scheming to regain Kabul. In 1833, with the covert approval of the colonial government, he recruited an army to march on Dost Mohammad's forces. The battle was joined at Kandahar, where Shah Shuja snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by fleeing the battlefield just as his army gained the advantage. While Dost Mohammad was engaged at Kandahar, Ranjit Singh seized control of Peshawar.
2. Khodadad Khan increased his mercenary army over time. In 1869, a British Political Agent reported, the force was 2,000 strong and made up of 'scoundrels of all sort, Patan, and Afghan, and men from all parts of Central Asia.' (quoted in Thornton, 1977 [1895]: 46).
3. Merewether to Governor and President in Council, 5 April 1872, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, p. 171.
4. Government of Bombay to Foreign, 16 July 1870, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, p. 17.
5. Phayre to Merewether, 6 December 1869 in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, pp. 37–57. This account contains a running commentary by Merewether that clarifies the differences between them.
6. Twelve people were killed and twenty wounded. Property losses were estimated at around Rs90,000 (Khelat Affairs 1977 [1872]: 27).
7. Secretary Government of Bombay to Secretary Foreign Department, 20 April 1872, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, pp. 181–2.

8. Translation of a letter from the Khan to the Commissioner in Sindh dated the 9th of *Jamadi-ul-Awal* 1289, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, p. 306.
9. Diary No. 11, 1873, by the Political Agent, Khelat, for the Week Ending 16th March, 1873, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, p. 380.
10. Translation of a letter from Mullah Mohammad Khan Raisani to Commissioner in Sindh, 26th *Safar* 1290, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, p. 428.
11. Political Superintendent, Upper Sindh Frontier, to Commissioner in Sindh, 24 February 1874, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, No. 1, p. 463.
12. Sandeman to Commissioner and Superintendent, Derajat, 5 February 1876, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, pp. 112–13.
13. Sandeman to Commissioner and Superintendent, Derajat, 5 February 1876, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, p. 121.
14. Petition from the sardars to Sandeman, 13 January 1876, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, pp. 135–6.
15. Merewether to Secretary, Foreign Department, 21 January 1876, in Papers Related to the Treaty, pp. 150–1.
16. Merewether to Governor and President in Council, Bombay, 5 April 1872, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, p. 180.
17. See Woodruff (1954: pp. 34–5) for a comparison of frontier policies in Sindh and Punjab.
18. Minute by his Excellency the Governor, 10 February 1871, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, p. 84.
19. Merewether linked character flaws in Khodadad Khan to his childhood in the *harem*. Merewether to President in Council, Bombay, 26 January 1870, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, pp. 9, 16.
20. Merewether to Governor and President in Council, Bombay, 29 June 1872, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, p. 269.
21. Khan to Merewether, n.d., in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, p. 398.
22. Merewether to Khan, 10 March 1873, in Papers Relating to the Affairs of Khelat, p. 400.
23. Khan to Sandeman, 21 April 1876, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, p. 205.
24. Sandeman to Khan, 28 April 1876, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, pp. 205–6.
25. Sandeman to Commissioner and Superintendent, Derajat and Khelat Frontier, 31 July 1876, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, p. 254.
26. Foreign Department to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, 23 March 1877, in Papers Relating to the Treaty, p. 353.



27. Khokand fell to the Russians in 1876, Khiva and Merv shortly thereafter.
28. Sandeman went on home leave in 1881, and spent considerable time and effort lobbying politicians in London for inclusion of the ceded territories in the new Agency (Thornton, 1977 [1895]: pp. 162–3).
29. It is not surprising that Sandeman's style was controversial in Calcutta. Among his critics were Henry Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary, and Lord Landsdowne, Viceroy (Tripodi 2011: pp. 63–4).

## 4

## The Politics of Space

Balochistan was a space of tribal territories and towns located along caravan trade routes when the British began the task of creating a colonial Baluchistan. The towns were fortified, indicating that the raiding of settlements was fairly common, as was raiding amongst the pastoralists themselves. Scholz (2002: 259–62) stresses the importance of security in pre-colonial Balochistan. He argues that it contributed to the integrity of the tribe, the authority of the sardar, and the paucity of settlements. The passes between the mountains and the plains were often dangerous spaces. The Bolan Pass posed significant problems for the seasonal movement of the tribal groups. Pasturage was scant, and the possibility of raiding, especially by the Marris, was a constant threat. Scholz (2002: 242) reports that well into the twentieth century, the Bangulzais moved en masse through the Bolan Pass in a single caravan, protected by armed guards.

Tribal spaces were structured by personal networks based on patrilineal and affinal links and on ties of patronage. These socio-political relations arose from the agency of men seeking to secure their families in an environment of variable resources in water and pasturage. Links of kinship comprised the networks of most tribespeople. While kinship was also primary for sardars and Khans, their multiple marriages created wider networks that were further extended by patronage relations with the Hindu bankers, shopkeepers, and Afghan merchants. These diverse articulations



produced overlapping networks that linked camps and villages into localities, and localities into regions. There was virtually no vertical spatial integration. In this situation it is deceptive to speak of borders and boundaries, as they existed only to the extent that a sardar or a Khan had the inclination, authority and means to enforce them.

Ethnic-linguistic boundaries were permeable, as the heterogeneity of tribal sections, discussed in Chapter 2, indicates. Most Sarawani tribes included *takkars* (sections) that claimed Pushtun origins. When the British censused Balochistan in 1901, they found small groups of Brahui-origin residing among the Pushtuns in British Baluchistan (GOB Sarawan: 51). Scholz (2002: 50) describes the Marri tribe as formed in a process of repeated incorporation of unrelated groups. Authority derived from the successful performance of power at multiple locations from the extended family through sections, tribes, and the Khanate itself. Power, in the sense of a right to accept, evade or reject the authority claims of others, was thus widely distributed among men. Performative style expressed hierarchy, as a tribesman kissing the feet of a sardar evoked a seemingly commanding authority, especially in the eyes of Western observers. However, *sardari* authority was limited by the ability of families and lineages to move and ally with another sardar, although this entailed accepting inferior client status, at least initially. The idiom of tribal genealogy was not converted to a patrilineal charter. Tribes were not stable entities, but rather the precipitate of an ongoing process in which families and lineages sought to maximize economic and political security. The British did not interfere with the mobility of tribespeople, and indeed, the establishment of the *pax Britanica* stimulated movement into tracts whose lack of security had discouraged earlier pastoral and agrarian utilization.

The British transformed the space of Balochistan in two fundamental ways. They introduced permanent borders into the region, and they located their headquarters at Quetta, which was situated in the extreme north of Balochistan. The selection of Quetta was determined by its location between the Khojak Pass on the Afghan boundary and the Bolan Pass, the gateway to Kachhi and Sindh. In pre-colonial times the location of Quetta, on the ethnic boundary between the Pushtuns and the Brahuīs constrained its growth, and control of Quetta shifted between the two groups. When Charles Masson visited Quetta in 1831, the Khan controlled Quetta by stationing troops there. The troops, along with a number of residents, relocated to Kachhi during the winter. Masson reported that those who planned to stay through the winter were repairing the fortifications to withstand the threat of Pushtun raids (Masson, 1997 [1842]: 329).

The two Afghan wars had taught the British the logistical importance of transport. The eighteen-eighties and eightennineties were marked by rapid construction of railways and roads, and Quetta was the hub for transportation as all lines converged there. In a pattern common to imperial development, there was virtually no investment in the secondary routes which could link one town to another. British infrastructural investment redefined substantial areas in Balochistan. Quetta, once marginal, was now central, despite its eccentric location vis-à-vis the rest of Balochistan, and Kalat town, the centre of the Khanate, became marginal. Towns located along the railways had new commercial opportunities, and caravan trade declined as merchants turned to shipment via the rail. The lack of rail and road construction in Jhalawan consigned it to a remoteness that was not really breached until the second decade of the twentieth century.



### QUETTA: THE SPACE OF COLONIAL DOMINANCE

Quetta was a small, fortified village, in pre-colonial times. The name is derived from the Pushtu word, *kwatta*, which Raverty translates, at one point, as 'fort' or 'walled city' (Raverty, 1976 [1878]: 611), and at another, a 'mound' or 'pile of earth, stones or rocks' (Raverty, 1877: 288). Archeological evidence indicates that Quetta Valley, situated at an elevation of about 1850 meters, had been inhabited for thousands of years, although the settlements were small and few in number (Fairservis, 1956; Possehl, 1990; Ratnagar, 2006: 89, 329–30). Quetta village was located at the southern end of a network of narrow alluvial valleys between the Bolan Pass, which leads southeast to the Indus Plains, and the Khojak Pass, which leads northwest to Kandahar and southern Afghanistan.

Historically the area was commonly known as Shal or Shalkot, and it generally fell within the administrative sphere of Kandahar. Throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, control of the area shifted between the Mughal and the Persian empires. With the rise of the Afghan state under the Durrani, Quetta fell under Pushtun control. It is generally agreed that Ahmad Shah Abdali (1747–73), the first of the Durrani rulers, transferred the revenue rights in Quetta Valley to Mir Nasir Khan I of Kalat as a reward for military support against the Persians in the Battle of Meshad in 1759.

Prior to the British presence, Quetta Valley was occupied by groups of Pushtun and Brahui. In 1895, when the British recorded land-rights in the *tehsil*, they found that the Khan had issued numerous revenue-free *sanads* (land-grants) to Pushtun and Brahui notables, although the Raisanis and the Shawanis were the major landholders. Many *sanads* were rewards for military service to Mir Nasir Khan I in battles ranging from Mashad to Delhi. There were even a few earlier *sanads* issued from the court at Kandahar. There had been

extensive investment in *karez* (man-made underground water channels) irrigation, and it was not uncommon for the shareholders in a *karez* complex to come from different Brahui tribes. In a few cases, Pushtun and Brahui held shares in the same complex. The Revenue Commissioner, who surveyed landholdings in the Quetta Revenue Commission district in 1895, recommended allowing the *niabers* (revenue district) in 1895, recommended allowing the tribesmen to retain their revenue-free grants on the grounds that the 1876 Mastung Treaty prevented the Khan from interfering in the sardars' hereditary grants and, therefore, the British should not do so either, at least in the near term.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians' uprising in 1857, changed forever the way the British saw both the Indians they governed and India as a physical space. In her account of the restructuring of Lucknow in the aftermath of 1857, Oldenburg (1984) presents a paradigm for colonial cities. She argues that the native quarters became separated from the military cantonments and the civil-lines for the non-military European residents. A municipal government and police force were instituted to maintain order and safety. To ensure that the city would pay its way, the government imposed a series of new taxes.

Founded twenty years after the rebellion and built virtually from scratch, Quetta must have seemed an opportunity to create an ideal imperial outpost. Situated well away from the torpor and teeming populations of the congested cities of the Indo-Gangetic Plains, the highlands of Balochistan featured a temperate climate attractive to Europeans. Though it lacked the grandeur and scale of the major imperial centres, Quetta was built on the same template as other colonial cities, one that King (1990: 47–51) suggests primarily reflected the elite middle-class values and institutions of the metropolitan centre.



The city consisted of three physically and socially distinct sections, laid out roughly on a grid pattern. To the north was the area which contained the military cantonment. It included barracks and medical facilities for European and Indian troops; headquarters for infantry, artillery, and the engineer corps; and social institutions such as the Anglican, Catholic, Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches, a soldiers' home and a Freemasons Hall (Ford, 1918: 31). The cantonment area also had a military gymkhana, and in 1903 British India's only Military Staff College was built there. To the south of the cantonment lay the more densely populated civilian area, divided into the European quarter, the Civil Lines, and the Indian quarter. The dividing line between them was Bruce Road (now Jinnah Road), with the Indian bazaar and residential area to the southeast of it, and the European area to its northwest. Along with housing for the European civilians, the Civil Lines held the Residency where the AGG lived, along with the administrative buildings, the post office, the railway station, a library, a gymkhana, and the Quetta Club. In 1900, the Sandeman Memorial Hall, a domed building 'purely Oriental in character', where the *Shahi Jirga* (chiefly) used to meet, was built (Playne, 1920: 849). Although most of these major buildings were destroyed in the massive earthquake of 1935, the city was rebuilt on basically the same lines and retains its original pattern today.

A dispute that arose during Quetta's second decade illustrates some of the dynamic between the various sections of the city and the issues Oldenburg identifies as core colonial concerns. In 1891, Calcutta's Foreign Department proposed removing the restriction on locating bazaars in Balochistan's cantonments in order to reduce inconvenience to soldiers and to increase cantonment revenues. However, AGG Sandeman, in a long memorandum, objected to the proposal. He cited the danger of creating a haven for 'bad characters' that would be a 'source of crime in times of peace and

of serious danger and embarrassment in time of war.<sup>2</sup> Sandeman also pointed out that because the civil bazaar served both the cantonment and the civilian areas, the former received half of the cantonment revenue (import duties). For the year 1890, octroi city's octroi revenue of Quetta's total revenue of Rs120,000. He argued that if bazaars were to be established in the cantonments, they would bring less revenue but require more effort to collect it. However, despite Sandeman's pleas, the Foreign Office decided that conditions in the territories administered by Calcutta did not warrant a prohibition on bazaars in the cantonments of Balochistan.

Quetta's population at that time could be divided into four socio-economic groups: the Europeans, who were mostly British military personnel but also included administrators and some business-people; the Indian elite, consisting of high-ranking administrators and business-people; the bazaar shopkeepers, craftsmen, and labourers, who came from Afghanistan and India; and the indigenous Pushtuns and Brahuis, most of whom cultivated the fields bordering Quetta. The Indian elite were primarily Parsi, Hindu, Bohra, and Sikh, with origins outside Quetta. It was a concern of the British, especially in the early decades of their rule, that there were few Muslim families in this class:

Endeavours have been made of late years to employ a larger number of Muhammadans in the various offices of Baluchistan but attempts to increase the percentage of Muhammadan employees have hitherto met with limited success owing to the fact that good Hindu clerks are far more easily obtainable than good Muhammadan clerks (ARBA 1902-3: 6)

The Indian elite was created through the colonial system. Their prosperity was derived from goods and services provided to the British. Typically, they held supply or construction contracts, and in several instances they had done similar work in other parts of



Although the British and the Indians interacted politically and economically, there was little social mixing. In his memoirs, Keshobad Marker, a Parsi businessman who moved from construction contracts into manufacturing ice and pharmaceuticals and served on the municipal committee, reports that a British officer accepted his father's invitation to stay with the Markers when visiting Quetta in 1919. This was 'unprecedented in those days as Parsi officers normally kept aloof and did not freely mix with Europeans' (Marker, Vol. I 1985: 120). The Markers, and families like them, accepted British ways and sought expanded social contact. The only way to make personal contacts with them was on the cricket field or through Free Masonry. They [the Parsis], very fond of cricket' (Marker, Vol. I 1985: 137). They also took to Free Masonry. Both Marker and his father were Worshipful Members of the Quetta Lodge (Marker, Vol. 1985: 125).

The colonial government placed a priority on protecting the health of the military, particularly the British soldiers. As Harrison (1980: 171) observed:

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regiments permanently in hospital, as a military but not a civilian problem.

Concern about the spread of venereal disease made prostitution an issue in Imperial India. Since the British policy in India discouraged marriage for junior officers and conscripts, the colonial government was caught between the spectres of disease and homosexuality, and ended up backing the regulation of prostitution. In 1868, the Indian Contagious Diseases Act was passed in London. This allowed a local government to enforce compulsory registration of brothels and regular medical examinations for prostitutes, and infected women were required to undergo treatment (Ballhatchet, 1980: 44).

Racial concerns led to official recognition of two classes of prostitutes: first-class prostitutes who were reserved for Europeans, and second-class ones who were patronized by Indians (Ballhatchet, 1980: 41). Regulation of prostitution implied official acceptance of it, and the Act inspired vigorous opposition from both the Nonconformists and feminists in Britain. Most colonial officers viewed regulation as necessary for the health of their troops and for harmonious relations with the natives. They believed that without regulation soldiers would solicit local women, which would upset the local populace (Ballhatchet, 1980: 82). However, with leaders of the purity movement and many clergy in opposition, the Act was repealed in 1888 (Ware, 1992: 151–7; Burton, 1994: 95–6).

In the same year Sandeman contracted with Asa Mull, a private businessman, for the construction of a *chakla* (brothel) in the municipal bazaar that would house all the known prostitutes. Sandeman, apparently, did not consult with Calcutta regarding this project, probably because regulated brothels were so common in Imperial India at the time.<sup>4</sup> However, the 1888 Act meant that the

Indian Cantonment Acts and Regulations had to be revised in keeping with the law. The initial tactic was to merge all contagious diseases under a revised Cantonment Act to control them, and to locate the brothels outside the cantonments (Ballhatchet, 1980: 81–7). This is likely the reason that Sandeman contracted with Mull and located the brothel in the Quetta bazaar rather than in the cantonment.

Opposition in Britain continued, however, as some reformers saw the revised Cantonment Act for what it was, an effort to continue regulating prostitutes. In 1891, two women reformers went to India to investigate. They found that it was essentially business as usual in the ten cantonments they visited (Ware, 1992: 153–4; Levine, 1996). Although the brothels had been moved outside the cantonments, the military still controlled them (Ballhatchet, 1980: 75). Women were required to submit to medical exams, and if they refused treatment, they were expelled. There was a serious standoff between London, where the reformers had powerful allies, and Calcutta, where colonial officers believed regulation to be necessary for the health of the troops.

Deregulation won the day, however, in 1895, when the Government of India was forced to close cantonment brothels and end compulsory medical exams, but the victory was short-lived. Colonial officials continued to argue that the health of the troops was at stake. Several years of investigations and delicate negotiations ensued. Calcutta provided dubious statistics that indicated half the troops in India sought treatment for venereal disease in the unregulated year of 1895 (Ballhatchet, 1980: 88).<sup>5</sup> Public opinion in Britain swung toward regulation, and a new bill that would allow regulation was passed in 1897.



A sense of how strongly the colonial officials supported regulation can be found in a series of communications between Sandeman's successor, AGG Browne, and the Foreign Department. Browne queried Calcutta as to the legal status of the *chakla* in 1894. The Foreign Department asserted that the contract had been drawn without their knowledge or consent and should be terminated. Browne protested that local opinion was strongly against closing the *chakla* and dispersing the women throughout the bazaar. As the ranking official in an overwhelmingly Muslim agency, Browne must have been sensitive to the potential for serious problems if prostitution was unregulated. While one might wonder how the public learned of the brothel's possible closing, their feelings surely ran high. Furthermore, Mull refused to terminate the contract without some compensation. Calcutta, in a move similar to their averted gaze on slavery (see Chapter 7), advised Browne to tell Mull that he could continue to operate the brothel, and to assure him that the AGG would continue to force prostitutes to live there, but '... there will be no agreement in existence.' Calcutta established deniability vis-à-vis London, while covertly allowing regulation to continue. This was not the end of the story, however. The AGG, concerned about the municipal cost of providing police oversight, asked Calcutta to deduct it from Imperial funds rather than requiring Quetta to assume the burden. Failing that, Browne requested that the cantonment be charged, arguing that 'the *chakla* was built entirely in the interests of the military community.'<sup>6</sup>

Calcutta, however, was not sympathetic, and they ordered the municipality to pay any expenses connected to the brothel. Eventually, the *chakla* was closed, probably in 1895, but a policy change in 1897, reopened the regulation issue. The AGG appointed a committee of civil and military officers to make its recommendations. Although the committee was divided as to whether prostitutes should be compelled to live in a brothel, it was

unanimous in recommending a new municipal hospital for the treatment of 'contagious disorders'. The AGG and his committee proposed that the cantonment assume cost of this civil hospital 'maintained entirely in the interests of the cantonment'; this time Calcutta, though, did permit the charge.

The measures taken to maintain sanitation and provide medical services in Quetta, enabled the city to weather repeated epidemics much better than other parts of the agency. In 1899, the Church Missionary Society established the first of two hospitals. In the same year, a dispensary serving women and staffed by nurses, was established (GOB: Quetta-Pishin: 292). In 1903, a cholera outbreak hit Balochistan. Part of a widespread epidemic of the disease in India that year, it first appeared in the village of Samungli, seven miles from Quetta. A total of 967 cases were recorded in Balochistan, 726 of which proved fatal. Printed instructions were distributed in Quetta and the cantonment to prevent it from spreading, and the effort was largely successful. Only eight cases of cholera were recorded in the cantonment and forty-three, overall, in Quetta, whereas 105 cases were recorded in Samungli and 154 in other nearby villages (ARBA, 1903-4: 39).

It is clear that medical services were provided to the local populace early on in the colonial period, although it can be argued, as Arnold (1988: 16-17) does, that medical altruism was motivated by such ideological concerns as demonstrating the government's benevolence as well as its technical and political superiority. By 1908 there were thirty-seven dispensaries and hospitals throughout British Baluchistan. Regional centres such as Sibi and Loralai, had facilities that included *zenana* (women's) hospitals. Colonial authorities regularly set up screening programmes and forced dispersal of nomads to block the spread of contagious diseases.



When the British established their headquarters at Quetta, they created a greatly expanded market for crops. To make the garrison as self-sufficient as possible, the British encouraged the expansion of irrigation through sinking more artesian wells, digging new *karez* (man-made underground water channels), and greater use of river water (Scholz, 1989: 11). In the case of new *karez*, the government reduced taxation for three years. The owner of a new *karez* paid no revenue in its first year, one-tenth of gross production in its second year, and one-eighth of gross production in the third year. Revenue Commissioner Crawford argued concessions should be extended to ten years, a policy closer to that of Punjab, which awarded twenty years of relief for new irrigation. Revenue policies were complemented with new cultivation techniques such as the use of green fertilizer and the addition of crops such as lucerne (alfalfa), Persian clover, and vegetables, to the system of crop rotation.<sup>7</sup> In order to prevent the alienation of agricultural land from local owners, the British prohibited sale to anyone who was not 'a Pathan, Brahui or Baluch resident of the district in which the land lies without the previous sanction of the Political Agent' (ARBA, 1908-09: 16).

In a short decade, Quetta was transformed from a frontier village to an urban space, a cosmopolitan city whose population was predominately alien. With the exception of Kansai Pushtuns and Shawani Brahui, who held land in and around Quetta, there were few local people in the expanding city. The British introduced new forms of control and surveillance, as in the regulations regarding bazaars and brothels. They imported new medical, educational and religious institutions to service city residents. Quetta was subject to dual governance: military in the cantonment, civil in the municipality.

### AGENCY TERRITORIES

The British created new spaces of control in the tracts designated Agency Territories. Some of these—Quetta, Bolan and the railway lines, and the *niabets* (revenue districts) of Nushki and Nasirabad—were leased from the Khan. Zhob and Chagai became Agency Territories in 1896, after a joint Afghan-British Border Commission demarcated the international border. Most of Loralai, which bordered Punjab on the east, became Agency Territory the same year. With the exception of the Nasirabad *niabet*, leased in 1902, Agency Territory was land that the British deemed central to control and security along the frontier. Agency Territory created a directly-administered zone between Kalat and the new international borders. With the exception of the southwestern Makran-Iran border, Kalat was encircled.

Agency Territory had its origin in Quetta, where, initially, the British administered Quetta on behalf of the Khan, deducting their costs and remitting the balance to him. In 1883, Sandeman reported that Mir Khodadad Khan proposed leasing Quetta *tehsil* (district) and the Bolan Pass to the British, for a fixed annual rent. The circumstances which prompted this proposal are unknown, but it is likely that the Khan foresaw, and perhaps had already experienced, difficulties in retaining effective authority over these lands.<sup>8</sup> The leases were essentially a legal recognition of the *de facto* situation. Subsequently, in 1899 and 1902, respectively, the British assumed leases on the Nushki and the Nasirabad *niabets* as well. British interest in Nushki was strategic, since it was the largest settlement on Chagai's eastern border. Kalat had annexed Nushki in the early eighteenth century, but soon lost it to Kandahar. The Persian ruler, Nadir Shah, conquered Nushki and conferred it on Kharan in 1740. Nasir Khan I restored it to Kalat, although the Khan's control had diminished under his successors. Located at the



intersection of caravan routes from Afghanistan and Iran, Nushki had been a commercial centre for centuries, although its fortunes fluctuated according to the prevailing security situation and the tolls exacted by the tribes along the route. Tolls were high and the security low when the British took control of Chagai.<sup>9</sup> Agency officials pressured the Khan to enforce his authority in Nushki but when this failed, they pressured him to lease the *niabet*. Unwilling to undertake the expense of sending his troops to Nushki and reluctant to lease it, the Khan, at first, asked for a rent of Rs12,000 per year, which was more than double his annual revenue. Although the Government of India wanted to secure and improve the trade routes for both commercial and political reasons, it was unwilling to pay such a high rent.<sup>10</sup> While the Khan and the British were bargaining over the rent, the Khan's *naib* (deputy) fled Nushki and the revenue collection collapsed. Under pressure from this crisis, the Khan and the British finally settled on an annual rent of Rs9,000.

Problems of overlapping jurisdictions led the British to negotiate the leasing of Nasirabad. In the late 1840s, prior to the establishment of the Agency, the British had extended the Sindh irrigation canals to Kalat territory, with the aim of settling and pacifying the border areas.<sup>11</sup> While the irrigation scheme was reasonably successful in pacifying the border tribes, it created jurisdictional problems, that were further complicated, when Balochistan became an Agency in 1877. Revenues from the Kalat scheme were divided equally between the Khan and the British Government. The British took charge of all land issues while civil affairs were the responsibility of the Khan's *naib* (Khan's agent). This division of authority did not work well as cultivators appealed to British officials for relief from arbitrary actions taken by the Khan's officials.

The British were uncomfortable participants in an administration whose methods they deplored. The divided jurisdiction created two categories of cultivators: British-protected subjects on the land belonging to Sindh, and subjects of the Khan on land belonging to Kalat. The Revenue Commissioner of Baluchistan proposed leasing Nasirabad in 1898, which was opposed by the Commissioner of Sindh, and in 1902 the Government of India convened a conference on the disposition of Nasirabad. The Commissioner of Sindh argued that Nasirabad should be under the jurisdiction of Sindh as many of its tenants cultivated land both in Sindh and Kalat. The AGG countered with the question of governance, stating that if Sindh assumed its control, the tribal tenants would be subject to Sindh's police. This would place several border tribes in the position of being under divided authority, which would lead to tribal unrest. The conference, adjourned without reaching a decision.

As had been the case with Nushki, word that the British might lease Nasirabad and further extend the canals, somehow, did get out, and the Khan was inundated with petitioners seeking land-grants. Mir Mahmud Khan did issue a number of new grants, which, however, only fueled the speculation even further. In these circumstances, the cultivators refused to pay revenue to the Khan's *naib*. Again under pressure of a looming crisis, the Government of India accepted the Khan's offer to lease Nasirabad 'with all my rights therein and cultivated and uncultivated land forever to the Government on an annual rent of Rs115,000.'<sup>12</sup> The amount of the rental reflects the productivity of the irrigated land and the British belief that more efficient administration would increase revenues to the point where the lease would be profitable.



## MAKING BORDERS

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the British began ordering the space of Balochistan by setting both external and internal borders. This was a complicated and lengthy project that would enable the British to classify people as subjects of Iran, Afghanistan, Kalat, or British India. A nationality status was alien to the Baloch, whose political bonds were based on allegiance or clientage, as they were not subjects of Kalat per se, but subjects only, either of the Khan or of a sardar. Non-tribals in Kalat, such as the Hindu shopkeepers or the Afghan traders, were clients of the Khan or of the sardar who controlled the town where they resided and where they conducted their business. The British themselves used nationality only when dealing across an international border because it allowed the British to determine which government could be held accountable for the unacceptable behaviour of tribesmen. The British sought to order zones of conflict and encroachment by establishing borders that located tribesmen as subjects and defined rights and obligations. The borders served as the basis for formal negotiations between governments.

The British initially engaged in making borders on essentially an ad hoc basis as specific problems arose. The border between Sindh and Kalat was a source of contention prior to the 1876 treaty. In 1862, British officials in Sindh set the boundary in an effort to establish the Khan's responsibility for raids and crimes committed in Sindh by tribesmen who evaded punishment by fleeing to Kalat, and the line they set was totally arbitrary:

Experience shows that it is useless to attempt to discover by evidence any original boundary between the Provinces. It is certain that no distinct or recognized boundary ever existed, and the contradictory assertions of the natives of all ranks and stations with regard to such a line only serve to confuse the matter still more . . . after becoming

acquainted with the localities lay down arbitrarily the boundary line as it may *appear* (emphasis original) to yourself to be the most convenient and equitable to both Khelat and the British Government.<sup>13</sup>

Fixing a border did not end disputes about accountability between the AGG and the Commissioner of Sindh. In 1911, there were several raids from Jhalawan into Sindh, in which<sup>14</sup> one shopkeeper was killed and several others wounded; besides, property valued at Rs35,000, was stolen. Calcutta was forced to referee a dispute between two different systems of governance. When Commissioner Younghusband demanded compensation, AGG John Ramsay responded that Sindhis had also participated in the raids. Younghusband denied this, while, simultaneously, arguing that any Sindhi participation was led by Brahuis from across the border. The AGG proposed a joint Kalat-Sindh *jirga* to adjudicate the case. There were differences regarding the constitution and membership of the *jirga*. The Commissioner, operating with a court perspective, wanted a clear British domination of the process. The AGG, however, was committed to the *jirga* as the basic tribal judicial institution in Kalat, and resisted what he saw as a 'hybrid creation which could be neither a *jirga* nor a regular court.'

The Commissioner wanted punishment and restitution for what he regarded as a 'foreign aggression', in a timely fashion. The AGG defended *jirga* mediation as the only instrument for making sardars accountable for the actions of their tribesmen. Younghusband would 'accept either a military or a political solution, but Ramsay argued that a military solution involving the use of imperial troops in Kalat territory would only destabilize the fragile politics of the Kalat border. He claimed that any presence of imperial troops would be seen by the Jhalawan sardars as a breach of faith that would make them even more difficult to control. Calcutta



ultimately accepted the AGG's assessment of the risks involved in the solution proposed by Sindh, and placed the inquiry entirely in the AGG's hands while cautioning him that a successful resolution depended on the cooperation of the Commissioner.

Mapping the border with Iran began in connection with the Indo-European telegraph line through Makran and Persia. The Persian government was a reluctant party to the negotiations, bargaining 'hard and actively from a position of relative weakness' (Spencer, 1988: 616). An agreement, demarcating the border from the ocean to the village of Kuhak, was reached in 1872. In 1896, a joint Anglo-Persian Border Commission set the boundary from Kuhak, which fell to Iran, to Koh-i-Medik Siah, a place which coincided with the meeting point of the borders of Afghanistan, Iran and British Baluchistan. In the same year, an Anglo-Afghanistan commission marked the border from Koh-i-Medik Siah to Nushki, and the territory of Chagai was allotted to the British.

The western border of Kalat was troublesome right from the beginning of the colonial period. According to Lieut. Col. Terence Keyes, writing long after the fact, Makran was a subject of discussion between the Khan and the Viceroy at the signing of the 1876 treaty between Kalat and the Government of India. The Khan asked for Sandeman's assistance in settling his affairs in Makran. The Viceroy replied, '... in accordance with your previously expressed desire, Major Sandeman on his return to Khelat is to proceed to Makran and Panjgur for the purpose of settling, if possible, the affairs of that distant portion of your territories.'<sup>15</sup>

This indicates that the British accepted the Khan's claim to Makran as part of the Kalat State. However, due to the intervention of the Second Afghan War, Sandeman's mission to Makran never took place.

Under Nasir Khan I, Kalat had annexed the districts of Makran and Kharan. Nasir left local rulers in place, taking a portion of the harvest. His successors, however, found it difficult to maintain Kalat's suzerainty, and the Khan's authority, before the arrival of the British, was nominal at best. The Gichki rulers, who had seized control of the Makrani oases towns in the eighteenth century, had fallen into chronic dynastic disputes. After the war, the Khan repeatedly asked the British to administer Makran on his behalf, a proposal firmly rejected in Calcutta: 'The petty internal politics of Mekran (*sic*) are of little import to the Government of India though, doubtless, they are of importance to the Chief of Kalat State.'<sup>16</sup> Calcutta, with an eye on the bottom line, wanted the Khan to station his own troops in Makran.

Makrani politics was complicated by the Nausherwanis of Kharan, who had substantial landholdings in Makran. No chief had played border politics more effectively than Azad Khan Nausherwani, who had operated independently for many years where the borders of Iran, Afghanistan and Kalat converged. Despite strenuous British efforts to control arms smuggling, Azad Khan possessed several hundred guns and could turn out the largest, best-equipped *lashkar* (tribal army), in Kalat. It's not surprising, therefore, that in 1883 Sandeman undertook an arduous journey to meet Azad Khan at his residence in Kharan. Although the Nausherwani chief had sheltered Nasir Khan II in 1839 after the British had killed Mehrab Khan and denied Nasir Khan the throne, the two had fallen out after Nasir Khan assumed the khanship. Azad Khan sided with the rebellious Brahui sardars in 1871. He had furnished troops to the Afghans at the Battle of Maiwand, and his forays into Makran were a major source of the disorder prevailing there.

Sandeman's description of Azad Khan reveals the sympathetic respect that underwrote much of his success in dealing with the sardars:



In spite of his great age, Azad Khan retains his mental faculties unimpaired. Bowed by age, he is unable to mount a horse without assistance, but once in the saddle his endurance is greater than that of many a younger man. Possessed of unflinching resolution, impatient of wrong, generous to reward, stern and relentless in punishment, Sirdar Azad Khan has above all things enjoyed a reputation for unswerving honesty. He is never known to depart from his word once given, and has a sincere contempt for chicanery or falsehood. (Quoted in Thornton, 1977[1885]: 181)

It was a productive meeting for both men. Sandeman was particularly pleased with his success in persuading Azad Khan to acknowledge the Khan. He ignored the contradiction implicit in entering into a direct agreement with Azad Khan while at the same time exhorting the chief to submit to the Khan (Redaelli, 1997: 84). Sandeman also ignored Azad Khan's long years as a freebooter in favour of a future cooperation buttressed by a subsidy for levies for protection of trade and maintenance of peace. A few years after this meeting, Azad Khan demonstrated his loyalty. During the mapping of the Afghan border he provided 200 camels to the survey party. Half of these camels came from his personal herd, and for these he refused all compensation, even for the loss of the thirty-five camels that died or strayed. They were, the Nausherwani chief said, a gift. At Sandeman's request, Calcutta responded to this chiefly largesse by granting Azad Khan an award of Rs5,000.<sup>17</sup> However, Sandeman had given the sardar a greater reward by confirming Nausherwani lands in Makran, which had been under dispute with the Gichkis, and this concession would plague Sandeman's successors.

When Azad Khan died in 1885, his sons informed Sandeman of the death in a letter that reiterated Nausherwani loyalty while reminding Sandeman of the land-disputes in Makran and Jalk that he had settled in their favour. Although there was no recognized

border at the time of Sandeman's decision, Jalk was under Persian control. The sons claimed that Persian forces were massing to oust them from Jalk, against the wishes of its residents. These challenges were a predictable response to Azad Khan's death. They constituted a test of the will and leadership of Nauroz Khan, his successor. Although the language of the letter is deferential, the message is clear: We allied with you, now our interests are threatened, and we call on you for support. Calcutta instructed the AGG to make it very clear that the British would not intervene in Persian disputes.<sup>18</sup>

Persian authority, always tenuous in the borderlands, weakened towards the end of the nineteenth century. Increasing disorder led AGG Browne to urge Calcutta to authorize a new Border Commission with Persian and Afghan representatives. He argued that secure borders would aid in pacifying Makran and help increase the trans-border trade. Browne was concerned that the Persians were making territorial claims unacceptable to the British,<sup>19</sup> and felt that the cooperation of Nauroz Khan Nausherwani, son and successor to Azad Khan, would be critical to the success of this undertaking. The AGG proposed increasing Nauroz Khan's subsidy with the following conditions:

1. the Nausherwani chief would report all border violations by the Persian and Afghan governments, and admit no foreign visitors without British permission;
2. Nauroz Khan would take responsibility for Nausherwanis in Makran and support any British military intervention there;
3. Nauroz Khan would support the Khan of Kalat.

Although Calcutta supported demarcating the border, they refused to increase Nauroz Khan's subsidy on the ground that it might encourage the Nausherwani sardar to think of himself as equal to



the Khan, which would be 'destructive to the theory of the Baluch confederacy.'<sup>20</sup>

The collapse of Persian authority escalated troubles in Makran, where chronic disputes among the Gickhis and Nausherwanis were exacerbated by raiding from Iran. As the Khan's income from his Makrani lands declined, his resistance to stationing his troops there grew. This meant that Calcutta could no longer ignore the internal politics of Makran. Several British efforts to resolve the conflicts failed, and in 1891 they sent a detachment of regular troops to restore order. The British administered Makran for three years but the Khan was finally persuaded to replace the British force with his own troops in 1894, although the British were forced to intervene again in 1898 when the allied Nausherwani-Gichki forces rebelled. They attacked a British survey party, looted government stores, and cut the telegraph line. Troops were sent from Karachi, and the major leaders of the uprising were killed in battle (GOB Makran: 55). Under British pressure, the Khan appointed Mehrullah Khan Raisani as his *nazim*. Mehrullah Khan served in Makran for nineteen years, often enforcing order by means that the British preferred to ignore.

In 1900, Muhammad Umar, a Nausherwani subject of Kalat, organized a series of raids in Makran, after which he retreated with the plunder to Iranian Balochistan. Twenty-four persons were killed during these raids and thousands of animals were taken. Muhammad Umar was the grandson of Mir Baluch Khan, a leader killed in the 1898 rebellion. He was also the son-in-law of Sher Muhammad Gickhi, who was murdered by Mehrab Khan Gichki, in 1900. The murder was an embarrassment for the British, as the *Nazim*, Mehrullah Khan, was implicated in it. Captain Henry Showers, PA Kalat, however, defended the *Nazim*:

The man (Sher Muhmmad) was practically a rebel and the good of the country demanded his removal. The manner of his removal was perhaps regrettable, but I would not lay too much stress on it. For one thing, the word 'murder', which has been used in the correspondence in this case is, I venture to think, inappropriate. The word, as we understand it, is seldom if ever applicable to cases of bloodshed among wild border tribes, and its use naturally conveys a false impression. . . . I trust it will not be thought from these remarks that I in any way approve of the summary means used by the *Nazim* . . . I merely seek to show that if all the circumstances of the case be considered the . . . proceedings were not quite so objectionable as the early reports of the occurrence would have led one to believe.<sup>21</sup>

The murder initiated an alliance between the *Nazim* and Mehrab Khan Gichki that underwrote the *Nazim's* ability to enforce order in Makran. Although he was officially the Khan's agent, British support enabled Raisani to become the de facto ruler of Makran, attentive to British interests and essentially independent of the Khan.

After negotiations with the Persian government, Calcutta authorized Showers to meet with his Persian counterpart, the *Sartip* of Bampur, to resolve the issue of cross-border raiding. Accompanied by several sardars from Sarawan, an escort of 200 rifles, and a small detachment of the Sindh Horse, Showers met the *Sartip* at Dizak (Iran), in 1901. Dizak was the *Sartip's* choice, who sought to use the meeting to further his own agenda. Although Showers's mission was the capture of Muhammad Umar, the *Sartip* wanted British assistance in capturing some Baranzai dissidents in control of forts near Dizak. Showers found the Persian forces incapable of maintaining order because they were too few in number, and lacked artillery powerful enough to destroy the forts. Recognizing that a failure to cooperate with the *Sartip* would only escalate the rebellion, Showers organized a combined British-Persian force that



persuaded the Baranzais to submit to the *Sartip* and restore the looted property:

... on the whole the results of my visit to Dizak have fallen far short both of the *Sirtip's* promises, and, as I must admit, of my own expectations. Muhammad Umar is still at large, while a reckoning has yet to be come with the other leaders who supported him ... the only alternative would seem to be for me to meet with the *Sirtip* again in the cold season. ...<sup>22</sup>

The Anglo-Persian meeting, which followed in 1902, was a more ambitious undertaking.<sup>23</sup> Showers was accompanied by a more escort of fifty Sindh Horse, three hundred rifles, and twenty sappers and miners, along with a contingent of tribal chiefs from Makran months. The Persian contingent, too, was larger, and it was led by the Governor General of Kirman. The British had two aims; first, to settle compensation for past raids, and then to establish an ongoing trans-border process to settle future border complaints. They were successful on both counts. A *jirga* composed of chiefs from both sides of the border assessed compensation from those Persian Baloch who had participated in the raids. There was some difference between Showers and the Governor General regarding the liability for blood compensation. The Persian official argued that compensation should be given for deaths during engagement with the Anglo-Persian forces as well as for deaths connected to raiding. There would be some offsetting payments, which, according to the Governor General, was in keeping with the local custom. Showers refused to accept this argument on grounds that it equated a lawless raid against civilians with a government-authorized campaign against dissident outlaws. He did, however, accede to the Persian request to lower the assessment on one chief to avoid impoverishing him.

The increased show of force was effective, as the Iranian Baloch raiders surrendered, submitted to the assessments and began to deliver compensation. A number of forts were destroyed. The Governor General agreed to annual meetings between the *Sartip* and the Khan's *nazim* to settle future border complaints. He also agreed to take measures against the importation of guns, and to station troops at several strategically located forts. Muhammad Umar, who had again evaded capture, fled to Afghanistan. He was, later, reported to have moved to Sistan (Iran), where he sought protection from the local Persian officials. The Governor General agreed to allow the *Nazim's* forces to cross the border in pursuit of Muhammad Umar, should he raid again in Makran.

Internal borders were often as contentious as international ones. The British had sought control of Chagai for two reasons: the major route from Sistan (Iran) to Nushki traversed Chagai, and they wanted to increase security and expand trade. By the time the border was established, the British had come to understand the difficulties in controlling Kharan. The landholdings of the Nausherwanis extended into Chagai, as well as into Iran and Makran. Control of Chagai gave the British a strategic position on the northern reaches of Kharan. With the *Nazim* enforcing order in Makran, Kharan was flanked on the south as well. The British sought a meeting with Nauroz Khan to determine a Kharan-Chagai border. The British wanted to negotiate a new agreement with the Nausherwani chief, that would, in addition to setting a border, establish several new levies posts, reiterate Nausherwani responsibility for the telegraph line, and embargo arms coming from the Gulf. Nauroz Khan, however, had no desire to negotiate these issues. In addition, he feared British expropriation of Nausherwani lands in Makran, as they had already tried to persuade him to sell these lands, though, without success.



The chief initiated a strategy of avoidance, at first, by ignoring the letters from the AGG. After five months, however, the AGG's patience ran out:

You say you will be engaged until February 15<sup>th</sup> in distributing seed and in sowing operations and that then the time of harvest will be so near that you will not be able to meet Major Whyte. I gather from this that matters regarding the boundaries of your territory are considered by you to be of little importance in comparison with cultivation around Kharan. This may be so, but I have for a long time past both verbally and in writing intimated to you my wish that you should accompany Major Whyte and assist him with such information as may be necessary in your own interests to enable him to make a full report to me. As you do not seem to have understood my wish, I am obliged to order you to proceed to join Major Whyte with all possible haste. Your failure to do so will necessitate my ordering Major Whyte either to proceed with his inquiries without you, or to return. Neither of these consequences will be to your advantage and as your friend I wish you to avoid these consequences. Much delay and expense has already been unnecessarily incurred in connection with Maj. Whyte's work and if this continues the Govt. of India will be seriously displeased.<sup>24</sup>

This letter shifts uneasily between sarcasm and vague threats framed with imperial condescension. Nauroz Khan had good reason to believe that negotiating with Agency officials was not in his interests. Mindful of Calcutta's sensibilities about native states, the AGG's resort to command is modulated by the threat of vague consequences that might ensue from ignoring his order. In fact, the more the AGG pressed the boundary project, the more Nauroz Khan turned to prevarication as a means of delaying it.

Nauroz Khan responded that he was hosting a prominent *pir* (mystic) and would meet Major Whyte in Panjghur (Makran) following the *pir*'s departure. The meeting finally occurred in March 1908. Nauroz Khan pleaded poor health, and after

examining him, a British medical officer found him too ill to attend a further meeting. The project was suspended for six months. During this interval Nauroz Khan was reported to be planting boundary markers with his father's name on Chagai land. When the AGG resumed his efforts to arrange a meeting, Nauroz Khan again pleaded poor health, and the medical officer refused to clear him for the trip.

Nauroz Khan died in June 1909. He had succeeded in stalling negotiations with the British for almost three years, while attempting to consolidate control of disputed lands in Makran and Chagai. The British were quick to negotiate with his son and successor, Mohammad Yacub Khan, who signed an agreement that continued his father's subsidies and obligated him to the conditions proposed in 1907. Yacub signed reluctantly, perhaps concerned about the subsidies, which totaled Rs10,000 per annum. Within a year the Sardar was complaining about the Kharan-Chagai border. In fact, the agreement had located some disputed tracts in Chagai, which made them British territory. The British conceded one tract, but denied Yacub Khan's claim to several others. The chief expelled government officials from posts in Kharan and Chagai. Escalating tensions came to an abrupt end when Yacub Khan was killed by his own bodyguards, probably at the instigation of his uncle, and was succeeded by his young son, Habibullah Khan. This put an end to British plans to lease the troublesome border tracts from the Nausherwani sardar, as the AGG would have to obtain Calcutta's permission for a permanent land-settlement. He did not believe Calcutta would sanction such an agreement with a chief during his minority.

Establishing a boundary between Lasbela and Kalat was another intractable problem. Lasbela and Kalat had enjoyed a relatively cooperative relationship, reinforced by inter-marriage between the



ruling families, from the late eighteenth century until shortly before the First Afghan War. The British, probably accepting the Khan's claim, designated Lasbela a feudatory of Kalat.<sup>25</sup> In the upheavals after the war, Jam Mir Khan, ruler of Lasbela, joined the Mengals in several unsuccessful insurgencies during the 1860s, so the British exiled him to Karachi. His son reconciled with Mir Khodadad Khan shortly before Sandeman negotiated the Mastung Treaty in 1876 (GOB Lasbela: 26–33).

The northern border of Lasbela abutted lands held by the Mengals and Bizenjos. There was an indeterminate zone where the Mengals, Bizenjos, and the Jagdals from Lasbela grazed their flocks and occasionally cultivated small plots of land. In 1901, the Jam laid claim to this land by demanding *sung* (transit tax) on goods passing through the tract.<sup>26</sup> The Bizenjo sardar objected, claiming that the tract was Bizenjo's land. The PAs of Kalat and Southern Baluchistan met to consider his complaint, but nothing was settled. Many of the Mengals cultivating in the disputed land had submitted to the Jam's authority and were attending his court. In 1904 the PA Kalat convened a committee consisting of himself, the PA Sibi (who had formerly served as the PA Southern Baluchistan), the Khan's Political Advisor, and the Jam's *wazir* (vizier), to settle the case, but the Political Agents disagreed with each other and the issue remained unresolved. The PA Kalat supported the Bizenjo claim, while the Sibi PA wanted a proper mapping before making a decision, as the latter wanted to assure the territorial compactness of Lasbela as a defence against tribal encroachments. The mapping was done in 1906, and when the committee reached a settlement, all the parties involved—Lasbela, the Mengals and the Bizenjos—opposed it. The case dragged on, sidetracked by the First World War, and in 1919, the PA Kalat decided that it was easier to avoid the issue than to attempt to settle it.

### SHARNA: A VILLAGE IN TIME

When Charles Masson travelled to Dulai (Sarawan) in the 1830s, the valley already had several villages. The Khan held lands around Kanak village, where he built a fort in 1874. The residents of the village, who cultivated his land, were of diverse tribal backgrounds. The Shawani and the Raisani sardars had summer residences nearby (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 70). Masson remarked in passing on the presence of gardens and trees, which indicates irrigation. He also noted that Dulai, north of Kanak, had no villages, despite the apparent fertility of the soil (Masson, 2001[1844] IV: 325). Masson's guide was concerned about security and he feared raiding by the 'Khakas', probably the Pushtun Kakars, who were said to be at enmity with the Raisanis (Masson, 1997[1842] II: 72). The presence of fortifications in the villages suggests that the lack of security probably contributed to the scarcity of settlements in Dulai. The suppression of raiding under the Pax Britannica led to the growth of settlements in the area. The various forms of sedentarization that developed over time were tribe-based. Although the British provided the conditions, the shifts in land-usage and the tenancy contracts were the results of tribesmen and the sardars responding to the changing political environment. The landscape of Kanak and other valleys in Sarawan shifted from a few scattered, fortified villages, to more varied settlements—smaller, usually transhumant villages and hamlets, around which pastoralists continued to exploit the seasonal pasturage. The contacts between pastoralists and cultivators, between people of differing tribal affiliations, were mediated by sardars, whose lineages benefited from shares in the harvest.

In 1901, a rough count found 179 villages in Sarawan. A recount in 1905 returned 301 villages (GOB Sarawan: 44). In 1906, the British noted sixteen villages in Dulai, the largest of which,



Babkari, contained about 150 houses whose residents included Mengals, Raisanis, Sasolis and Summalaries. Likewise, the neighbouring villages were also tribally mixed. There were twenty-five (25) *kanazes* and four springs irrigating 9,560 acres of land (GOB Sarawan: 229). Although not recorded by the British, these Sharna were among those engaged in this endeavor.

Sharna seemed almost timeless when I first saw it in 1962. It rose from the desert floor, the walls of its outer rim of compounds joined together, limiting access to the interior. A barely visible track linked it to the surfaced road that ran down the valley. It was one of several villages in central Dulai, smaller and more homogeneous than its neighbours. There was no running water, no electricity. The mixed agricultural-animal husbandry economy was still predominantly subsistence-oriented, although some onions and potatoes were sold to itinerant marketers. The village was all but deserted in winter. Most families migrated with their flocks to the lowland Kachhi plain, where they set up tent-camps and worked as day-labourers in the sorghum harvest, for which they were paid in kind.

This impression, however, of timelessness was deceptive. Sharna originated as a seasonal camp, some eighty years earlier, when the founders were granted a tenancy right by the Raisanis, who held most of Dulai as a *jagir* (estate) from the Khan of Kalat.<sup>27</sup> Sharna and its neighbouring villages were examples of the initial movement toward sedentarization, attendant on the British suppression of raiding in Sarawan.

At first, investment in cultivation was minimal, and the fields were embanked to catch and hold the scanty rainfall. Once planted, the fields apparently received minimal attention until the harvest, a

one-quarter share of which went to the Raisani overlords (Swidler, 1968: 83). Over the space of four generations, the settlement shifted from a tent-camp to a cluster of adobe houses. The economy shifted from cultivation, secondary to pastoral nomadism, to a more mixed economy. In the 1930s, Persian-wheel wells increased agricultural output by supporting a two-crop annual cycle. The turn to irrigation was a major commitment to agriculture over pastoralism, and it was the sale of animals which provided the initial capital for the project (Swidler, 1968: 157). It is likely that the Quetta market, some twelve miles from Sharna, was an impetus for agricultural investment. A sharecropping agreement underwrote initial cultivation, and it continued to be an acceptable arrangement for cultivators and proprietors through the development of diesel machine-wells. With the introduction of the Persian-wheel, the proprietary share of one-fourth was negotiated to one-sixth for irrigated crops. The change appears to have been negotiated over several years with the Raisani sardar consulting with both sides and finally backing the new rate.

In 1964, Warren Swidler and I witnessed the installation of the first diesel machine-well in Sharna. Within the year, two more machine-wells were in operation. All of these were financed by partnerships of villagers and outside investors. Both parties preferred this arrangement over the government-backed schemes, which were based on annual fixed payments. Most investors came from Quetta and had a pre-existing relationship with the organizer of the village partnerships. The profits were split evenly between the two parties for ten years, after which the machine belonged to the villagers (Swidler, 1977).

In the subsequent thirty years, irrigation technology has kept pace with the lowering water table, but at some cost. Diesel machines have been replaced with tube-wells and submersible pumps.<sup>28</sup>



Village partnership groups have become larger and the internal distribution of shares more complex. Many men hold stakes in two or three well-complexes. The cost of drilling a tube-well and installing a submersible pump was 600,000 to 700,000 rupees in 1995, which has eroded the sharecropping relationship. The investment partner finances the whole irrigation installation. The takes an ongoing interest in the production cycle, especially, if there are only one or two partners.

One of the largest local investors, HNR, was an investor in the 1964 diesel machine-wells in Sharna. He had stakes in at least eighteen wells in 1995. He was also a major lender, whose terms included the right to market the crops at a commission of 7-8 per cent. In the few cases of well-complexes being owned by a single family instead of a partnership, HNR made loans to cover production expenses for the right to the market commission. Investors like HNR, sometimes appointed one of the land-partners to serve as an overseer, for assuring proper application of water, and in some cases, fertilizer, as well.

Sharna has more than doubled in size. Most of the increase has come from families who depended on rainfall to cultivate their lands. If the rains failed, as they did in 1964, these families were forced to seek work elsewhere, leaving their land in the care of relatives. There is more economic differentiation than there was in 1964. The more prosperous households in 1964 were able to maintain their relative position in 1995, as well, and had been joined by several other households. Prosperity was strongly correlated with joint-family households, poverty with nuclear families. Wages, almost non-existent in 1964, figured in the budgets of almost half the households in 1995. All but a couple of these jobs are located outside the village, primarily in Quetta. Driving trucks and buses, and assisting on buses, were the most

common jobs. In virtually all cases, these men lived in Sharna with their families.

History indicates that Sharna and its neighbours have been quite open to economic change from the beginning. The fragmentation of 'ownership', i.e. rights in land, did not discourage productive investments in the land. 'Tribal' landholdings have proven flexible enough to adapt to technological improvements over the course of the twentieth century. In fact, the proprietary share is still held collectively by Raisani lineages. However, as the cost of irrigation increased, the balance between village partnerships and the outside investors shifted towards the latter.

#### CHANGE AND AMBIGUITY IN THE SPACE OF KALAT

In pre-colonial Kalat, time and space were in constant play. To the extent that one can speak of borders, they were the oscillating effects of tributary relations and unstable alliances. The colonial state, driven by geopolitical concerns, imposed its own spaces, but it did so unevenly and over time. The mapping of the Balochistan Agency was initially focused on setting international borders, in order to locate national subjects and assign governmental responsibility for their behaviour. These borders endure till today, despite challenges from Afghanistan after the emergence of Pakistan, although they divide both the Pushtun and the Baloch peoples, and border control is a problem for Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The interior space of Balochistan was restructured in complex ways. Directly-administered British Balochistan and Kalat State were joined in the Balochistan Agency, but administered under different laws and policies, producing two ethnically-based categories of subjects. Agency territory encircled Kalat, and only the Iran-



Makran border escaped direct Agency control. The British extended their control in Kalat over several decades, establishing boundaries and borders as it became expedient to do so. To some extent, the rather ad hoc British mapping echoed pre-colonial conditions, and boundaries were established when land was contested or when there was a need to clarify subject status. In 1909, the Foreign Office noted inconsistencies in the borders of Balochistan as demarcated on the map of India and as mapped in the District Gazetteers. The AGG responded that the maps reflected the state of knowledge at different times, noting that substantial areas of Balochistan had yet to be mapped.<sup>29</sup> As late as 1940, the boundary between Kharan and Jhalawan had not been settled, a situation that complicated the Kharan-Kalat conflict discussed in Chapter 9.

Perhaps the most important consequence of spatial restructuring was locating the Agency's headquarters in Quetta. Geostrategic interests had, clearly, motivated the British in making this decision, but as a result Sarawan was pulled into the colonial orbit while it consigned much of Kalat to a new remoteness, distant from both rail and road connections. Sarawan, arguably, had been the heartland of Kalat. The support of Sarawan's sardars had underwritten the success of the expansionist Khans. Their struggle to regain their Kachhi estates after the First Afghan War had led to the restoration of Sarawan to the Khan.

The status of ambiguous spaces vis-à-vis Kalat—the Marri-Bugti lands, Makran and Kharan, for example—remained unresolved. The British placed the Marris, Bugtis and Dombkis, administratively, under the jurisdiction of the Sibi District (British Baluchistan), largely because they believed that these territories could be more effectively controlled from Sibi. Although the Marris and Bugtis had only tenuously and intermittently been attached to Kalat, Dombkis had more consistently acknowledged the Khan's authority,

and their lands in Kachhi were within Kalat. Ad hoc decisions of the moment would lead to difficult problems after the Second World War, problems that Pakistan would inherit after 1947.

#### Notes

1. Crawford to AGG, 8 July 1895, HSA Sec. 3, File M-3, Basta 2.
2. A series of exchanges between the Foreign Office and Sandeman are contained in a document entitled 'Establishment of Bazaars in Cantonments in Balochistan', Sec. 17, File M-17, Basta 1.
3. Luhrmann (1996: 106) points out that the pattern of successful business-people contributing generously to charities was a script Parsis frequently followed in Imperial India. She argues that it extends from the Parsis's close identification with the British and their efforts to emulate the colonists' values.
4. Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion draws on letters between the AGG and the GOI in, Sec. 1, File M-1, Basta 1, and Sec. 2, File M-2, Basta 2. See also Hyam 1990: 123-5.
5. Ballhatcher (1980: 90) notes that these figures did not distinguish between new cases and readmissions. When readmissions were excluded, the rate dropped significantly.
6. Letter AGG Barnes to Foreign, 31 December 1897, HSA Sec. 7, File M-7, Basta 2.
7. Memo Crawford to AGG, 8 July 1895, HSA, Sec. 3, File M-3, Basta 2.
8. It is possible that the British officials pressured the Khan to make the proposal.
9. In 1896, Sir Henry McMahon estimated the annual total of transit tolls to be about Rs15,000 a year, a sum he said discouraged use of the route (GOB:Chagai: 134-6).
10. Letter AGG to Foreign, 3 April 1899, HSA Sec. 5, File 2, Vols II and III, Basta 13D.
11. The following discussion is drawn from HSA, Sec. 3, File 7, Basta 2 and Sec. 1, File 3, Vol. I, Basta 18.
12. Letter Mahmud Khan to AGG, 3 April 1902, HSA Sec. 1, File 3, Vol. I, Basta 13.
13. Note, Jacob, 30 December 1853, HSA, Sec. 16, File 20, Basta 1/F.
14. See HSA, Sec. 15, File 64, Basta 8, for an account of these cases.
15. Letter Keyes to AGG, 7 January 1932, HSA Sec. 10, File 2-B, Basta 13.
16. Letter Sec., GOI to AGG, 10 March 1894, SA Sec. 9, File 95, Basta 18.



17. Letter PA Quetta-Pishin to AGG, HSA, Sec. 10, File 15, Basta 18.
18. Letter Foreign to AGG, 30 September 1885, HSA, Sec. 10, File 15, Basta 18.
19. In 1895, the Agency's officials complained that Persian tribes were meddling in Mashkel (Letter AGG to Foreign, 15 June 1895, HSA, Sec. 15, File 66, Basta 8). Mashkel is a large inland lake, the delta of the Mashkel River, located on the borders of Iran, Chagai and Kharan.
20. Letter Foreign to AGG, 16 September 1895, HSA, Sec. 15, File 15, Basta 8.
21. Report, Part I: 8, PA Kalat to AGG, 20 April 1900, Showers Family Archive, Box 4, CSAS.
22. Report, Part I: 14, PA Kalat to AGG, 20 April 1900, Showers Family Archive, Box 4, CSAS.
23. The following account is drawn from Report, Part II, PA Kalat to AGG, 20 April 1900, Showers Family Archive, Box 4, CSAS.
24. Letter AGG to Nawab Nauroz Khan, 6 February 1908, HSA Sec. 14, File 26-C, Vol. I, Basta 3.
25. The Khan's claim would have been based on an agreement that obligated the *ams* to provide warriors on request, but exempted them from any other form of tribute (GOB Lasbela: 26).
26. The following account is taken from Todd 1926: 31–4.
27. The Khan had received the land from Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Durrani ruler, in return for military service in the conquest of Delhi in 1756.
28. Data on tube-well/submersible-pump irrigation comes from field-notes taken by Paul Titus in 1995. I am grateful to him for sharing them with me.
29. Foreign to AGG, 9 July 1909, Sec. 13, File 14, Basta 8.

## 5

## The Politics of Culture

In 1893, Mir Khodadad Khan ordered the execution of his *wazir* and advisor, Mustaufi Fakir Muhammad, the *wazir's* aged father, his adult son, and his financial agent. This turned out to be his final effort to assert control over his palace officials. It precipitated a series of events that culminated in Khodadad Khan's forced abdication in favour of his son, Mahmud Khan.

Removing the ruler of a Princely State was a serious undertaking that generated extensive reports, as officials on the scene were required to defend their actions to Calcutta. Not surprisingly, they typically argued that the rulers were at fault. By the late nineteenth century, the Princely States had become accepted as integral parts of the Indian Empire. British policy had shifted from annexation to accommodation, but accommodation brought with it more British oversight and interference, and a ruler whose behaviour was judged to be unacceptable could be deposed.<sup>1</sup>

The decision to depose a princely ruler, however, was not undertaken lightly by Calcutta, as it might arouse concerns amongst other princes. Groenhout's (2007) analysis of the depositions of Holkar in 1886 and Rewa in 1922, demonstrates that in both cases there was no single event that precipitated their removal, but rather a series of actions in which the princes' refusal to accept British guidance on multiple occasions led to concerns about their loyalty, and ultimate removal.



Kalat's remoteness from the other states had two effects on colonial administration. It relieved the British from worry about the response of other princes, but it also put pressure on the different levels of bureaucracy. While Calcutta was determined to protect the privilege of office extended to the princes, Agency officials were lining up the subsidiary players—Khodadad Khan's son and the sardars—necessary to a transition that could be endorsed by the Government of India.

Before the Government of India would sanction the removal of Mir Khodadad Khan, they required a full report of the case. Sandeman's successor, AGG James Browne, prepared a lengthy document, *Record of the Proceeding Against His Late Highness, the Khan of Kalat*, which was sent to Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> The Proceeding was introduced by an overall summary argument defending Browne's action in bringing a case against Mir Khodadad Khan, and it included copies of relevant communications with the Khan and with Calcutta, as well as transcripts of all statements taken from witnesses. Browne divided his argument into three sections: Section A dealt with the murders themselves, Section B with more general considerations of frontier policy, and Section C with the charges that the Khan had repeatedly demonstrated abuses of power. In Section B, the AGG argued that failure to endorse the abdication might encourage other princes to defy British authority. He further pointed out that restoration of Khodadad Khan might inspire the Amir of Afghanistan or the Persian government, acting under Russian influence, to meddle in Kalat's affairs. In short, the AGG argued that there were compelling reasons of state and culture that precluded any option other than his removal.

The summaries that introduce each of the three sections interpret the documents and evaluate the reliability of witnesses. They reveal Browne's determination to persuade Calcutta that Khodadad Khan's

removal was the only possible resolution of the crisis precipitated by the killings. But the documents themselves, combined with an expanded historical context, support an alternative reading. Browne excludes this history as his account is limited to his own abbreviated and difficult relationship with the Khan, and excessive rhetoric dominates the summaries. The excessive greed and murderous inclinations of the Khan are mirrored by Browne's excessive appeal to universal civilized values, with Browne frequently employing 'barbarity' as a descriptor of the Khan's behaviour. Thus he emphasizes the advanced age and frailty of the Mustaufi's father, carried to his death on a *charpoy* (four-legged bed) (Proceeding: 35). The alleged exhumation of the grave of the Mustaufi's infant grandson, who died some days before the executions, reflected Khodadad Khan's excess of greed, as it was evidence that he would leave no stone unturned in his eradication of heirs to the Mustaufi's fortune (Proceeding: 19).<sup>3</sup> The fourth person killed by the Khan was the Mustaufi's advisor, Sherdad. The AGG made a special point of this death, as Sherdad came from Shorarud (British Baluchistan) and was thus a British-protected subject. Browne challenged Khodadad Khan's right to order the death of a British subject. The Khan responded that he had 'committed an error'. The AGG argued that this death was motivated by the Khan's desire to obtain the whole of the Mustaufi's estate (Proceeding: 63).

Browne represents the thirty-six year reign of Khodadad Khan as 'a long record of broken oaths and violated engagements, varied by oppression and brutality.' His removal was inevitable, as:

... no amount of punishment, or of good advice, or of paper curtailment of his power to oppress, would prevent Mir Khodadad Khan from bursting out afresh into acts of brutality, which would result in the British Government having anew to adopt towards him even sterner measures than those necessitated under the present circumstances (Proceeding: 154).



Given Browne's indictment, it is hard to understand why the British supported Khodadad Khan for so many years. There is no mention of his loyalty during the Second Afghan War, or of his cooperation in the construction of rail, road and telegraph lines through Kalat. The Proceeding is framed around the Khan's insubordination and his excessive and arbitrary behaviour, and he is depicted as a paradigmatic example of the oriental sovereign.

Browne, who became the AGG in March of 1892, acknowledged troubled relations with Khodadad Khan from the start. He felt that the Khan had failed to accord him the respect appropriate to his office (Proceeding: 128). Baloch (1987: 142) recounts an initial problem of protocol: each man believed that the other should make the first formal visit.<sup>4</sup> The issue of insubordination had arisen prior to the killings. At the 1892 Sibi *Darbar* (setting of a royal or chiefly audience), Browne had issued an unmistakable, if indirect, warning to the Khan:

... it is a Ruler's place to show where blame is due to evil deeds. Only very lately deeds of unmercifulness, of brutality, of blood thirstiness, of savagery, have been done in Baluchistan, which are a disgrace to him who did them, although he is in a high position which should induce him to give a better example. Let him take warning, for these deeds of savagery will not in future be tolerated by the British Government, and let him remember that, although the mill stones of British justice may grind slowly, they grind to powder (Proceeding: 22).

This passage was unusually admonitory and threatening, and it would be impossible to imagine Sandeman speaking publicly in such terms. The Khan surely viewed it as dishonouring, and perhaps as a challenge as well. The caution was a response to reports that the Khan had ordered the castration of two of his servants. There was, apparently, no inclination to depose Khodadad Khan for this outrage prior to the murders, and the AGG only

intended to impose a heavy fine with a stern warning not to do it again (Proceeding: 21).

On 28 March 1893, Khodadad Khan sent the following telegram to Browne:

You wrote that Mustaufi Fakir Muhammad is [a] very faithful *wazir*, and so I was very kind to him. He came from Sibi on Tuesday, and I called him this morning in darbar for some State business, and in conversation he suddenly took over (*sic*) revolver to shoot me. In the meantime my son, Azim Khan, at once snatched away the revolver from him and saved me, so as a punishment I have killed Mustaufi, his son and father (Proceeding: 13).

Khodadad Khan suggested that the AGG was mistaken in believing the Mustaufi to be a loyal servant to him. The claim that the Mustaufi had attempted to kill the Khan is flatly asserted, as if Khodadad Khan were offering a token explanation for the executions, one that could serve as a cover for a legitimate punishment, if the AGG were willing to accept it.

It is not surprising that Browne viewed the killings as deliberately insubordinate, 'a studied insult to the paramount power' (Proceeding: 4), as the Khan had ordered the executions before the British could intervene. The Khan presented the AGG with a *fait accompli*. Browne was initially in a difficult position, as he could not proceed to Bhag, where the killings had occurred, without a military escort, as there was a sizeable detachment of the Khan's soldiers stationed there. Calcutta would not have approved the unilateral deployment of imperial troops to a town in Kalat State without a compelling reason for the action, and AGG Browne could not establish such a reason without a proper investigation of the murders. At first Khodadad Khan ignored both the requests, to either send a witness or present himself before the PA Kalat in



person. Although he released the witnesses about a month after the killings, it took the threat of a military action to persuade the Khan to travel to Quetta for the investigation. In seeking Calcutta's permission to employ troops if necessary, Browne represented Khodadad Khan as irrational and unpredictable, although the Khan was not confrontational and repeatedly affirmed his loyalty to the British (Proceeding: 132).

If the Khan's relations with Browne were far from cordial, his relations with the Mustaufi were overtly hostile. A few months prior to his death, the Mustaufi had asked the AGG to find him a position in the colonial administration, as he feared for his life. Browne rejected the request and encouraged the Mustaufi to continue as advisor to the Khan. In a meeting a month before the killings, the AGG enlisted the Mustaufi's help in persuading Khodadad Khan to turn over the castrated men for medical examination. The Mustaufi again expressed fears for his life, but agreed to do what he could (Proceeding: 128).

The strained relations between the Mustaufi and the Khan appear to have reached the boiling point when the Mustaufi's son was offered a position with the PA Kalat. Khodadad Khan believed this offer to be a reward for the Mustaufi's service to the British. It is clear that the Mustaufi had cooperated with the investigation of the castrations. The prospect of the father serving the Khan while his son served the British appears to have precipitated Khodadad Khan's radical challenge to colonial authority. In fact, according to eyewitnesses, the Mustaufi's son was the first to be seized when he came to take leave of the Khan before joining the PA's staff (Proceeding: 79, 95).

This was not the first time that differences about court officials had caused a rupture in Khodadad Khan's relations with the

British. There had been a growing tension about the Khan's selection of advisors throughout the early 1870s, prior to the establishment of the Agency, which culminated in a threat to withdraw the PA Kalat unless the Khan agreed to surrender three advisors into British custody. Khodadad Khan reluctantly acceded to the British demand, but repeatedly stated his desire to have them restored. It is clear that the Khan viewed this as impugning his honour.

Khodadad Khan claimed self-defence, but on the weight of the evidence, Browne rejected the Khan's claim and called the murders an outrage motivated by Khodadad's desire to obtain the Mustaufi's considerable fortune for himself. The AGG constructed a reasoned argument in support of his position, as according to him, greed explained the killing of the Mustaufi's father and son, and it also accounted for the disappearance of property records and valuables belonging to the Mustaufi. The testimony of witnesses supporting the Khan's claim of self-defence was flawed by substantial inconsistencies. There appears to have been no real effort to construct a consistent and convincing story. Self-defence in the narrow sense, i.e. as response to an immediate face-to-face threat on the Khan's life, seems improbable.

Following this, to resolve the problem between the Khan and himself, Browne summoned the sardars to a *jirga* in Quetta. The document that resulted from their deliberations is interesting on several counts. It begins with a formal address recounting the history of Khan-sardari relations. The chiefs asserted that in former times when the Khan oppressed them, they would take their grievances to the Amir of Afghanistan. With the signing of the Mastung Agreement in 1876, the British assumed the position formerly held by the Amir. The sardars claimed that while, formerly, they had been free to avenge the wrongs done by the



Khan to them, the British had prohibited such actions. They cited the murder of the Mengal chief, along with the deaths of the Mustaufi and his family, as outrages that led to their petition to depose Khodadad Khan in favour of his eldest son, Mir Mahmud Khan (Proceeding: 164-5). There were twenty-six signatories to the petition; notable absences were the Mengal and Zehri (Zarrakzai) sardars, who lived at some distance from Quetta. Mohammad Sardar Khan Baloch (1984[1958]: 113) points out that Marri and Bugti chiefs were also absent, along with several Kachhi sardars.

Although Browne stated that some sardars had written a 'rough draft' of the petition entirely on their own without any input from the AGG, it is hard to believe that the PA Kalat did not have a hand in shaping this presentation. The whole planning and method of the AGG's removal of Khodadad Khan, as located within a frame of historical continuity, seems designed to assuage any worries in Calcutta regarding the sensitivities of other princely rulers and their supporters in London. In citing the historical precedent, it confirmed the British as successors of the Afghan suzerain and it asserted the deposition as legitimated by history and custom. The PA Kalat had been in touch with various sardars early on, and he noted that Sardar Assad Khan Raisani had been consistently helpful (Proceeding: 136).

Following the conventional *jirga* procedure, a series of questions were presented for the consideration of the sardars. One set related to the deaths of the Mustaufi and his family. In these, the sardars' recommendations firmly supported the British argument that greed had motivated the killings, and the evidence supporting the Khan's claim of self-defence was not believable. They asserted that castration was prohibited under Islamic law (Proceeding: 177). When the sardars were asked to deliberate on a series of grievances against the Khan that involved abduction of women and adultery,

however, they declined to make recommendations, passing these cases back to the AGG but did urge Browne to take the Khan's explanations into consideration (Proceeding: 175). In similar fashion, the sardars finessed deliberation upon a series of claims dealing with Khodadad Khan's oppression of his agricultural tenants, saying only that they believed that Mahmud Khan, his son and successor, would not commit such offences (Proceeding: 179).

Browne took the occasion to consult the sardars about the Khan's customary rights and administration of Kalat State. The sardars endorsed the Khan's right to appropriate provisions from his subjects and his right to maintain an army. They also supported his right to pass sentences on his subjects, but they recommended requiring the approval of the AGG in death-penalty cases. There was, however, one significant exception: honour killings were exempt from British review. The *jirga* accepted Browne's proposals, unconditionally, for improvement of governance in Kalat. They approved the AGG taking charge of the Khan's treasury and investing it in interest-bearing government securities, providing subsidies to the Jhalawan sardars, and the addition of a new Native Officer to advise the new Khan (Proceeding: 167-8).

The *jirga's* recommendations embody a critical accommodation between the sardars and British officials. In matters of general Kalat governance, sardars would comply with British desires, but in exchange, the British would defer to the sardars in matters of tribal *rivaj* (custom). The sardars, on the whole, had little sympathy for Khodadad Khan, as in his long reign he had threatened or murdered several of their number, but they supported the rights of the office itself. The issues they declined to consider were especially significant: adultery, abuse of servants, and oppression of tenants. These the *jirga* placed within the domain of *rivaj*, because like the Khan, the sardars, also, were overlords in their own estates. In



refusing to recommend on these issues, the sardars served notice of their intent to insulate their own relations with their tenants from any British interference.

In keeping with Calcutta's instructions, all statements taken during the hearing were read to Khodadad Khan. He listened to the testimony but declined to exercise his right to call his own witnesses or question those called by Browne. He reiterated his claim of self-defence and asserted his customary right to the property of slaves and servants, although he denied taking possession of the Mustaufi's jewels and deeds:

I looked upon him [The Mustaufi] as my slave and his property as mine, such was the case before. This rule has been observed since the time of my fathers. When a slave or a servant was killed, his property was taken by the Khan (Proceeding: 103).

Khodadad Khan's own testimony, consisted of very brief and uninformative answers to the questions put to him. With regard to the castrations, he said he had ordered them as punishment for adultery. When asked why he did not delay the killings, he responded, 'It was my desire.' When asked how many people he had killed since becoming the Khan, Khodadad Khan said, '3,500 men and women' (Proceeding: 103). The answer, a substantial, well-rounded figure, seems offered in the same spirit as the question was asked.<sup>5</sup> The Khan declined to mount a defence, apparently on the grounds that he had committed no crimes but merely exercised the customary rights of his office. Arguably he was right, because the treaty he had signed with the Government of India in 1878, had left domestic affairs in his hands. Browne recorded the Khan's assertions, but never addressed them; presumably, he believed a cultural appeal to outrages against 'civilized' values would place any legalistic defence of Khodadad Khan's actions beyond consideration.

In any case, the Khan did not refer to the Treaty, citing only the precedent of custom.

Once Browne had gathered the interested parties in Quetta, the hearing proceeded rapidly. When the *jirga* deliberations were read to him, Khodadad Khan said:

I see the sardars and *ryots* [tenant cultivators] are against me. I am contented if my son carries on the work. I will live quietly and have nothing to do with worldly affairs. . . . I do not see that I have committed any offence . . . (Proceeding: 105).

Khodadad Khan kept his word and was placed under house-arrest in Loralai in British Baluchistan, where he lived out the rest of his life in quiet retirement.

Thus the AGG obtained legitimation for the forced succession from 'the highest indigenous court of reference in the country, viz., the *jirga* of the tribal Chiefs of the Baluch confederacy' (Proceeding: 5). This was reinforced by the cooperation of Mir Mahmud Khan, 'indebted to us for being raised much earlier than he had any right to expect, from an insignificant position to one of power and dignity' (Proceeding: 5). In short, the succession was managed as if it had occurred naturally, and the actors critical to such a performance, the sardars and the succeeding son, agreed to play their roles accordingly.

However, Calcutta would not endorse the abdication until they were assured that the case against Khodadad Khan was strong, and that he had been accorded the rights appropriate to his office. It is hard to imagine the circumstances that would have led to retaining the Khan against the AGG's recommendation, but Calcutta and the Agency officials had slightly different priorities in terms of dealing with the crisis precipitated by the AGG's dislike of



Khodadad Khan's actions. Calcutta, responsible to London and sensitive to princely prerogatives, had reservations about several actions taken by AGG Browne during the crisis. When the Khan initially resisted Browne's request to come to Quetta for a hearing, the AGG asked Calcutta for military support. The Government of India refused, wanting to avoid any action that might escalate the Khan's resistance to open defiance (Proceeding: 139). Officials on the ground were concerned that protracted negotiation with the uncooperative Khodadad Khan increased the danger of local disturbances. Although Calcutta did eventually authorize the presence of troops when Khodadad Khan met the PA Kalat, the circumstances surrounding the Khan's trip to Quetta must have worried them. The line between voluntary cooperation and persuasion under threat of arrest was virtually invisible. Indeed, M.S.K. Baloch claims that Khodadad Khan was 'arrested' (1984[1958]: 112). The AGG was especially concerned about preventing the looting of the Khan's treasury in Kalat town, where there was only a small detachment of British troops. When Calcutta delayed sanctioning reinforcements, Browne reported hearing that Pushtun raiders were moving toward Kalat with the double intent of looting and killing (Proceeding: 140). When Calcutta, at first, refused to authorize house-arrest for Khodadad Khan during the hearing, Browne reported that the Khan and his son were planning to flee to Afghanistan (Proceeding: 143).

Calcutta had more serious reservations about the governance issues put before the *jirga*. They wanted to avoid any appearance of taking control of the Khan's treasury before the case against Mir Khodadad Khan was settled, and expressed regret that Browne sought sanction for investing it from the sardars and Mahumud Khan during the murder investigation (Proceeding: 146, 152). There was no precedent for sardars having any voice in the disposition of the Khan's treasury, and Browne's inclusion of this question in the *jirga*

deliberations was deemed inappropriate by Calcutta, as it represented a significant change in Kalat's relations with the British government. Furthermore, critics in London might question whether the financial and administrative changes were forced on Mir Mahmud Khan as a condition of his succession. Calcutta had:

... expressly declared that the position of the State towards the British government is not affected by the transfer of the chiefship from Mir Khodadad Khan to Mir Mahmud Khan, and that Mir Mahmud Khan succeeds to all the rights and privileges formerly exercised and enjoyed by his father.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore Calcutta insisted that the AGG would have to obtain Mahmud Khan's voluntary acceptance of the administrative proposals after his succession.

The Proceeding should be read against the background of Calcutta's concerns. Browne was on notice, so to speak, to present the strongest possible case against Khodadad Khan. His summaries were carefully constructed to do this. Having elicited Calcutta's ire by putting questions of governance to the *jirga*, thus making them a part of the official record, Browne mounted an extended argument for the benefits of investment. The Khan could be charged for British military support, and subsidies for the Jhalawan sardars.<sup>7</sup> The fund could be used to finance a proposed campaign to secure the Persian-Kalat border in Makran. It might also finance irrigation projects, the only cited use of possible benefit to the people of Kalat (Proceeding: 7-10). The AGG would keep the books, but all expenditures would have to be authorized by the Khan. This was a major change in the Kalat-Calcutta relations, as it distanced the Khan from the major portion of his treasury while shifting it into currency that could more easily be put to purposes endorsed by the Agency's officials.<sup>8</sup>



Calcutta accepted Khodadad Khan's abdication in favour of his son, Mahmud Khan, in an official Notification dated 19 August 1893.<sup>3</sup> The Notification cited overwhelming evidence of the Khan's guilt in murders and other crimes. It emphasized the deliberations of the *jirga*, casting the sardars' recommendations as influencing their decision. In a rather ironic ending, Calcutta asserted that:

... the position of the Kalat State towards the British Government is not affected by the transfer of the government of the State from Mir Khudadad Khan to Mir Mahmud Khan, and that Mir Mahmud succeeds to all his father's rights and privileges.

Mahmud Khan was installed at a Full Dress Darbar in Quetta on 10 November 1893. In a carefully orchestrated ceremony, AGG Browne fastened a new, bejeweled, emblem on Mahmud Khan's turban and proclaimed him the new Khan of Kalat. Browne took the occasion to deliver a speech devoted to the obligations attendant on the office, paying special attention to the obligations of the State Treasury:

There is one point to which I would specially call your attention; you must differentiate between your private fortune and the money which comes to you, and which has to be spent for the public advantage. You must ever bear in mind that the State is not a mere mine out of which to dig money. A portion no doubt belongs to you, but a large share is in reality the right of the public, and should be employed on affairs which have to be taken up by Government because the public could not satisfactorily undertake them, such as roads, canals, the post, and a variety of other desiderata too numerous to mention.

The irony of lecturing the Khan about the proper utilization of his treasury after appropriating a substantial portion of it appears lost on AGG Browne.

It was not coincidental that new roads topped the list of public works the Khan should finance. While the British had constructed strategic road works linking Quetta to Kachhi, there were only tracks to Kalat town and the rest of Jhalawan. Improved roads were fundamental to the British aim of establishing control in Jhalawan.

Browne turned his attention to the obligations of the sardars. He exhorted them to accept the authority of the Khan and to take their *jirga* responsibilities seriously. He urged them to decide cases impartially, which, he said, they had not always done in the past. Failure to heed this advice might lead to fewer cases entrusted to them. This admonition, despite their cooperative deliberations in the Khodadad Khan case, suggests that Browne saw the succession of Mahmud Khan as initiating a new and improved Kalat State:

You should all remember that it is not my object in any case to interfere with the ancient customs and laws of this State as long as they are neither barbarous nor cruel. Indeed, I regard the maintenance of ancient usages as highly beneficial and altogether advisable. Without changing your customs, you can graft on to them what is found to be most advisable and useful amongst the customs of other nations. . . . Whereas Baluch customs are no doubt in many ways better suited to the habits and customs of the Baluchis themselves, they should endeavour to take all that would benefit them from the English laws and customs and adopt them to the old Baluch stock.

Browne casts Mahmud Khan as the leader responsible for modernizing the state. But what, exactly was the space the Khan was to modernize? Certainly, not the tribal lands, over which he had no control and from which he derived no revenue. 'Kalat State' had been collapsed de facto into the Khan's estate, the revenues of which should be devoted to the public works that would further British geopolitical interests in transport and communication. When addressing the sardars, Browne emphasized their role as



guardians of tradition, albeit of an improved, more enlightened, sort. The politics of accommodation linked colonial officials and sardars in forms of governance that rendered the Khan politically marginal. Mahmud Khan followed this lecture on good government with a brief statement, pledging to govern with justice and remain a faithful ally of the British Government in Calcutta.

### MIR MAHMUD KHAN AND THE BRITISH

Like his father, Mahmud Khan was a great disappointment to the British, although for different reasons. Khodadad Khan's actions were deemed to be unacceptable enough to call for his abdication and Mahmud Khan, perhaps seeing a lesson in that, declined to govern. The evidence indicates that Mahmud Khan's refusal to govern was deliberate. His motives are not clear, although his compromised accession and the loss of control over his treasury may have played into his refusal. As is seen in the passage below, the British explained his resistance as a by-product of his weak character. Agency officials consistently resisted viewing Mahmud Khan's behaviour as politically motivated. The British deplored his disinterest and his self-indulgence but were able to live with his failings. Mahmud Khan held office from 1893 until his death in 1931. The theme of Mahmud Khan's inadequacies was established soon after his accession:

The expectation of the Government of India no doubt was that Mir Mahmud Khan would certainly develop some capacity as a ruler, and that he should be allowed as far as possible to govern by his own methods, subject only to the tactful admonition and advice of the Political Agent and the Political Advisor. This expectation has been altogether falsified by experience. . . . His only idea of government is to collect what money he can from his *Naibs*; to spend what he finds necessary on himself, which is not very much, and to hoard the remainder. He rarely leaves Kalat except when summoned to Quetta,

and practically he trusts the Political Agent and Political Advisor to keep the country in order for him. Consequently every year the Political Agent is compelled to interfere more and more frequently in the administration of the country—the very result which the Government of India were most anxious to avoid.<sup>10</sup>

The final sentence above is somewhat disingenuous. Sandeman clearly saw that the Forward Policy committed the British to a more activist role in Kalat's affairs. And despite their claims, the British were not willing to let Mahmud Khan 'govern by his own methods', which involved maintaining his authority by manipulation of the sardari factions. In fact, the British had essentially taken over managing the sardars, and when Mahmud Khan did engage in sardari politics in Jhalawan, they sought to punish him. If the struggle over court appointments was a central issue in Khodadad's time, financing government expansion occupied a similar role during his son's reign. As the British extended their control in Kalat, the cost of governance rose. Once the frontier was reasonably pacified, Calcutta became resistant to authorizing any increase in colonial staff. In the view of officials on the ground, maintaining British authority required expanding the levies and increasing the number of the Agency's officials.

Calcutta's parsimony moderated after Mahmud Khan was persuaded to authorize British investment of most of his treasury in 1893. Shortly thereafter, at the urging of the AGG, Calcutta authorized a new officer to serve as his Political Advisor. The office of the Political Advisor was structurally divided between the Khan, who paid him, and the AGG, who selected the person to fill the post, subject to the Khan's approval. The Political Advisor would be a native official of the Agency, 'employed at the expense of Kalat and for the benefit of the State, but under the orders of the Political Agent.' This arrangement seemed designed to allay any fears in



Calcutta that the office represented an unacceptable intervention in the Khan's authority. He was to be neither the sole servant of the Khan nor the British. His duties were to arbitrate disputes between the Khan and the sardars, to oversee the Khan's estates, convene local *jirgas* to resolve petty disputes, and render sensible advice to the young and inexperienced Khan. Calcutta noted that there were precedents for such officers in other princely states. However, they signed off with a caution:

The Government of India desire themselves to abstain from, and to impress upon the local officers the necessity of abstaining from unnecessary interference in the internal affairs of Kalat. The Khan cannot be expected, for some time to come, to govern his wild country except by Kalat methods, and it would be exceedingly difficult for him to control his turbulent Sardars and people, or to carry on the government, if his measures were to be subjected to close scrutiny and constant check.<sup>11</sup>

Did Calcutta really want to protect the Khan's latitude to rule? It is hard to take the above passage at face value. To the extent that there were 'Kalati' methods of governance—manipulation of sardari factions and the threat of harsh punishment to rebellious chiefs—Calcutta would not permit them. The passage seems designed to deny what the document sanctioned, a British appointment foisted on a reluctant native ruler. In any event, the Khan had his own desires. The Political Advisor was quickly drawn into the vacuum produced by Mahmud Khan's disinterest in administering his estates. The Khan's tenants, suffering under his unrestrained *naibs*, turned to the Political Advisor for assistance, who soon found that he had little time for other duties. It was difficult to cultivate a personal relationship with the Khan, as he rarely left his palace in Kalat unless summoned to Quetta.<sup>12</sup>

In 1897 Mir Mahmud Khan, at the urging of the PA Kalat, instituted a Kalat State Court to handle both civil and criminal cases and Political Advisor was appointed the judge of the court. Cases were assigned to the court by the written order of the Khan, who bound himself to accept and enforce its decisions. The PA had the authority to obtain the records of any case, and to order a retrial if he found the proceedings unacceptable. He also had to sign off on any sentences exceeding four years, while the AGG confirmed sentences greater than seven years. Court procedures would follow those in force in British Baluchistan. The Political Advisor could, with the permission of the Khan and the PA, refer a case to a *jirga*. It appears that the Khan took as little interest in administering this court as he did in his estates.<sup>13</sup>

In the aftermath of Khodadad Khan's removal, Calcutta was particularly sensitive about British intervention in the affairs of Kalat State (Todd, 1926: 9). However, Agency officials were grappling with accumulating problems resulting from Mahmud Khan's refusal to govern, i.e. to oversee his estates and protect his tenants. When Maj. H.L. Showers became the PA Kalat in 1900, it was clear that neither the Khan nor the sardars were willing to address the problems. Showers was an interventionist PA, more concerned with solving administrative problems than with deferring to the fiction of the Khan as the ruler of a princely state. He saw improving the quality of the Khan's *naibs* as central to administrative reform. The *naibs* came from a variety of backgrounds. Some came from prominent tribal families. Some were *khanazada*, household slaves who were trained for the Khanate's administration. Political Advisors had not been able to restrain the *naibs*, who remitted to the Khan only the amount they calculated necessary to retain their office. When the Khan did seek an accounting from a *naib*, the latter was likely to flee to British territory, which put the British in a bind since they were unwilling to extradite the *naib*,



fearing he would be subjected to unacceptably harsh punishment by the Khan:<sup>14</sup>

The *naibs* . . . were mostly men of low origin, dishonest, ignorant and incompetent. They kept no proper accounts and what they did keep they evaded submitting as long as possible. . . . Supported by a degraded and ruffianly body of the Khan's troops the *naibs* did just as they liked, oppressed and extorted all they could from the people they governed with hardly a shadow of justice or system. . . . The most powerful of the *naibs* was *Naib Akram* (one of the Khan's slaves!) who was in charge of the rich and important Bhag *niabet*.<sup>15</sup>

In 1902 Mir Mahmud Khan and PA Showers reached an agreement that reconciled the different agendas held by each man when the Khan agreed to place his Mastung estates under the oversight of the PA Kalat. Mahmud Khan's refusal to rule his Mastung subjects was essentially a refusal to rule them by the British terms, to embrace the British principles of governance. This forced Calcutta into shifting from the official policy of minimal interference in Kalat's governance, the principle they had articulated when he assumed the *masnad* (throne) in 1893. Showers clearly thought the British could do a better job, and felt that the Agency's oversight of the Political Advisor were revised to allow him to devote most of his time to the Khan's estates.<sup>16</sup> The duties of the Political Advisor were revised to allow him to devote most of his time to the Khan's estates. With the Khan's approval, the British replaced the uncooperative *naibs*. Agency officials oversaw estate accounts, deducted the costs of management, and remitted the balance to the Khan. These arrangements were rapidly extended to all the Khan's holdings in Sarawan and Kachhi (Bhag, Dhadur, Gandava, and Lehri). The Khan's Kachhi revenues shortly doubled, while his less productive estates in Jhalawan were left to his own management.

Although it is impossible to recover Mir Mahmud Khan's subjectivity, to reconstruct his motives for refusing to rule, his actions were certainly political in a narrow sense. Having been nominated to the throne by the British and constrained within paramountcy, having also witnessed the removal of his father, Mahmud Khan chose non-cooperation. His choice had the significant consequence of allowing him to minimize his contact with the British. Mahmud Khan became a skillful obstructionist, delaying signing off on British projects for extended periods of time. Agency officials attributed his non-cooperation to defects of character, a time-honoured formulation readily accepted in Calcutta. This rhetorical tactic functioned well as an explanation for Mahmud's approach, while denying a political dimension to Mahmud Khan's deliberate actions.

Mahmud Khan's desire to minimize contact with Agency officials appears to have been reciprocated. There was a small cantonment about two miles from Kalat town that contained residences and offices for the PA Kalat and the Political Advisor, a post office, a small dispensary, and troop barracks, Kalat was a two days' journey from Quetta. The responsibilities of the PA and the Political Advisor covered a large territory, and they spent little time in Kalat. Major Showers, PA Kalat, noted that there had been few attempts:

to break through the barriers of seclusion and reserve, which His Highness has always interposed between his immediate surroundings, e.g. the control of his army and the management of his extensive but worthless stable, and ourselves. I think in the 12 years of his rule no more than three Agents to the Governor Generals' visits have been paid to Kalat. . . . At the same time His Highness's own visits to Quetta and the outer world have been no more than six in the same period.<sup>17</sup>

Meetings with the Khan were consistently difficult, but frustration did not erupt into the bureaucratic prose of Agency officials, and



the Khan's behaviour, which included regular obstruction of official inquiries and requests, and renegeing on agreements reached after lengthy negotiations, was explained, instead, in terms of his flawed character.

Neither the PA nor the Political Advisor was in Kalat on 18 March 1905, when some of the Khan's troops moved into the cantonment and sought British protection.<sup>18</sup> Shortly, thereafter, a party of loyal troops, led by the Khan, pursued the deserters, threatening to bombard them, and the dissidents fled from the residency to the post office. In the ensuing melee between the postal levies and the Khan's forces, a Dehwar named Ido, a temporary postal levyman, was fatally injured.

The postmaster sent a telegram on 18 March, informing the AGG of the disturbance. The PA Kalat and the Political Advisor, escorted by forty cavalry, arrived at Kalat on 21 March. They initiated an inquiry which focused on assessing the actions of the deserters and the Khan's response to them, along with investigating the cause of Ido's death. The PA, Maj. McConaghey, interviewed the Khan and took statements from the deserters who were still in the cantonment. The Khan was invited to send anyone with knowledge of the event and a representative to question the men who had made their statements. Mahmud Khan declined to examine witnesses and stated that he did not intend to send any witnesses to the proceeding, but instead he would provide the PA with an account of the incident. This effectively prevented the PA from getting direct statements from the Khan's officers. In a telegram sent before the arrival of the PA, Mahmud Khan denied responsibility for Ido's death, suggesting it resulted from an overdose of opium. He also denied that Ido, at the time of his death, was employed as a levyman by the agency.

The Khan stated that soldiers under Commandant Nur Khan had committed numerous thefts and he said he had warned Nur Khan that the thieving had to stop. The next day some forty armed soldiers, led by Dost Muhammad Khan, Nur Khan's brother, went to the cantonment. The Khan sent Nur Khan to give the men their pay and to collect their guns, but the dissidents refused to surrender their weapons or accept the pay. Concerned that the soldiers might damage cantonment property, the Khan led a detachment of soldiers with artillery to the cantonment. Under threat of bombardment, the dissidents surrendered about half their guns and moved from the PA's residence to the post office. The AGG, however, was not satisfied with Mahmud Khan's account. He sought clarification regarding the grievances of the deserting troops and the circumstances of Ido's death. The Khan reiterated his ignorance regarding Ido's death. He repeated the theft charges and stated that he regarded the deserters as mutineers who required swift action.

The British had long deplored the quality and discipline of the Khan's troops. Several years after his accession, Calcutta authorized Lieut. LeMesurier, to aid the Khan in the instruction and reorganization of his army. Some Punjabis were recruited, and the army acquitted itself well in battle with the Jhalawan dissident, Gauher Khan (see Chapter 6). However, the project foundered on Calcutta's desire to give first priority to the development of a camel corps to serve in Makran.<sup>19</sup> Over the years the Khan appears to have lost interest in maintaining a well-disciplined force. On the basis of the statements provided by the deserters, PA McConaghey attributed the soldiers' discontent to low pay, which was frequently in arrears. The yearly bonus of Rs36 was often reduced by various charges, levied by the officers in charge of dispensing it. The Khan's violation of the Agency's grounds was 'hasty and ill-considered', but the PA acknowledged that the deserters had put the Khan in



an awkward position. The PA believed the injuries sustained by Ido during the quarrel between the levies and the Khan's troops were accidental in nature. The postmaster stated that Ido had asked permission to go home after the altercation, saying he did not feel well. He died during the night. An autopsy revealed that Ido had died of internal bleeding caused by a ruptured spleen.

PA Showers, on leave when the disturbance at Kalat occurred, wrote a report to the AGG that was rather different in tone and conclusions from Maj. McConaghey's on-scene investigation. Showers argued that Ido's death, albeit accidental, was 'directly attributable to the Khan's actions . . . that there was no intention to kill the man . . . do[es] not lessen His Majesty's responsibility. . . . According to Showers, the desertions required no immediate action from the Khan, whose 'violation of the Cantonment . . . was an injudicious and improper proceeding that showed but scant respect for the dignity and position of the representative of Government'. The Khan should pay a blood compensation of Rs1,500 to the British, who would then disburse it to Ido's survivors.

Showers, who shared the general British concern about the Khan's army, noted that the Khan had been consistently resistant to suggestions for its improvement. He casually noted in passing, that the condition of the army should have been dealt with when Mahmud Khan acceded to the throne, a notion Calcutta surely would not have sanctioned at the time. Showers argued that the army could not be improved with modest reforms as it required a fundamental overhaul. The PA made two proposals to this end:

1. The British would select men of good character from the tribes to serve as officers who would recruit tribal soldiers. The Khan would have command of the army, once the pay scales were worked out with British approval.

(Or)

2. The troops would be recruited from the Punjab and be led by retired officers of the Native Army, under the Khan's command.

Showers preferred the second plan. He did not believe that tribal soldiers would be loyal to the Khan, especially as he believed that the Khan lacked the character to elicit respect.

AGG Tucker submitted the formal report of the March disturbance to Calcutta on 24 June 1905. He transmitted Mahmud Khan's regret over the incident, and his assurance that it would not happen again. The Khan accepted responsibility for Ido's death and agreed to pay the compensation. The Khan also agreed to raise the military's pay and reduce the size of the army. The AGG noted that he intended to instruct the Political Advisor to make Kalat his headquarters and encourage the PA to spend more time there as well. Calcutta sanctioned the AGG's proposal, noting that lack of British supervision was a factor in the March incident.

The Khan's claims about Ido over the course of the investigation, exemplify his methods in dealings with the British. At first he asserted that Ido was a Kalat subject, not employed by the British at the time of his death, which was in any case unrelated to the disturbances in March. Hence his death should be of no concern to Agency officials. When these claims were not accepted, Mahmud Khan, under some pressure, agreed to pay compensation for his death. In response to repeated requests to provide the payment agreed to, the Khan stated that Ido had died a natural death. It was not until July 1907 that British officials succeeded in getting him to authorize the compensation.



Kalat's administrative charges were funded from several sources. The Government of India continued to pay subsidies to the sardars of Sarawan and the cost of several of the earliest-established levy posts. *Jirga* expenses were met from the *Jirga* Fund, which consisted of fines and small fees. As the century advanced, the British pressured Mahmud Khan to provide new services such as schools and medical dispensaries. Agency officials argued that his coffers had swelled under their management, which was certainly true. Mahmud Khan's revenues in 1908 totaled Rs805,578, and almost all of this was derived, directly or indirectly, from the British rents on the leased areas, the annual subsidy granted in the Mastung Treaty, income from the administered *niabets*, and the Khan's Fund. Mahmud Khan was expected to assume an ever-lengthening list of charges.

The Khan's Fund was a particular target in British negotiations over Kalat State's charges. It consisted of the annual interest accrued from British investment of the Khan's treasury. The fund realized about Rs200,000 a year.<sup>21</sup> Initial charges against the Fund were support of the ex-Khan's household, subsidies for the Jhalawan sardars, and the salary and office of the Political Advisor, for a total of Rs96,000. By 1905 the Fund's expenses totaled Rs207,676, leaving the Fund with a balance of around Rs40,000. Charges on the fund were subject to the Khan's approval, and over the years Mahmud Khan had agreed, often reluctantly, to accept a variety of charges. These included some new levy posts and public works, administrative costs in Makran, an allowance for the PA Kalat, and the salary and office for the Native Assistant of Jhalawan. Agency officials not only negotiated additional charges against the Fund, but periodically, they pressured the Khan to sanction the transfer of charges from the Fund to his personal treasury, or to the *niabet* revenues. In 1906, Mir Mahmud Khan 'contributed' Rs27,000 from his *niabet* revenues to the upkeep of his father's household

(Todd 1926: 55). Subsidizing the PA's office from the Khan's Fund indicates that the distinction between Kalat State's expenses and the expenses administered by the Agency, seems to have been rather flexible. In fact, AGG Tucker observed that it was inconsistent to charge Kalat State's funds with an allowance for a British official, and the subsidy was transferred to the *Jirga* Fund. Mahmud Khan witnessed increasing charges against the *niabet* funds. In 1906, these included additional administrative staff, road maintenance, a sericulture project that proved unsuccessful, and various public works. PA Showers, writing to the AGG, pointed out that the new charges:

if not discussed with His Highness in detail, were all assented to by him in that he agreed that the Political Advisor should take over the sericulture operation, the Kalat road, and the maintenance of various buildings hitherto maintained by the Khan's Fund. . . . Thus it only seems necessary now that these additional items should be embodied in a note supplementary to that of 11th November last and the contents communicated, as before, to His Highness the Khan for his information.<sup>22</sup>

In a letter of 4 June 1906, Mahmud Khan accepted new levy charges against the Khan's Fund, while pointing out that he had raised objections to them with both the AGG and the PA Kalat:

It is the duty of every individual to look at matters concerning him from all points and I therefore submitted my representation to the Honourable the Agent to the Governor General. But as these have not been taken into consideration I do not think it becomes me to trouble the Hon'ble the A.G.G. any further. I therefore write to say that I entirely accept the proposals made . . . You are acquainted with the general rule governing the conduct of affairs between superiors and subordinates. A subordinate, if he has any objections to offer, submits his representations. If they are accepted well and good, if not, there is nothing more to be said in the matter.<sup>23</sup>



In this passage Mahmud Khan echoes his father's response when the British refused Khodadad Khan's plea to retain the controversial advisors. The rhetoric of honour has been replaced by a rhetoric of hierarchy; when the desires of the subordinate are rejected, he acquiesces and withdraws. The cultural posture of dignified disengagement was convenient for the AGG, who could then assure the Government of India that the Khan had agreed to assume the costs of more levies.

The British portrayed Mahmud Khan as licentious, self-indulgent, and above all, greedy. Baloch writers concur in this negative characterization. Thus, Baloch (1984[1958]: 247) describes Mahmud Khan as 'a virtual slave of his self, given to luxury and debauchery.' He asserts that the Khan was a gifted musician, but faults him for presiding over a court of 'forbidden pleasures' (MSK Baloch, 1984[1958]: 181). Mahmud Khan was regarded as a dynastic embarrassment by his nephew, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan: 'He was just the sort of man most fitted to British political ends. He functioned virtually like a dummy. . . .' (1975: 109). While there is abundant evidence of the personal shortcomings that trouble many Baloch, Mahmud Khan was not quite the British puppet suggested by Mir Ahmad Yar Khan. He consistently engaged in tactics of evasion and delay with Agency officials. His resistance forced them to resort to dubious accounting practices that would have embarrassed Calcutta, had they become public knowledge.

Agency complaints about his greediness deserve a closer look. Although Mahmud Khan received annual interest from the Khan's Fund, the fund itself, which comprised the fortune amassed by the previous Khans, had passed to British control. The British deplored Mahmud's 'hoarding' of his wealth, which they estimated to be about Rs530,000 (5.3 *laks*) in 1908.<sup>24</sup> The British urged investment, but from Mahmud Khan's view, investment could be

seen as losing control of his fortune. From his accession in 1893 to 1908, the Khan gave Rs377,272 for roads and agricultural improvements. In addition to bearing increased levy costs, Mahmud Khan committed Rs16,000 annually for roads, schools and dispensaries. Most of these monies went for roads, which were the highest priority for the British, who wished to increase the mobility of both their officials and the troops. Although the Khan's administrators were, according to Agency officials, clearly inefficient and often corrupt, British-backed reforms did not always increase the Khan's revenues. In the case of Makran, where the Khan received about fifteen thousand rupees a year before the reform, he was by the 1920s, making up an annual deficit of close to a hundred thousand rupees. Much of this deficit came from increased costs associated with British interests in defending the Iranian border and maintaining internal order (see Chapter 4).

Fixed charges against the Khan's Fund also rose during this period. The cost of maintaining Khodadad Khan's household had risen from Rs27,000 when he abdicated, to Rs80,000, by the 1920s. In fact, the Khan's Fund was overspent by this time, the deficit being made up from the *niabets*' revenues of the Khan. The British transferred charges from one account to another with some frequency, and the Khan was often in the position of being pressured to accept charges over which he had no control for projects in which he had no interest. Although Mahmud Khan's long reign was undistinguished at best, British representations of his faults should be read against his desire to keep a distance from the British and to retain control of what was left of his wealth.

The removal of Mir Khodadad Khan was a critical event in the history of Kalat State. It marked the end of the Sandeman period, but the cooperation between sardars and Agency officials that enabled a peaceful succession validated his belief in tribal



governance. The Khan's position, untenable from the start, became further marginalized. From the beginning, Browne seemed determined to distance himself from the Sandeman style, as indicated by his dispute with Mir Khodadad Khan over the visiting protocol. He was probably encouraged by Calcutta, who sought to replace 'the Sandeman style' with a successor more committed to bureaucratic administration. The history of the Khan's disputes with Agency officials over court personnel is erased from the Proceeding. The provocation of taking the Mustaufi's son into the Agency's service is occluded in Browne's indictment, which combined a selective, legalistic argument with the larger cultural discourse of oriental rulers. His orchestration of alleged threats—that the Khan might flee to Afghanistan, that his treasury might be looted—compelled Calcutta to sanction his actions, despite their reservations. Although Calcutta's primary concern was protecting paramountcy, Kalat's remoteness permitted a kind of British *purdah* (curtain camouflage). Calcutta, hobbled by distance, had little choice but to accept Browne's questionable allegations. His inclusion of the changes to the Khan's finances in the official record clearly annoyed Calcutta, as it had the potential to generate embarrassing questions in London.

Browne's use of the abdication to seek sardari authorization to take control of the Khan's treasury had no legal or historical justification. The legitimacy of obtaining sardari support for Browne's proposal to invest the money and use the interest to pay subsidies to many of them is obviously problematic. The sardars, probably guided by the Sarawan chiefs, adroitly deployed a politics of accommodation to stake their claims for internal tribal autonomy as the price of collaboration. This was critical to the successful management of Khodadad Khan's deposition.

How Browne obtained Mir Mahmud Khan's agreement to the investment scheme is unknown, but budgetary issues clearly poisoned the Khan's relations with the British for the whole of his reign. Similarly, the motives that led to Mahmud Khan's refusal to rule are unknown, but it appears to be a culturally appropriate response to the humiliation of his father and to the loss of authority and power in the khanship. His tactics forced Agency officials to violate paramountcy further, increasing their dependence on sardars and tribal governance, thus setting the conditions for Kalat exceptionalism.

### Notes

1. According to Copeland (1997: 19), about a dozen princes (out of about 600) in the late nineteenth century were deposed for acts judged to be criminal by the British.
2. Accessed in the Commissioner of Quetta District Archives (CQDA).
3. No witness to this exhumation appears in the Proceeding. The mother of the deceased infant testified that she had been told of its occurrence.
4. Baloch provides no source for this story. However, it should be noted that Sandeman had been willing to place himself (perhaps unknowingly) in the situationally subordinate role of a guest by visiting chiefs at their residences. Browne's refusal to continue this practice would have been viewed unfavourably by the Khan, who might have seen it as an insult.
5. This answer entered the lore of colonial Baluchistan as a factual indicator of Mir Khodadad Khan's brutality. Edward Wakefield, an Agency official in the 1930s, noted that the Khan 'boasted' of having killed 3,500 persons (Wakefield, 1966: 109).
6. Secretary, GOI, to AGG, 28 August 1893, HSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 5.
7. Subsidies were paid to the sardars of Sarawan by the British.
8. A small proportion of the treasury was left in the Khan's direct control.
9. Foreign, 19 August 1893, includes the AGG's speech cited below. Thanks to Aziz Luni for a copy of this document.
10. AGG to Foreign, 4 July 1900, HSA, Sec. 1, File M-1, Basta 11.
11. Secretary, Government of India to AGG, 28 August 1893, HSA, File No. 74, Sec. 5, Basta 5.
12. AGG to Foreign, 4 July 1900, HSA, Sec. 1, File M-1, Basta 11.



13. AGG to Foreign, 8 December 1905, HSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 8.
14. AGG to Foreign, 4 July 1900, HSA, Sec. 1, File M-1, Basta 11.
15. This passage comes from a copy of a Note by Major H.L. Showers, C.I.E., on the Present State of Administration in Kalat (HSA, File No. 74, Sec. 5, Basta 5). It appears to have been deleted from the Note in the version submitted to Calcutta (HSA, File No. 222, Sec. 6, Basta 6). The deletion was perhaps due to the mention of slavery, which was officially outlawed in the British-administered territories.
16. A Note by Major H.L. Showers, 31 March 1905, HSA, Sec. 6, File 222, Basta 6.
17. Confidential Notes on Baluchistan 1904-5, HSA, Sec. 8, File 2232, Basta 3.
18. The following account is drawn from documents in HSA, File No. 1, Sec. 10, Basta 3.
19. Foreign to AGG, 19 November 1895, HSA, Sec. 15, File 64, Basta 8.
20. PA Kalat to AGG, 29 May 1905, HSA, Sec. 10, File 1, Basta 3.
21. The following figures were taken from AGG to Foreign, 8 December 1905, HSA, File No. 222, Sec. 6, Basta 6.
22. PA Kalat to AGG, 7 April 1906, HSA, Sec. 6, File 222, Basta 6.
23. Khan to PA Kalat, 4 June 1906, HSA, Sec. 6, File 222, Basta 6.
24. Figures in the following discussion were taken from two documents: AGG to Foreign, 3 August 1908, HSA, File No. 1, Sec. 1, Basta 20, and PA Kalat to AGG, 7 January 1923, HSA, File No. 2-B, Sec. 10, Basta 13. SAHH.

## 6

## The Space of Politics

The Baluchistan Agency was essentially a byproduct of the first two Afghan Wars. The first war had failed in achieving a peaceful and cooperative Afghanistan, so the British turned to establishing Kalat as a cooperative and dependent Native State. However, the Second Afghan War broke out, before the problems attendant on this project could be perceived, much less addressed. In 1878, the Amir refused to allow the British mission through the Khyber Pass. The British demanded an apology and when one was not forthcoming, they called up their troops. The war ended in 1880, rather inconclusively, as far as the British security goals were concerned, but under the Treaty of Gandamak, the British did acquire the Pushtun territory that later comprised British Baluchistan.

The distinctive spaces of the Baluchistan Agency were thus created in treaties, the first recognizing the State of Kalat, while the second established British Baluchistan. The determinations of Kalat State governance began with Calcutta's decision to support Sandeman rather than Mereweather. The resistance of the sardars, especially the Sarawan sardars, discussed in Chapter 3, contributed to British wariness regarding the complexity and cost of using the military to produce a centralized Native State with a ruler possessing the means to control his subordinates. Sandeman was also a central player in the second determination. His confident belief that expanding the Agency was good frontier policy, made him an effective advocate in London and Calcutta for the



incorporation of British Baluchistan (Thornton, 1977[1899]: 262-63).

In pre-British times, British Balochistan and Sarawan were often attached to Kandahar, and there is evidence of population flows between the Pushtun and the Brahui-speaking areas. The Sarawan Raisanis claim, originally, to have been Spin Tarins. Barth (1978) noted that the Marri Baloch incorporated Pushtuns as the Marri advanced their northern border. With the possible exception of the Jomezai Kakars, the institutionalized chieftaincy, characteristic of Kalat tribes, was absent in British Baluchistan. There were local notables, men prosperous enough to provide generous hospitality in their guesthouses, but these did not appear to have been hereditary positions (GOB Quetta-Pishin: 64).

Sandeman never altered the tactics that had proved successful in negotiating with tribal leaders, which he had initially acquired as a District Officer in Punjab. His willingness to convene *jirgas* and to offer protection to those who sought it, was an effective policy in British Baluchistan, where it was backed by military force. British Baluchistan was organized administratively into districts, where land was registered and the British taxed the harvest. Increased security led to expanded cultivation and, probably, diminished movement across the borders of Kalat. For Sandeman, tribal administration transcended any difference between the Pushtuns of British Baluchistan and the tribes of Kalat, because it helped integrate the Agency. However, the new jurisdictions, which meant paramountcy or indirect rule for Kalat, and direct rule for British Baluchistan, set up different future trajectories that would become evident during the politics around Partition.

Calcutta had two concerns regarding the Agency. Its first priority was security, which it wanted maintained at minimal cost. Its second

was supporting the appearance of Kalat as a Native State, even as colonial policies destroyed its fragile integrity. Calcutta avoided the cost of staffing two Agency administrations, one handling tribal governance under the sardars in Kalat, the other engaged in direct administration in British Baluchistan, by combining the two positions. British officials assigned to Baluchistan, wore two hats that were donned according to location. The AGG became the District Commissioner when he officiated in British Baluchistan, and the Political Agents became the District Magistrates. Although the merging of the two jurisdictions at the top provided an administrative integration, differences between Kalat and British Baluchistan, present at the start, increased over time.

As the British extended their control of British Baluchistan, they established District and Sub-district Headquarters and staffed them with a growing number of lower-ranked officials, most of them Indians, who were paid significantly less than British officials. The district towns were subject to Indian laws and staffed with police, largely recruited from Punjab. By 1900, there were primary schools and medical dispensaries in larger towns. The hinterlands were administered under the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and cases were heard by *jirgas*.<sup>1</sup> The Agency Territories of Quetta, Chagai and Nasirabad, were administered under the same law codes as British Baluchistan, with a few special laws for Quetta (GOB Quetta-Pishin: 215).

Native officers were critical in the Agency's administration. Most of them came from India, and the earliest appointments were, predominately, Hindus. Diwan Ganpat Rai, who served with Sandeman in Punjab, came with him when the Baluchistan Agency was established. Ganpat Rai's ancestors had served the Mughuls in Multan and the Sikhs in the Punjab. He accompanied Sandeman on all his tours.<sup>2</sup> Hittu Ram, a Baloch Hindu, was Sandeman's



secretary during the 1876 mission that produced the treaty establishing colonial relations with Kalat (Thornton, 1977[1895]: 82). When Sandeman became the AGG, Hittu Ram served as his representative on numerous important *jirgas* (Thornton, 1977[1895]: 179). In 1888, he was sent to Lasbela to mediate a succession dispute (Thornton, 1977[1895]: 202). By 1900, the British had recruited some Muslims for service in Balochistan. Kasi Jallal-ud-Din, appointed Political Advisor to the Khan in 1900, was from a prominent family in Afghanistan and had been a *qazi* (judge) in Kandahar before entering the British service.<sup>3</sup> The policy of recruiting native officers served to maintain a clear separation of colonial administration from tribal governance. The Agency's staff was alien to Baluchistan, and the single exception, Hittu Ram, was a non-tribal Hindu.

#### JIRGA ADMINISTRATION

Disputes in Kalat were officially subject to *rivaj* (customary law) and routinely went to the *jirgas* if they could not be settled informally. The PA was expected to use the FCR as a guide in framing the issues to be considered, however, since Kalat was a native state, he could not cite the FCR explicitly, either in framing the issues of the case or in his statement of the *jirga's* findings.<sup>4</sup> Domestic cases in both jurisdictions could be referred to a *qazi* for adjudication under the laws of *Shariat*, if both parties agreed and bound themselves to accept his decision.

Sandeman saw the *jirga*, a council of notables meeting to settle disputes ranging from crop damage to murder, as an indigenous custom. He envisioned a system of tribal governance modern enough to accommodate the demands of the colonial state, while retaining what he found most admirable in tribalism: chiefly authority and collective responsibility. The British saw their right

to establish the *jirga* as the institution to interpret customary law in Kalat as derived from the Mastung Treaty, which gave them the authority to mediate conflicts between tribes.<sup>5</sup> Calcutta saw the *jirga* as desirable on two counts: it appeared compatible with paramountcy and provided governance on the cheap. Public mediation was common in tribal Balochistan; however the British transformed the *jirga* from a mediation process controlled by parties interested in resolving disputes to an institution activated and largely controlled by them. Sandeman sought to improve upon custom by introducing British concepts of evidence and by standardizing *rivaj*. The British official in-charge convened the *jirga*, framed the issues to be addressed, and had the authority to reject or modify the decision when setting the sentence. *Jirga* decisions were thus recommendations rather than binding judicial determinations, and these recommendations were based on custom and generally apportioned responsibility and punishment (usually a fine or a good-conduct bond) among the disputants. Sandeman established a hierarchy of *jirgas* by instituting the annual *Shahi* (chiefly) *jirgas* in Sibi and Quetta, to consider the most important cases.

The convening official typically structured the relevant issues as a series of questions. Some questions addressed, directly or indirectly, traditional practice and customary law. Thus, in the case of Khodadad Khan's forced abdication, AGG Browne asked the sardars whether the Khan, traditionally, had the right to appropriate provisions free of charge from his subjects when he visited an area. They responded that the Khan did have that right, but only for three days' worth of supplies.<sup>6</sup> In a pattern common to British colonial administration, local elites, in this instance the tribal chiefs, defined tradition and customary law. *Jirga* participants were also often called upon to legitimate new practices. The Abdication *Jirga* accepted the extension of sardari subsidies to the chiefs of



Jhalawan, and they also approved a proposal to appropriate a large portion of the Khan's treasury for investment in British securities. It is easy to see self-interest in some *jirga* decisions, easy, too, to see an accommodation to the British agenda.

Accommodation worked in multiple ways, however. The greater power resided with the British, but the *jirgas* did not always ratify British desires, and the questions posed to a *jirga* might be finessed. When questioned about the Khan's oppression of his tenants, the Abdication *Jirga* blandly asserted that such mistreatment would end with the accession of the new Khan (Proceeding: 179). In 1894, the British proposed locating a levy post in Saruna (southern Jhalawan), because of a longstanding dispute regarding division of the harvest, between the Mengal tenants and their Chutta proprietors. The Mengal cultivators had embanked plots and claimed they owed a one-sixth share of the harvest to the Chuttas, who argued, however, that they were entitled to a one-fourth share. The Chuttas opposed the Saruna levy post when they learned it was to be staffed with Mengals. In 1899, the British bought the levy post question before the Sibi *Shahi Jirga*. That *jirga*, however, declined to address it on the grounds they were unfamiliar with the area, and suggested that British officials should determine the location of the post.<sup>7</sup>

Some cases, especially those involving longstanding enmities and sardari succession disputes, were not easily resolved. *Jirga* decisions were not always implemented, and a case could drag on for years, subject to repeated *jirga* attempts to devise an effective settlement. Although *jirgas* were activated and structured by the British, they were arenas of mutual negotiation, where each party engaged in defining and defending its sphere of authority and responsibility. The accommodation developed over time, excluded from the *jirga* consideration those internal tribal issues and disputes that sardars were willing to adjudicate on their own.

The sardars surrendered inter-tribal disputes and raiding to *jirga* consideration in exchange for a free hand within their respective tribes. By the turn of the century, British officials noted a tendency for the Sarawan sardars to send the most important cases to a *jirga*. At the same time, they asserted that many disputes involving parties from different tribes were settled by their sardars without recourse to a *jirga* (GOB Sarawan: 153). This suggests that the sardars were relatively successful in controlling the disposition of disputes. It is likely that the most contentious cases went to a *jirga*, where the blame for an unpopular decision could be attributed to the British and the other sardars in attendance. The sardars kept many domestic conflicts, including most honour killings, outside the purview of the *jirga*. Their collective desire to insulate cases involving women was evident in the Abdication *Jirga*. AGG Browne sought their recommendations for cases of adultery and abduction brought against the Khan. The sardars declined to advise on them, turning them back to the AGG for decision 'after fully considering the circumstances and taking the Khan's explanation' (Proceeding: 175). There is a remarkable absence of information regarding murders of ordinary tribespeople in the *jirga* records in Kalat. The killings that the British sent to a *jirga*, typically, involved those of the tribal notables.

In 1905, a *Shahi Jirga* considered a case in which a man accused of adultery escaped, and an agnate was murdered for the crime. The *jirga* decided that the murder was justified, as it was a custom of the Magasi tribe to exact punishment on a relative when the perpetrator could not be found. The PA ascertained that other tribes limited such killings to the actual perpetrator. The PA accepted the *jirga* decision in this case, but the following year he placed the question of collective responsibility before the *Shahi Jirga*, which declared the 'custom to be unlawful' (GOB Sarawan: 156). The paradoxical notion of unlawful custom reveals the British



determination to standardize the local customs and bring them into greater conformity with British concepts of justice, despite their rhetorical claims that the *jirga* was an indigenous institution. The routinization of custom smuggled the predictability and stability of law into tribal adjudication, while, simultaneously, authorizing the custom as authentically a Baloch one.

In 1896, a *Shahi Jirga* was convened to consider a conflict between the Marris and Lunis that involved raids and counter-raids with numerous fatalities.<sup>8</sup> The incident that set off the round of raids involved two Marris, who were attacked and killed by a party of Lunis. The Lunis claimed that they accosted the Marris because there was an outbreak of smallpox in the Marris' land and they feared that the Marris would bring the disease to a nearby Luni settlement. According to the Lunis, the Marris drew the first blood, murdering one of their party, and the Marri deaths resulted from this. The Marris argued that the deaths were deliberate vengeance by Darwesh Khan, whose son had been killed by them. A previous *jirga* had convicted three Marris for the son's death, but the blood compensation had not been paid. The *jirga* determined that vengeance, rather than fear of smallpox, was the cause of the initial attack. Ten men, four Marris and six Lunis, were sentenced to transportation for life. Compensation was assessed at Rs18,420 for the Marris and Rs8,900 for the Lunis.

For AGG Browne, it was the Luni deaths in particular—in the most violent encounter in the series, Marri raiders attacked a Luni party in British Baluchistan, killing fourteen of them—that called for punishment greater than a *jirga* could impose. The Lunis were revenue-paying British subjects killed in British territory and their status was clear. The AGG characterized the Marris as 'non-paying quasi independent tribesmen.' The Marris were neither proper subjects of Kalat, where their status as a tribe paying no revenue to

the Khan, would be consistent with other member tribes, nor were they independent of the Agency's administration. The Marris were an unclassifiable anomaly of colonial governance in Baluchistan. Anomalies and ambiguities were tolerated in frontier Kalat State, where maintaining Calcutta's administrative standards was difficult and, occasionally, counterproductive. Neither proper subjects of Kalat nor of British India, Marris were, nevertheless, subject to a *jirga's* adjudication.

*Jirgas* were authorized to recommend a maximum punishment of seven years in jail. AGG Browne believed this to be inadequate relative to the death toll. Although he was hesitant, he finally decided to send the case to a *jirga*, and to seek its approval for use of the harsher Indian Law in recommending punishments in this case. His success is evident in the tone of his report to Calcutta:

... for the first time in the history of this Agency, the Baluch *Jirga*, speaking with the authority of a national Parliament, has of its free will and as the result of its own convictions, recommended that certain tribal crimes should be tried by the British authorities under the Criminal Procedures and Indian Penal Codes . . . the National Parliament has now, by its replies, thoroughly asserted its right to self-government.<sup>9</sup>

Browne's success in obtaining the *jirga's* permission to apply Indian Law in this case led him to elevate the *jirga* to the status of a 'national parliament'. In effect, the *jirga* transferred the case back to the British, hardly a decision appropriate to a 'national Parliament'. Browne seems to have been oblivious to the contradiction of a national legislature demonstrating its 'right to self-governance' by authorizing another government to decide certain cases. The decision appears to have been an instance of a *jirga*, in the relatively early years of *jirga* deliberations, assessing the benefits of accommodating British desires.



## THE LEVIES

Sandeman also instituted a network of levy-posts manned by the local tribesmen. In regions such as Zhob (British Baluchistan) and Makran (Kalat), where there was some resistance to British authority, the Levy Corps were paramilitary units. Tribesmen recruited to these corps were drilled, disciplined and armed under the command of British officers. Men in the levies were nominated by sardars who typically placed close agnates in the higher ranks of the levies. It was common for sons and brothers of sardars to be in charge of levy posts. The more modest District Levies were paid less, not issued weapons, and administered by tribesmen.

District Levies performed a variety of tasks ranging from carrying messages to making arrests and collecting witnesses. Sandeman saw the levies as reinforcing the principle of collective tribal responsibility embodied in the *jirga*. He was explicit about this:

[Levy] posts will become a rallying point for the whole tribe in case of a raid, and I wish in this connection to emphasize the principle . . . that the money to be paid is to be regarded as securing in time of need the services of the whole tribe and not merely of the few individuals whose names are enrolled in our service.<sup>10</sup>

The way the levies were constituted—in part a form of sardari patronage, in part a service funded by the British to facilitate their governance—made them an inter-cultural field similar to the *jirgas*. Levy-men, especially those serving at fixed posts, were formally subject to British officials who paid them and distributed punishments. These included fines or suspension of wages, when their conduct was judged unacceptable, and rewards, usually a bonus, for exceptional performance. Most levy-men served in their home localities, and unauthorized absence from the post was the commonest reason for punishment. A sardar could, with Agency

agreement, replace a serving levy man with another nominee and the placing of close agnates in the higher levy ranks ensured that sardars as well as the officials monitored the levies.

Some officials in Calcutta saw the sardari allowances as simply a glorified form of bribery and blackmail, a reward for good behaviour that could be withheld as a punishment if the sardars were uncooperative. H.S. Barnes, who served under Sandeman, however, rejected this view. Barnes argued that sardari allowances were embedded in tribal governance. *Jirga* decisions were reached only after all parties had a chance to present their grievances, decisions were governed by tribal custom, and restitution was usually apportioned among the disputants:

The lever of the allowances was used to compel the headmen to produce the actual offenders, who were then tried by their own people in tribal *jirgas*, and punishment was awarded in accordance with tribal custom. If a *jirga* imposed a fine, and recommended . . . that it could be cut from the tribal pay, then only were the tribal allowances touched . . . (Thornton, 1977[1895]: 304).

In short, sardari allowances were a linchpin in the modernized tribal system, where British notions of reasonable governance were accommodated to tribal honour and collective responsibility. While Barnes' defence may have been accurate at the time, it was not long before the British were withholding subsidies to compel behaviour, and on occasion, suspending them. By 1895, the PA Kalat was threatening to withhold subsidies for the Sardars of Jhalawan unless they participated in a campaign to capture a dissident Zehri sardar.<sup>11</sup> Carrot and stick subsidy reallocations were employed several times during the Mengal leadership crises discussed later.



### THE *JIRGA*-LEVIES SYSTEM: TRIBAL PRACTICE AND COLONIAL RULE

*Jirgas* never considered cases involving Europeans or British civilians, as these were handled by a British Court, i.e. the AGC acting as the Chief Commissioner. Such persons, if convicted, were sent to jails in either Karachi or Shikarpur. Similarly, a Muslim who murdered a European or an Indian employee of the Agency was never subject to a *jirga*. These crimes fell under the Murderous Outrages Act, and the penalty was death. The killer's body was burned to prevent his grave from becoming a local shrine, and all his property was confiscated. British officials had discretionary powers to investigate the associates of such killers to ascertain whether they might have prevented the attack. Penalties for failure to intervene included fines and forfeitures of land (GOB Sibi: 262). Between 1892 and 1905 the British recorded forty-one killings under the Murderous Outrages Act, most of which occurred in British Baluchistan (GOB Loralai: 261; Zhob: 229–30; Sibi: 261; Quetta–Pishin: 224).

It is not surprising that the colonial officials made jurisdictional errors from time to time, or that they sometimes manipulated the two codes. As long as a case was adjudicated by a District Magistrate, i.e. as long as the offence was committed in British Baluchistan, remand to a prison in Sindh was legal. However, British courts had no standing in Kalat State. Until the British persuaded the Khan to finance a jail in Mastung, disposal of Kalati prisoners was a problem, which was occasionally solved by the PA signing a remand order as the District Magistrate and sending the offender to Sindh. The official position that British law did not apply in Kalat was tested in Makran, where, in 1893, a 'ghazi' (fanatic) attacked a British lieutenant, and was promptly killed by another officer in the party, pursuant to the Murderous Offences

Act, which did not apply in Kalat State.<sup>12</sup> The Government of India took note of this 'irregularity':

The case was . . . apparently a perfectly plain one and the sentence well deserved. No exception need therefore be taken to Kemball's action, which seems only to have erred in a technical sense, by the formal assumption of jurisdiction.<sup>13</sup>

Like other irregularities, the 'technical error' was excused by the behaviour of the native who had elicited an improper response from an official. This 1895 example anticipates Showers' defence of the *nazim's* complicity in a later murder in Makran.

Sandeman viewed *jirga*-levies administration as a means of aligning tribal interests in self-governance with British interests for pacification of the frontier. In truth, the *jirga*-levies system required constant British oversight and frequent intervention. It was they who determined who would serve, and how the issues to be decided were framed. *Jirga* attendance was part of the service for which sardars received allowances and failure to appear was seen as a serious dereliction of duty. However, many sardars, by not attending a *jirga*, displayed their displeasure with some official act or stance, or a general resistance to the colonial situation.

The *jirga*-levies system was a contradictory melding of tribal practice and colonial rule. It put the Khan in an impossible position, nominally acknowledged by the British as the ruler of the Kalat State, but deprived of both power and authority. The Mastung Agreement had confirmed the Khan as head of the Kalat State and constituted the British as adjudicators in disputes between the Khan and the sardars. Although this agreement contained terms for settling specific differences between them at the time, it laid out only general principles for their future relations, enjoining each party to treat the other with justice and



respect. The treaty of 1876 signed by the Khan and the British Government, had incorporated the general principles enunciated in the agreement.<sup>14</sup>

Mir Khodadad Khan queried Sandeman about his status relative to judicial procedures shortly after the Mastung Agreement was signed. Sandeman developed a proposal that attempted to provide mediation at the local level while instituting rights of appeal that distributed jural authority among the Khan, the sardars, and the British. A tribesperson could appeal a sardar's decision to the Khan. The sardar, in turn, could appeal the Khan's ruling to the British, as the final court of appeal. This proposal had the potential of weakening the sardars' judicial monopoly in internal tribal disputes by providing a means of appeal, and it gave the Khan a significant judicial role. The Government of India refused to sanction Sandeman's proposal on the grounds that it would lead to excessive British interference in Kalat's governance.<sup>15</sup> Although the British continued to treat Kalat as a princely state, the *jirga*-levies system had become the foundation for tribal administration, drawing sardars and officials into a joint governing process independent of the Khan. The Khan's representative attended the *Shahi jirgas* and signed off on recommendations, but appears to have taken no active role in the proceedings.

Some nationalist scholars view the *jirga*-levies system, sometimes called the 'Sandeman system', as a deliberately conceived colonial plot to take control of Kalat's governance. While this was true to a large extent, such an analysis, however, tends to deprive the sardars of their actual role in the whole process. Baloch (1987: 141) asserts that the sardars were 'tamed and bribed' into legitimating British interests. This overlooks the pre-colonial factionalism of the sardars, as the Khans were accustomed to playing divide and rule tactics with the sardars, before the British had appeared on the scene.

It does not do justice to the entangled motives evident in the protracted British struggle to control the Jhalawan tribes, discussed later. Breseeg (2004: 167) argues that the 'Sandeman system' was a deliberate effort to establish 'direct relations with the Sardars and tribal chiefs, bypassing the Khan.' These arguments treat the colonial state as a monolithic entity whose policies were set at the founding of the Agency. These claims, however, are not supported by the available evidence. Indeed, the fundamental contradiction of the Kalat paramountcy was Calcutta's determination to maintain the façade of the Khanship, while endorsing the Agency's policies that undermined the office.

Responsibilities assigned to the levies increased rapidly during the early decades of the British administration as newly-constructed telegraph lines and roads required protection and as the volume of mail increased. By 1883, Sandeman was pressing the Government of India to sanction an expansion of the levies. He argued that the levies served British interests in two ways: they were the most economical way to provide the necessary services, and they strengthened the Government's hand in dealing with the tribes.<sup>16</sup>

In the early years, sardari subsidies and *jirgas* were limited to Sarawan and Kachhi. The Sarawan sardars were long accustomed to border politics by playing Kalat against Kandahar. More than other Kalat chiefs, they had experienced both armed conflict and negotiation in their relations with the British. These sardars had borne the brunt of British punitive policies after the First Afghan War, when Sarawan was briefly attached to Kandahar and the sardars lost their Kachhi estates. A politics of accommodation gradually developed between the British officials and the Sarawan sardars. Chiefly authority was ratified and strengthened in *jirga*-levies governance, and the smaller size of the Sarawan tribes made



it easier for the sardars to control their internal dissensions. Disputes over succession were rare in Sarawan.

#### COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

In Kalat, a small staff administered an area roughly the size of Italy. Responsibility was divided in a rather ad hoc fashion. There were two Political Agents, one (PA Kalat) dealing with Sarawan and northern Jhalawan, while the other (PA Southern Baluchistan) was responsible for Lasbela, Makran, Khara and southern Jhalawan. The Marris, Bugtis and Dombkis were administered from British Baluchistan. The Khan had repeatedly complained that they refused to acknowledge his authority, and conflicts among the tribes, together with the Marris' forays into British Baluchistan, led to their de facto separation from Kalat, despite their historical connections to the Khanate. The British, citing pre-colonial custom, recognized the Raisani and Zehri (Zarakzai) sardars as ranking above their counterparts in Sarawan and Jhalawan, respectively. This worked well in Sarawan, where the Raisani sardar served on virtually all the important *jirgas* and on occasion represented tribal interests on ad hoc administrative committees, as well. It proved, however, less successful in Jhalawan, as the large Zehri and Mengal tribes were riven with internal disputes.

There were around 200 men in the levies for the whole of Kalat, so it is not surprising that the AGG repeatedly appealed to Calcutta for additional officers. Concerned about administrative costs in a native state that generated little revenue for the colonial state, initial requests for such an increase were routinely denied by Calcutta. Imperial geopolitical concerns had led Calcutta in the early years of the Agency to assume payments to the Sardars of Sarawan for security in the Bolan Pass and to fund a small force of

levies, but as their anxieties about the frontier diminished, their desire to make Kalat a self-sustaining state increased.

AGG Browne had appealed to Calcutta for Jhalawan subsidies in 1893, arguing that they were necessary to the pacification of the Sindh-Kalat border, but Calcutta had initially refused to sanction the expenditure. The Commissioner of Sindh, backed by Bombay, had urged Calcutta to authorize a trans-border police force that would be empowered to pursue criminals in Kalat's territory. The AGG had opposed this plan, arguing that it would undermine the Agency's relations with the sardars, and perhaps this led him to see Khodadad Khan's abdication as an opportunity to propose investing the Khan's treasury as a means of financing subsidies in Jhalawan:

In all previous communications addressed to you on the subject of the disturbed condition of the Sind-Kalat border, my main object has been to obtain a grant of money . . . to enable me to take these Jhallawan (sic) tribesmen into our own service as levies. The chief obstacle to the adoption of this obviously desirable plan was the difficulty of obtaining . . . the funds for this purpose. . . . As the money has now been obtained without the help of the Imperial Treasury, there is no reason for thinking that the Sind-Kalat frontier will not be as effectively controlled as other parts of the border.<sup>17</sup>

Although Browne was overly optimistic about ending the border problems, there is a clear tone of defensive satisfaction in this 1894 report on the border. The AGG took the occasion to restate the differences between the Jhalawan tribes and the peoples of British Baluchistan and Sindh. The former, being tribal pastoral subjects of Kalat, in contrast to the British subjects of Sindh and British Baluchistan, had an easier time evading Agency officials. Therefore, good relations with sardars were critical to colonial administration in Kalat. Browne argued that maintaining the cooperation of the sardars and strengthening the levies, were the appropriate



mechanisms of control in Jhalawan. His loosely connected argument reflected the contradiction of governance in Kalat, because the fiction of Kalat's subjects could only be maintained by reconstituting them as tribal subjects. Browne ended his report with the suggestion that he and the Commissioner be given more latitude to administer the border without having to consult either Calcutta or Bombay.

### CHALLENGES TO PARAMOUNTCY

Limitations to the politics of accommodation emerged early. In the 1880s Dehwar cultivators in Mastung complained about frequent depredations by tribesmen from Sarawan who looted crops and stole property. These Dehwars were subjects of the Khan, and when his *naib* was unable or unwilling to protect them, they became vulnerable to tribal predators. Sardars were not cooperative in investigating such cases and punishing the perpetrators. Their interests in protecting non-tribal peoples were limited to those who resided in their territories, and they resisted what they saw as doing the Khan's work. After several years of escalating cases, the British docked the sardars' subsidies and used the money thus acquired to hire extra men for the levy force to deal with these cases.<sup>18</sup>

The Mastung problems were a harbinger of the difficulties to come. The British concept of Kalat as a state with subjects was faulty from the start. The category, 'Kalat subject', did not exist for the local people, who understood themselves only as subjects either of a sardar or the Khan. Tribal subject-categories were based either on genealogy or contract, as was discussed in Chapter 2. Where access to land was not determined by genealogy, it was granted in exchange for political allegiance and payment in animals or a share of the harvest. Genealogy became a residual subject-category that could be claimed if circumstances favoured its activation.<sup>19</sup>

The complex patchwork of Kalat landholdings, in which some were traditional tribal lands, some were granted as blood compensation, some were based on service and some others obtained through conquest, produced anomalous categories of people. There were tribesmen who cultivated the Khan's lands and were, therefore, subject to his *naibs* and entitled to his protection. There were areas like Mastung, where tribal landholdings were interspersed with the Khan's estate and tribespeople and Dehwars lived in proximity. Mahmud Khan's refusal to govern, i.e. to oversee his estates and protect his subjects, led to increasing disputes between his *naibs* and his tenants, especially the tribal tenants. When these tribesmen appealed to their sardars, they usually obtained support and could challenge the *naibs*. The Khan's subjects were often victimized, either by tribals or the unrestrained *naibs*. For example, in the Sarawan village of Pringabad, sometime during the 1890s, some Brahuis cultivating the Khan's land remitted only a small fraction of the Khan's share of the harvest, but their sardar refused to get involved in the case. When the British intervened in 1901, the Brahuis were openly defiant, threatening to kill the PA. After being punished for insubordination, they agreed to pay their full share.<sup>20</sup>

By the turn of the century, Agency officials were increasingly concerned about Kalat's governance. In the aftermath of Khodadad Khan's abdication, Calcutta was particularly concerned about British intervention in Kalat affairs (Todd, 1926: 9). Agency officials, faced with Mahmud Khan's refusal to govern, struggled with numerous village disputes, and finally, they were virtually forced to intervene in the management of his estates. This produced a widening gap between Calcutta's obligation to treat Kalat as a native state and Agency officials' need to maintain order. By the time Major H.L. Showers became the PA Kalat in 1900, it was clear that neither the Khan nor the sardars were willing to address the accumulating problems resulting from the Khan's behaviour.



Political Advisors had proved unable to restrain the Khan's *naibs*. Many of these *naibs* remitted to the Khan only the amount they thought necessary to retain their offices. When the Khan did seek an accounting from a *naib*, the latter was likely to flee to British territory, which put Agency officials in a bind, as they were unwilling to extradite the *naib*, fearing that he would be subject to unacceptably harsh punishment at the hands of the Khan.<sup>21</sup> In 1902, PA Showers obtained permission to reassign a native assistant (NA) from the Bolan Pass to Sarawan.<sup>22</sup> In addition to duties connected with controlling the tribes—convening *jirgas*, collecting fines and administering the *Jirga* Fund—the NA Sarawan was given the tasks of overseeing the Khan's Fund, and the public works projects, formerly responsibilities of the Political Advisor.<sup>23</sup> This gave the PA better access to the Khan's Fund, as the NA Sarawan was directly under him. Even before Calcutta had authorized the position of NA Sarawan, Showers was advocating for a Native Assistant (NA) for Jhalawan. True to form, Calcutta was initially resistant, despite persistent unrest in Jhalawan.

In 1903, Major Showers toured Jhalawan, with an entourage<sup>24</sup> that included the Political Advisor, seven tribal notables, and a medical officer,<sup>25</sup> escorted by eighteen levies and a fifty riflemen. Showers' report at the conclusion of this tour, was an extended argument for the appointment of an NA for Jhalawan. He convened *jirgas* to hear five major cases and settled over a hundred minor ones. Two of the major cases were variants of the problems encountered in Mastung, i.e. disputes between the Khan's *naibs* and tribal tenants. In the Jhalawan cases, the latter refused to provide provisions for Showers' entourage. The third major case resembled the Raisani-Panni land-case discussed below. The Chutta and the Mengal tribes claimed the same land. In their support, the Chuttas cited a paper written in 1872 by a British officer stationed in Karachi. Showers believed that this account was unreliable, as the

officer had not visited the area himself, and his information had come from the Chutta informants. The Mengals cited their graveyards as evidence of their longstanding presence in the disputed land. At Showers's urging, the tribes agreed to arbitration by two sardars, whose decision was typical in that neither side got all that it had claimed: the Mengals received only the land they already occupied, but their right to that land was legitimated.

Showers gave particular weight to the fourth major case. A widow had been engaged by her family to a Musiani tribesman. She rejected this betrothal and sought protection with the Sasolis, where she arranged her own engagement with a man from the *sardarkhel* (sardar's lineage). The Musianis at first refused to mediate the case but when Showers said that he would not leave the area until he had settled it, they agreed to present themselves. The widow had in the meantime, decided that she would remain unmarried. A *jirga* determined that she should be placed under the protection of a neutral sardar. According to Showers:

It [the case] was one of the gravest ever known in Jhallawan. The parties could never have adjusted it by themselves, and, but for our intervention and my opportune arrival at Khozdar, the whole country would certainly have been plunged into strife and bloodshed.<sup>26</sup>

Showers surely overstated the case. The potential for widespread and uncontrolled violence was asserted in a way that suggests Showers assumed Calcutta shared his assumptions about tribal women and politics in the context of what appeared to be a looming honour killing. Although it is very unlikely that Showers was cognizant of all the particulars of the case, his representations indicate that he viewed cases involving women as especially dangerous and difficult to control. Yet his presentation of the 'facts' provides nothing to indicate how an honour dispute between the



Musianis and the Sasolis would escalate into a regional conflict. When tribal women came into the purview of Agency officials, they were perceived to be disruptive. In the figure of a widow on the loose, Showers could demonstrate the unpredictable volatility of tribal politics and the danger of inadequate staffing.

Showers asserted that, prior to this tour he had accepted Calcutta's rejection of a Native Assistant for Jhalawan, and resolved to carry on as best he could. However, his experiences in Jhalawan had led him to believe that he would be 'neglectful of the interests both of Government and of the Jhalawan people', if he failed to raise the question again. Showers's argument was augmented by a petition from virtually all the Jhalawan sardars and most of their Sarawan counterparts, requesting the appointment of a Native Officer for Jhalawan. Shortly after receiving these papers, Calcutta authorized the position, which in addition to containing instructions about the procedures for various types of disputes, specified that the NA Jhalawan was to pay special attention to internal relations of the Mengals. He was instructed to get to know the leading men and their relations with the sardar and with each other, with an eye towards better control of the tribe.<sup>27</sup>

By 1906, the Government of India had accepted the Agency's position and acknowledged that the Khan no longer had any authority in Kalat. His relations with the Sardars of Sarawan had deteriorated, largely due to British actions, and establishing an effective *jirga-levies* system in Jhalawan was proving to be difficult. Major H.L. Showers argued, that:

... our intervention as the guiding and controlling hand in Brahui affairs both in Sarawan and Jhalawan is the inevitable role of the supreme power in the country. We take the place in fact of the suzerain powers who preceded us. Viz., the Persians first and then the Durani rulers of Kandahar, with this difference that—being on the spot, while

they were at a distance—our control must of necessity be not general and intermittent but of a close, organized and continuous nature. We have no wish to take this responsibility on ourselves, but if we wish for good order and security in this important frontier region we have no option but to fill the administrative void we find existing. The old administrative system of the country, always of doubtful efficiency, has now completely broken down.<sup>28</sup>

For two generations the Raisani sardar had served as the middleman between the British officials and the Sardars of Sarawan. The loyalty of the Raisanis was acknowledged, and rewarded, in the AGG's decision regarding a land dispute between the Raisanis and the Panni Pushtuns.<sup>29</sup> The land in question bordered Sibi, part of British Baluchistan, and the Raisani holdings at Mithri, in Kachhi. The Panni claim was based on a seventeenth century document awarding the land as a *jagir* (land held on condition of military service) to the Pushtun Barazoi rulers of Sibi, while the Raisanis claimed that the land was theirs due to their conquest. The sardar said he had a *sanad* from the Khan in which he had agreed to a Raisani proposal to split the proceeds from this land. In 1895 this case came before the AGG. He decided that the case could not be settled on legal terms, and that the status of the land at the signing of the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879 would determine his decision. He rationalized his choice of this benchmark thus:

The fact that the Pannis were theoretically as well as practically, Afghan subjects, quasi hostile to England before the signing of this Gundamuck treaty, whereas the Raisanees were theoretically as well as practically Khelat subjects, and quasi allied to England at the time of that treaty, made it necessary to carefully guard against the slightest appearance of bad faith towards our allies, as having stronger claims on us than our enemies.



Any appropriation to our own use, of land 'de facto' occupied before our advent by the Raisanees, on the unfair plea that the land belonged 'de jure' to the English power as the political successor of the defunct Afghan authority in Sibi, which had been too weak to assert against the Raisanees, above the rights of its Panni subjects, would have been looked upon throughout Khelat as a breach of faith. I considered that petty financial advantages resulting from our ousting the Raisanees on such a plea, should not be weighed against our good name.

The financial advantage referred to was the land revenue, and had the AGG decided in favour of the Pannis, the land would have fallen to British Baluchistan. AGG Browne went on to draw a truly startling analogy to justify awarding the land to the Raisanis:

A. the Englishman, quarrels with B. the Afghan; and is assisted in despoiling him by C. (a Raisani Balooch child). Many years before A. came on the scene, C. had quarrelled with D (B.'s son) as to the ownership of a toy; and had appropriated it. B. had never interfered. If A. sixteen years after despoiling B., calls himself B.'s heir, and plunders C. of his toy on that plea, when it is obviously impossible to ascertain the rights and wrongs of the original quarrel over the toy between D and C, the latter would have every right to think himself illused by A. On this principle, I laid down that the 'status quo' at the time when the Afghan district of Sibi came into our hands . . . was to define the Panni and Raisanee limits.<sup>30</sup>

The analogy can be understood as a claim for the superiority of the British Empire vis-à-vis the Afghan kingdom. Child-like dependents may engage in trivial squabbles, and it is the responsibility of the paternal ruler to protect his dependents against the depredations of outsiders. Although the Afghan ruler of the area did not, the British did.

The Raisani sardar's influence over the other sardars of Sarawan, was based on his standing with the British, combined with his

personal political skills. In 1890, Sardar Asad Khan Raisani complained to Sandeman that the other Sarawan Sardars had objected that he was interfering with the governance of their tribes. His letter was a response to a letter sent to Sandeman by the Sardars discontended with Raisani's activities. Raisani asserted that he was simply following the customary practice that permitted a tribesman dissatisfied with his own sardar's decision to appeal his case to the Sardar of Sarawan. Raisani sought Sandeman's authorization of this practice, and if that was not forthcoming, he wanted to resign as the Sardar of Sarawan. Sandeman accepted that it was 'the bounden duty of the Sarawan chiefs to recognize the chief Sarawan Sardar as their tribal superior in accordance with the old custom of the country.'<sup>31</sup> While the offices of the Sardars of Sarawan and Jhalawan, both predated the British presence, it is highly unlikely that they involved the degree of authority that Raisani claimed for their position. In response to Raisani's complaint, Sandeman devised new procedures for appeals. Contested decisions would move from the sardars of the disputing parties to Raisani, who should consult with the Sarawan sardars, but if they were unable to resolve the dispute, it would be referred to the British Authorities. Sandeman ended his proposal with the caveat that it was subject to approval by Calcutta.

There is no record of the final disposition of the proposal. If Sandeman did submit it to Calcutta, it was probably denied on the same grounds as Calcutta's earlier denial of a similar proposal by Sandeman in response to the Khan's inquiry as appeals procedures that ignored the Khan, entirely, as the latter proposal did, would surely have been unacceptable to Calcutta.

Although Sandeman's support of Raisani as the ranking sardar in Sarawan, probably diminished opposition for a time, Sandeman's death in 1892, along with a series of official decisions in the late



1890s, damaged Raisani's influence. He lost an important land-case in Eri (Kachhi) to the Shawanis. A more serious setback occurred when the British intervened in a longstanding internal dispute between the Raisani *sardarkhel* and the dissident Rustomzai *tabbar* (section), in which the Rustomzais fled to Afghanistan. The death of Sardar Asad Khan Raisani in 1894, further unsettled the tribal politics in Sarawan and the British further exacerbated the situation, when in 1896, they allowed the Rustomzais to return under their protection. Over strong objections from the new, young Raisani sardar, they were allowed to separate from the Raisanis and were granted a seat in the *darbar*. As part of the settlement enforced by the British, the Raisanis were made to leave their summer headquarters in Kanak for a number of years (GOB Sarawan: 54).

In 1897, Mehrulla Khan Raisani, serving as the regent for the minor Raisani sardar, was suspected of disloyalty in connection with the raids in and around Quetta that had resulted in several deaths. Agency officials were concerned with what they perceived as a rising unrest, in Quetta's environs. Mehrulla Khan and the Kurd sardar were briefly imprisoned following which they fled to Afghanistan. As Showers later noted, British suspicions were probably unfounded, but Agency intervention in tribal affairs, especially in the Rustomzai affair, which was an internal dispute, undermined Raisani's authority and indeed the authority of all sardars:

The [Raisani] Sirdar's authority over his fellow chiefs has all but disappeared and with some of them he is actually at feud. And with the practical disappearance of a common head who held the Sarawan Brahuis together there has come, not as might at first be supposed, a strengthening of the position of the other chiefs, but a weakening of their authority with their respective tribesmen. All the larger tribes are subdivided into powerful groups the heads of which in the absence of

superior force or other restraining influence are ever ready to act in independence of, if not in opposition to, the tribal chiefs.<sup>32</sup>

Showers associated a decline in the Raisani authority with a general weakening of the sardari authority in Sarawan. This recalls the fluid nature of the pre-colonial tribal formations. The Raisanis had cast their lot with the colonial administration, and any sign of British disfavour, such as the Rustomzai problem, would have fueled competitive leadership within the tribes and among the sardars. Tribespeople, as collective actors, are absent from Showers' analysis, but the lack of stable hierarchies within the tribes, opened a space for negotiations between the aspiring lower-level leaders and lineage-based notables.

In the years between the accession of Mahmud Khan and the First World War, Agency officials devoted considerable effort to establishing order in Jhalawan. The Sandeman system of collective responsibility, administered through the twin institutions of the *jirga* and the levies, had been 'reasonably effective in Sarawan, Kachhi and British Baluchistan, where it was buttressed by civil and military settlements. Extending the *jirga*-levies system to the less accessible regions of Kalat, however, proved to be more difficult, because the Jhalawan tribes were much larger than their Sarawan counterparts. The Zehri and Mengal tribes were essentially mini-confederations, and the sardars were frequently challenged by section leaders seeking to fission and become sardars themselves. In the late nineteenth century, the Zehri and Mengal tribes were particularly unstable, as Khodadad Khan had the sardars of both tribes killed. British interventions and prolonged succession struggles within each tribe, had further destabilized tribal relations in Jhalawan. Whenever hostilities threatened to explode into intra-tribal violence, Agency officials convened a *jirga* to settle the source of the dispute. A resolution, sponsored by the



British and based on the *jirga's* recommendations, often lasted only as long as the officials remained in the area, and hostilities frequently broke out again when they departed.

Taj Mohammad Zarakzai, the Zehri sardar, was murdered in 1867 while a prisoner of the Khan. He had no surviving sons or brothers. When the Baluchistan Agency was established, Gauhar Khan, an aspirant from a distant collateral line, had claimed the Zehri sardanship and was embroiled in disputes within the tribe and with other Jhalawan sardars. Sandeman made several attempts at settling the affairs of the Zehris without success. In 1886, he detained Gauhar Khan and convened a *jirga* to consider various complaints against him. The *jirga* recommended that Abdul Karim, Gauhar Khan's cousin, who was also his brother-in-law, be placed in-charge of Zehri affairs, but the members declined to consider formally deposing Gauhar as they considered this to be an internal Zehri issue.

Internal conflicts devastated Zehri territory, and many villages were abandoned. Abdul Karim was able to establish a degree of security and encouraged people to return to their villages. He also restored much of the land and property looted by Gauhar Khan. In 1889, Sandeman asked the Sibi *Shahi Jirga* to consider the appointment of Gauhar's minor son, Yusef Khan, as the sardar of the Zehris. Many sardars favoured appointing Abdul Karim, but he declined the office, and Yusef Khan was installed instead (Todd 1925: 7). A year later, Sandeman released Gauhar Khan to serve as the regent for his son.

When Khodadad Khan was removed from office in 1893, Gauhar Khan became openly rebellious. Together with his brother, Pasand Khan, Gauhar plundered the Khan's granaries in Kotru. Gauhar was also reported to be organizing a *jihad* in support of the deposed

Khan. When Pasand's forces captured a large flock of the Khan's sheep, Mir Mahmud Khan was finally persuaded to dispatch his troops. Sardar Yusef Khan, who was studying in Aligarh, India, wrote to his father, advising him to end his campaign, but Gauhar ignored his son's advice. The AGG requested permission to send the PA Kalat to Nurgama (Jhalawan) to assess the stand-off between Gauhar's and the Khan's troops, but the Government of India was at first reluctant to sanction this action on the grounds that it would be seen as British intervention in the internal politics of Kalat State. Calcutta was persuaded to reverse their position, but cautioned the PA to avoid any appearance of taking sides in the conflict. The presence of the PA led to the defection of many of Gauhar's followers, but he escaped capture because the Khan's troops also deserted (Todd, 1926: 8).

In 1894, Gauhar Khan alienated Pasand by refusing to marry Yusef Khan to his brother's candidate. Although this rift diminished his following, Gauhar continued to attack and loot villages in Jhalawan, resulting in the deaths of several notables. Security concerns led the PA to close the local levy-post and move the staff out of the area. Pasand Khan allied with the British and made an unsuccessful effort to capture his brother. In 1895, a *Sardari Jirga*, which was convened to consider the problem, recommended appointing Pasand Khan as the sardar, but again declined to cooperate in capturing Gauhar, reiterating that this was an internal matter for the Zehri tribe. Under threat of losing their subsidies, the Jhalawan sardars provided a small *lashkar* to supplement the Khan's militia. Led by Pasand Khan, this combined force attacked and killed Gauhar Khan in 1895 (Todd, 1926: 11–13).



### SUCCESSION CONFLICTS AMONG THE MENGALS

With Gauhar Khan's death, conflict among the different sections of the Zehri declined for a time, and the British were able to turn their attention to the persistent problem of raids by the Mengals in Sindh and Lasbela. The Bombay Government had been trying to suppress Mengal raiding on the Sindh border since the 1850s, when the Commissioner of Sindh unilaterally marked a border in order to distinguish British subjects of Sindh from those of Kalat State. In the 1880s, Sindh authorities wanted the right to enter Kalat to capture the raiders, and they wanted the Khan held responsible for damages. The Government of India, forced to referee the conflicting proposals from the AGG and Bombay, sided with the former. They held to the principle of collective tribal responsibility by sanctioning the Agency's proposal to control raiding by increasing the number of levy-posts along the border. This, however, proved ineffective, and the border disputes escalated with a rising death toll. The British juggled allowances, reducing them for uncooperative sardars and increasing the subsidies of the loyal ones, but without much effect.

The protracted crisis of leadership among the Mengals tested British patience, as it indicated the limits of the *jirga*-levies system in the context of chronic internal factionalism. Legitimacy in the tribal sector was continually in play, as it was a consequence of sardari performance. When the British attempted to resolve the problem of Mengal succession through the *jirga*, they subordinated performance to a judicial process. The failure of successive *jirgas* to devise a successful resolution to the problem called the legitimacy of the *jirga* into question and encouraged the rapid formation of behind-the-scenes alliances. Sardars with no direct interest in the succession used it to pursue their own agendas, contributing to the high velocity of alliance and defection.

The sources of Mengal factionalism were located in tensions between the senior and the junior lines in the *sardarkhel*. There was a revenue dispute between, Sardar Shakar Khan, and his uncle, Ibrahim Khan, leader of the junior line. Ibrahim had served as a regent for Shakar in the latter's minority, and the revenue dispute may have originated during that time. The British brought the case before a *jirga* in 1897, but the *jirga's* recommendation did not resolve the tensions between the Shakar and the Ibrahim factions. PA Showers met Sardar Shakar Khan Mengal in 1902 and reported that the sardar asked to resign in favour of his twelve-year old son, then a student at Aligarh College in India. Showers agreed to raise the question at the next *Shahi Jirga*.<sup>33</sup>

The decline of Shakar's internal authority was manifest when PA Showers travelled to Wad (Jhalawan) in 1903. The Mengals, cultivating the Khan's land in the Khozdar *niabet*, refused to provide camels to the *naib* for use by the PA's party.<sup>34</sup> The *naib's* troops attacked the Mengals, and wounded several persons, including some women. When the Mengals threatened to attack Wad, the *naib* appealed to the British for support. Mir Mahmud Khan declined to send troops to aid his *naib*. The Mengal *lashkar* looted eight of the Khan's villages in Khozdar. A *jirga*, convened to resolve the conflict, determined that there were two cases of blood compensation against the Khan: a man who died of his injuries, and a baby who died from malnutrition consequent on the wounding of its mother. The property damages suffered by the villagers were judged to balance out the blood compensation.

Sardar Shakar Khan had removed himself from the Khozdar dispute by going to Lasbela. Displeased with Shakar's absence, the British raised the question of tribal management at the *jirga*, but the participants declined to remove Shakar from office and recommended appointing his cousin Wali Muhammad (Ibrahim Khan's son) as his



*vakil* (representative), with authority to represent the tribe. There was, however, considerable opposition to Wali Muhammad within the tribe which the British attempted to negate by emphasizing their support for him. They transferred a hundred rupees of the sardar's subsidy from Shakar to Wali Muhammad and, additionally, allowed the *vakil* to collect the tribal revenue, as well, but this failed to quell the internal hostilities. By 1905, there was growing opposition to Wali Muhammad collecting the *malia* (dues from tribesmen). In the following year the conflict expanded into raiding on the Lasbela border. Wali Muhammad was increasingly resistant to British advice. The Zehri sardar, Pasand Khan, joined by several other Jhalawani sardars, asked PA Showers to dismiss Wali Muhammad and reinstate Shakar Khan. Showers, was, however, not pleased with Pasand Khan's intrusion into Mengal affairs. Under British pressure, the *vakil* was reconciled with the Jam, but relations soon soured as Mengal tribesmen grazed their flocks in pastures the Jam claimed for Lasbela. Sporadic violence on the unmarked border escalated when Mengals from Wad joined their brothers on the border. Accumulating fatalities and some caravan raiding led the British to convene another *jirga* in 1907, to assess damages and set fines. This time the participants decided, after the deductions of various claims and counterclaims, that the Mengals owed Rs585-8 (annas) to the Jamots for deaths and injuries. A no-man's land was established to separate the Mengals and the Jamots. The *jirga* recommended the removal of Wali Muhammad and the reinstatement of Shakar Khan.

Major R.A.E. Benn, who replaced Showers as the PA Kalat in 1907, was embarrassed when Shakar Khan failed to appear for his installation ceremony. Benn called a *jirga* that recommended transferring the sardarship to Shakar's son Allahdina. Before the AGG could act on this, Shakar Khan joined the PA's camp and petitioned to resume the office. He was allowed to resume the

sardarship, but was placed on probation. A *thana* (levy-post) was established at Wad, and Allahdina was given charge of it. Probation did not elicit a cooperative stance from Shakar and his son, and, if anything, their actions were more confrontational than before. Shakar again failed to appear for *jirgas* and would not assist the NA Jhalawan in settling the Mengals' disputes either. He also failed to remit payments on the blood compensation awarded to the Jamots. Shakar appears to have engaged in tactics reminiscent of Mir Mahmud Khan's refusal to rule. It is likely that the sardar was getting advice from the Khan, who had taken an interest in Mengal affairs. Both Shakar and Allahdina contracted controversial marriages. The sardar contracted a second marriage with a woman from an undistinguished Mengal family and this offended Lasbela's ruler, whose sister was Shakar's first wife. Allahdina also disgraced his family by illegally marrying a woman who was already married to one of the Khan's *naibs*. Furthermore, Allahdina deserted his post at Wad.

Yet another *jirga* was convened, this time at Kalat town. As with all the important tribal cases, the British undertook to ensure the presence of the major sardars of Sarawan and virtually all of the sardars from Jhalawan, as well. After much discussion, they supported a British proposal to remove Shakar Khan and install his uncle, Ibrahim Khan, as the Sardar, and to move Shakar and his son to Quetta. This involved a shift from the senior to the junior line in the *sardarkhel*. It was also the first time that a sardar was to be removed for incompetence, and *jirga* members emphasized that this was not to be taken as a precedent. Shortly after the *jirga's* recommendation, a dissident Mengal faction began to agitate for the return and reinstatement of Shakar Khan as the Mengal Sardar.



Ibrahim was too old to journey to Kalat for the installation, so the *khillat* (investiture award) was taken to Wad by a deputation of sardars. There were indications that the support for the new sardar was not as strong as the *jirga* deliberations had suggested, as several of the sardars abandoned the party escorting the *khillat* to Wad. Alladina escaped the escort taking him and his father to Quetta, but was captured before he reached Wad, where his supporters had gathered. There were desertions at the Wad *thana*-post. A party of Jamots from Lasbela murdered a Mengal levy-man and mutilated his body. This killing escalated the hostilities as relatives of the murdered man collected a following to avenge the outrage. The Jam, who saw himself as the target of the avengers, requested troops from Karachi to protect Lasbela, even offering to reimburse the British for the cost of the action. The Khan took note of the chaotic situation in Jhalawan. He was reported to have pointed out that removing Shakar Khan for incompetence had put all the sardars at potential risk. Even the Nausherwani sardar was drawn into the fray when some Mengals sought his mediation. In August 1908, the British finally responded to the Jam's entreaties by dispatching three detachments of Imperial troops from Karachi, one going to Lasbela, while the others proceeded to Kalat. The troops were sent as a show of force and as a last resort if factional alliances, for any reason, coalesced into rebellion. The British were reluctant to employ Imperial troops against insurgents as fatalities on either side would have escalated matters further.

British intelligence indicated that Ibrahim Khan had the support of a majority of prominent *takkris* (section heads). Agency officials undertook two campaigns of intense persuasion, one with the recalcitrant Khan and the other with the sardars, who were pressured to enlist a tribal *lashkar* in support of Ibrahim Khan. The Khan resisted at first and his unwillingness to endorse the British effort was manifested in his refusal to provide troops and to

disallow his brother to accompany the PA's camp. He claimed that only the release of Shakar Khan and his son could restore order in Jhalawan. The Khan was finally persuaded to send letters to the insurgents urging them to support Ibrahim Khan. The sardars eventually turned out a *lashkar* of about 1,000 men. Accompanied by 500 Imperial riflemen, the PA's party proceeded to Wad to install Ibrahim Khan as the Mengal sardar. Under this show of force, the dissidents came in and a second reconciliation was negotiated. Ibrahim Khan Mengal was finally installed as the sardar, and the troops were withdrawn. The Khan's apparent disloyalty was excused because as far as it is:

possible to analyse a nebulous nature, such as the Khan's, it is pleasant to report that he is not naturally ill-disposed towards us. He has, however, an impish sense of mischief which prompts him whenever easy opportunity offers to do so without expenditure of energy or money, to interfere in the execution of a project not necessarily to benefit his own interests, but merely to have the pleasure of disappointing the promoters of it, whoever they might be.<sup>35</sup>

In this official report, Mir Mahmud is deprived of rational agency. PA Benn had acknowledged the Khan's refusal to provide troops to the British, as it was a matter of record. Benn also noted Mir Mahmud's support of the dissidents. Despite the evidence that Mahmud Khan was engaged in deliberate political activity, the AGG represented his actions as feckless and apolitical, the consequence of his immature desire to make mischief. The AGG's paternal magnanimity was likely the result of his judgment that it would be unwise to risk further tribal unrest by sanctioning the Khan for his disloyalty.

Given the persuasion required to implement the *jirga* decision, it is not surprising that the reconciliations arranged at Ibrahim Khan's installation began to unravel within months. In an effort to



produce permanent peace in Jhalawan, the AGG pressed Calcutta for construction of roads in the region and proposed the establishment of a levy-corps of 524 men with a transport corps of 200 camels, and all of it to be under the command of a British officer. The AGG argued that this establishment should be funded by the Khan, partly from estate revenues, which had increased under British oversight, and partly through savings resulting from the reduced number of the Khan's troops. Alternatively, the AGG suggested that the improvements might be funded by charging Mahmud Khan for the cost of the campaign against the Mengals, which the AGG estimated at Rs105,000 (25,000 civil, 80,000 military). The AGG also supported the PA's proposal to redistribute the sardari subsidies, increasing them for cooperative sardars and reducing them for dissidents.

In arguing that the Khan should pay the costs of the Jhalawan campaign, the AGG assumed a righteous tone. The British received no revenue from Kalat State and should not, therefore, have to bear the costs of troop deployment. The Khan, on the other hand, had a large income and should 'either administer the country himself, or pay an adequate share of the cost of its administration and of such reforms and improvements as the growing needs of the country might from time to time demand' (Todd, 1926: 54). Mir Mahmud Khan had refused any assistance during the troubles in Jhalawan, and the British were justified in demanding that he pay the costs. In order to strengthen the British position in Jhalawan, the AGG proposed constructing a road from Kalat town to Wad and establishing a local levy-corps, to enhance the authority of the NA Jhalawan. He suggested that these charges, along with some additional road repairs, should be funded by the Khan, perhaps from the cost of the Mengal campaign.

As the Government of India took the proposals under consideration, several sections of the Mengals again refused to acknowledge the new sardar. By 1910, Ibrahim Khan, already well along in years when he was installed, was ill, and his son was acting for him. Both father and son asked the British to formally acknowledge the reality by appointing Wali Muhammad as sardar. The transfer was accomplished in a modest ceremony, with the NA Jhalawan officiating. Wali Muhammad had been opposed by some Mengal *takkris* in the past, and with his appointment, internal factionalism intensified, and disputes about the payment of the *malia* (dues) continued unabated. The British wanted the sardar to capture Nur Muhammad, a rebellious *takkri*, who had attacked two levy-posts. At one he had wounded a levymen, and at the other he had destroyed the census records. In addition he had also looted several shops belonging to Hindus.

The new sardar professed ignorance of Nur's whereabouts, despite receiving visits from him. Wali Muhammad claimed that Nur was allied with Alam Khan, a *thanedar* (head of a levy post) at Saruna, who had been intriguing against the British for years. The sardar asserted that this alliance was too powerful for him to take action. The PA concluded that he, too, lacked the means to remove Alam Khan from his levy-position without the support of the Mengal sardar. Benn again urged consideration of the Jhalawan levies corps. Failing that, the PA proposed a joint Sarawan-Jhalawan force of a hundred men to proceed to Wad and remain there until the 'malcontents' had presented themselves. Benn succeeded in obtaining the support for a *lashkar* from all the major Jhalawan sardars. Shortly after the combined force reached Wad, a quarrel broke out between Khan Muhammad, who was representing his father, Sardar Pasand Khan (Zehri), and the Mengal sardar, as a result of which roughly half the Jhalawan contingent left Wad with Khan Muhammad. A petition signed by some Mengal *takkris*



requested the removal of Wali Muhammad and the NA Jhalawan, whom they alleged had favoured the Mengal sardar.

The British were in a bind as repeated *jirgas* had failed to quell the disturbances. The NA was ineffective, and all the British could do was to advise him against making indiscriminate arrests. The AGG professed that he could not understand the source of the 'semi-rebellion'. In fact, there had been several indications that the detention of Shakar Khan and Alladina in Quetta was viewed as them being under arrest, and this was fueling at least part of the uprising. Sardar Pasand Khan claimed his son was out of control and cautioned the NA to return to Khozdar for his own safety.

In the meantime, Khan Muhammad petitioned the PA with the following demands:

1. Release of Shakar Khan and Alladina.
2. Appointment of Alladina as the sardar of the Mengals.
3. Detention of Wali Muhammad.
4. Appointment of Habibullah as the sardar of the Nausherwanis.

The petition is interesting because Khan Muhammad's demands for the sardari appointments in two tribes, one of them not even in Jhalawan, are appropriate to the ranking sardar of Jhalawan, but not his son. It is difficult to imagine Khan Muhammad sending this document without the covert support of his father. Pasand had taken harsh measures against internal Zehri challengers in the past, and it is unlikely that he could not control his son. The request to protect Habibullah, the young Nausherwani sardar, seems to have come straight from Pasand, who had introjected himself into the Kharan succession process.

In May 1912, the AGG convened a meeting of the sardars of Jhalawan to discuss their grievances. The sardars surely would have recognized a meeting with the AGG to be an unusual occurrence. Their dealings were normally with the PA and his staff. The AGG presided over only the most important ceremonial occasions like the installation of a major sardar or the annual Sibi Fair. Sardars' various efforts to override the British official hierarchy were uniformly unsuccessful. Petitions to AGG or Calcutta were never acted upon and often not even acknowledged, and they were simply passed back down the ladder, Calcutta to the AGG, the AGG to the PA.

The sardars presented ten requests to the AGG. Although these ranged from a sardari appointment to a rearrangement of seating at *darbars*, most of them involved working conditions and compensation. The sardars wanted to end the practice of having levies' salaries and debts to shopkeepers deducted from their subsidies, and they also wanted the British to pay *roza* (maintenance) when they were asked to provide the *lashkars*. They asked that the number of *jirgas* be reduced. Additionally, they wanted an end to the assignment of non-local tribesmen to the levy-posts, and to the detention of women accused of adultery, in the levy-posts. Further they wanted the NA to treat them with deferential behaviour, by not being seated on a chair when they were seated on the ground, and that he should dismount his horse when they approached him.

The AGG responded to the levy-deduction request by saying that levies varied from post to post and asked each sardar to submit his individual report. He agreed that there should be no lien on sardars' subsidies for debts to *baniyas* (shopkeepers, moneylenders), although he reserved the right of the PA to submit in writing a request for such deductions. As to maintenance of *lashkars* in the field, the



AGG determined that when a *lashkar* was serving outside its tribal territory, the British would assume its maintenance. Maintenance for *lashkars* in their own territories would be decided on a case-by-case basis. Although he acknowledged that frequent *jirgas* were inconvenient for the sardars, the AGG pointed out that if the sardars could settle more cases among themselves, there would be fewer *jirgas*. The AGG asserted that the levy-men were normally assigned to their home areas, but he retained the right to assign men alien to the region to a levy-post. The AGG agreed that the NA should treat the sardars with respect, but indicated that such respect should be mutual. He ignored the deferential tribal etiquette proposed by the sardars. As to the objection about women held in the levy-posts, the AGG said a woman who fled to a post was entitled to protection until a *jirga* could hear the case. He allowed that such women could also obtain protection from sardars willing to give security for their safety. The AGG declined to consider a change in the *darbar's* seating, as it would mean changing a longstanding tradition.

It is interesting to compare these requests with the ones advanced by Khan Muhammad, some months earlier. His earlier list was exclusively concerned with tribal politics, while his later list was focused on colonial administration. There is no evidence to suggest that these requests played any significant role in the Jhalawan uprisings, although they were surely annoyances to many of the sardars. It appears that the sardars took the chance to present their grievances to the AGG to bargain for concessions as members of the colonial government. This suggests that the sardars acknowledged the reality of the colonial government, but it did not mean that they accepted its legitimacy. The inability to stabilize the Mengal leadership through the *jirga* revealed the contradiction of the Kalat paramountcy. Indirect rule in the absence of a ruler, opened a space where the sardars could challenge colonial authority by participating

in a deliberative process, whose recommendations they then ignored.

With few options, and the hope that the AGG's meeting with the sardars had defused the Jhalawan situation, the British reinstalled Shakar Khan as the sardar of the Mengals in 1912. Shakar Khan's return, however, did not bring peace to the Mengals, because if anything, disorder increased. Shops were more frequently pillaged, and more levy-posts were deserted. While the PA Kalat could not obtain reliable intelligence about internal dissension, the NA Jhalawan was, in turn, also overwhelmed. He convened a *jirga* that informed him that plotters in Sasol village were planning an attack on his camp, so the sardars advised the NA to strike first. A *lashkar* attacked Sasol, robbing some shops and houses. Two men were killed, and one was wounded. A *jirga* convened to consider the Sasol question blamed the attack on the NA and recommended that the British government pay compensation. The sardars decided that the NA Jhalawan bore the sole responsibility and assessed Rs5,620 against the Agency. The PA Kalat reluctantly accepted the recommendation, but reduced the compensation to Rs4,215, on grounds that the Sasolis had been insubordinate when they fired on the *lashkar* (Todd, 1926: 63). The British paid, perhaps, partly, as an acknowledgement that their effort to replace Shakar Khan had been a failure, and partly because they saw no viable alternative to *jirga*-levy governance despite its manifest shortcomings in Jhalawan.

With regard to the Khan's meddling in tribal affairs, the British found themselves in a difficult position. They wished to punish him by charging the cost of the military expedition associated with the removal of Shakar Khan to him, but Shakar was returned to the sardarship before the Government of India had acted on this proposal. The AGG explained:



... if existing orders are enforced, it will be my duty in due course to invite His Highness to give his formal recognition to the reinstatement of Sardar Shakar Khan, and, at approximately the same time, to invite His Highness to pay the cost of deposing Shakar Khan with the aid of a military force ... If it will seem the reverse of equitable to His Highness to be called upon to pay for the consequences of action initiated by us and against his real wishes, it will seem to him to be doubly inequitable to make the demand for the first time four years after ... and just when events appear to have proved that he was in the right and that we were in the wrong.<sup>36</sup>

This as close as the Agency's officials got to irony. British reports remained bureaucratically straight-faced throughout the lengthy series of unsuccessful *jirgas* and the subsequent repudiation of their decisions. In this instance the Government of India saw the problem and agreed to absorb the military costs.

Over the years, the British became deeply committed to tribal governance, and the doggedness with which they convened one *jirga* after another, attests to this. The sardars were more wary participants in the *jirga* process. However, they, too, came to see the *jirga* as an arena where they could defend internal tribal affairs from *jirga* deliberations and consequent interference, and even refuse to consider cases on occasion. Sarawan and Jhalawan sardars appear to have developed different tactics for dealing with the *jirga*. Sarawan sardars generally collaborated with the Agency's officials, and they appeared to have settled most of the inter-tribal disputes themselves. They exercised a degree of control by determining the disposition of conflicts. This was largely successful because they administered smaller tribes with fewer internal challenges. The suppression of raiding opened the formerly insecure lands to cultivation, benefiting both the sardars and the tribespeople. A commitment to cultivation, even on a transhumant basis, produced

new tribal followers whose sharecropping tenancies contributed to sardari income.

Collaboration was not an option for Jhalawan's sardars as they were faced with greater challenges within their larger tribal formations. As officials convened one *jirga* after another in the succession disputes, these sardars tested the possibilities of ignoring or repudiating the decisions they had supported in the *jirga*. For example, in the Sasol case, the British believed that the NA had been manipulated with false intelligence which encouraged him to mount a pre-emptive attack. Using such a tactic the sardars had taken control of the process, so when the PA convened a *jirga* to assess responsibility for the losses connected with the attack, the sardars judged the NA to be responsible and recommended compensation to be paid by the government. The shortcomings of the *jirga* troubled officials both in Quetta and Calcutta, and the Agency officials began to evolve the reform proposals, which are discussed in Chapter 8.

#### Notes

1. FCR is a law-code, originally developed by the British to administer the tribal areas. It was based on custom, and it emphasized collective responsibility and deliberation by tribal chiefs and elders. FCR is in effect today only in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). However, aspects of FCR persist in much of Pakistan. FCR is passionately criticized by many Pakistani lawyers and officials who argue that it violates both the constitution and basic human rights.
2. Letters AGG to Foreign, 22 April 1891 and 2 January 1892, SAHSA, Sec. 19, File M-19, Basta 1.
3. Letter AGG to Foreign, 4 July 1900, HSA, Sec. 1, File M-1, Basta 1.
4. Extracts from letter AGG to PA Kalat, 1 August 1900, in Collection of Papers Regarding Jurisdiction in Kalat State, HSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 5.
5. Note, AGG, 7 January 1898, in Collection of Papers Regarding Jurisdiction in Kalat State, HSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 5.



6. Record of the Proceeding Against His Late Highness, the Khan of Kalat, 166-7 (henceforth Proceeding), Commissioner of Quetta Division Archives (COQDA).
7. This case is discussed in Major Showers's report of his 1903 Jhalawan tour, Showers Family Papers, Box 4, CSAS.
8. The following account is drawn from a letter, AGG to Foreign, 24 January 1896, HSA, Sec. 4, File M-4, Basta 2.
9. AGG to Foreign, 24 January 1896, has, Sec. 4, File M-4, Basta 2.
10. Letter AGG to Foreign, 3 August 1883, HSA, Sec. 10, File M-10, Basta 1.
11. Letter PA Kalat to AGG, 21 August 1885, HSA, Sec. 3, File M-3, Basta 2.
12. Agency officials used 'ghazi' and 'fanatic' interchangeably to refer to men whose offences fell under the Act. This was a colonial appropriation of *ghazi*, which is more accurately glossed as a warrior of God, or a fighter against infidels.
13. Letter Foreign to AGG, 12 July 1895, HSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 5.
14. Agency's officials used Article 5 of the Treaty as the basis for their right to adjudicate inter-tribal affairs. 'It is hereby agreed that should any dispute calculated to disturb the peace of the country, arise hereafter between the Khan and the Sirdars of Khelat, the British Agent at the Court of his Highness shall in the first place use his good offices with both parties to effect by friendly advice an amicable arrangement between them, failing which the Khan will, with the consent of the British Government, submit such dispute to its arbitration, and accept and faithfully execute its award.' The full text of the Treaty can be found in Aitchison, XI: 215-17.
15. See PP, Bal. No. 2, pp. 271-2, for the text of Sandeman's proposal.
16. AGG to Foreign, 3 August 1883, HSA, Sec. 10, File M-10, Basta 1.
17. AGG to Foreign, 10 April 1884, HSA, Sec. 2, File M-2, Basta 2.
18. Memo, PA Kalat, August 1889, SAHSA, Sec. 7, File 24, Basta 3.
19. Even in the 1960s, men of Sharna village cultivating land as contractual subjects, would make a deferential visit to their genealogical sardar in Jhalawan, whenever they were in his vicinity. A nominal gift of several rupees would be offered to him.
20. Memo, PA Kalat, August 1889, SAHSA, Sec. 7, File 24, Basta 3.
21. AGG to Foreign, 4 July 1900, SAHSA, Sec. 1, File M-1, Basta 11.
22. Constructing the railroad through the Bolan Pass produced particular administrative costs. The British imported labour from India for this project. The influx of workers led to a rise in civil and criminal cases. Collection of shop-taxes and general maintenance were problems in the newly-established bazaars. Calcutta authorized a Native Assistant for Bolan to deal with these

- problems. By 1898, the railway was completed, the labourers had departed, and the Bolan Pass was relatively peaceful.
23. The Khan's Fund comprised the interest from Kalat's Treasury's investments. It is discussed in Chapter 6.
24. The following account is drawn from Showers' Report, 28 May 1903, CSAS, Showers Family Papers, Box 4.
25. Medical Officers did not normally go on such tours. Showers judged his presence to be a successful experiment, as the Officer treated 552 persons over the course of the trip.
26. Showers' Jhalawan Report, p. 9, CSAS, Showers Family Papers, Box 4.
27. Foreign to AGG, 31 October 1904, HSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 5.
28. The Pannis are classified as Baloch in the File.
29. Executive Order, AGG, 27 June 1895, HSA, Sec. 13, File 20, Basta 1.
30. Procedure laid down by Sir Robert Sandeman, 25 August 1890, SHSA, Sec. 5, File 74, Basta 5.
31. A Note by Major H.L. Showers, pp. 15-16, HSA Sec. 6, File 222, Basta 6.
32. PA Kalat to AGG, 28 May 1903, CSAS, Showers Family Papers, Box 4.
33. The following lengthy narrative of the Mengals' succession problems was constructed from HSA, Sec. 1, File I, Basta 20 and Todd 1926: 24-5, 34-56.
34. AGG to Foreign, 20 May 1909, HSA, Sec. 1, File I, Basta 20.
35. AGG to Foreign, 3 August 1912, HSA, Sec. 1, File 1, Basta 20.



## 7

### The Averted Gaze

The intercultural arena created through the interactions of colonial and tribal hierarchies was profoundly masculine and elitist. Slaves and women were excluded from the process, and even ordinary tribesmen had very limited access to it. Once colonial control was established in Kalat, Calcutta's primary interest shifted to low-cost maintenance and protecting the fiction of an Ahmadzai-ruled Kalat State. Agency officials were charged with implementing these concerns through managerial means, with the permanent presence of the British military as a backup. British policies discouraged participation of ordinary tribesmen in the economic and political opportunities created by colonialism. Manual labour for the construction of the railroads was recruited from Imperial India, as were the lower administrative ranks. The growth of the Quetta market attracted outside contractors and artisans. Agency officials maintained a deliberate segregation of persons subject to tribal custom from those who were subjects of British India. This distanced the tribespeople, who were subjects of a native state, from the attention of reformist organizations in Britain. Despite their occasionally differing agendas, officials at all levels were united in their desire to avoid such attention.

Slavery and women were major sites of cultural difference in late nineteenth-century Britain. Abolition was a signifier of civilized progress and it marked Europe as enlightened in contrast to much of the Middle East and Asia. Where slavery persisted in the

colonized regions, it was implicated in a discourse that distinguished 'oriental' forms of slavery from slavery in the Americas. It is often asserted that the former was not as harshly oppressive as the plantation slavery of the New World (e.g. Lewis 1990: 101). Domestic slavery was often described as sumptuary and uneconomic (Caplan 1980: 176).

Slaves and women had considerable disruptive potential in Baluchistan. Agency officials viewed tribal disputes involving women as especially dangerous. They believed that such disputes incited rash and impetuous action that could easily escalate into violence, too difficult for them to control. PA Showers reflected this concern when he noted that the most important case he settled in Jhalawan in 1903, was that of the runaway widow who rejected the remarriage arranged by her family.

Agency anxieties about slavery were related to political sensitivities in London. Any publicity dealing with the mistreatment or trafficking of slaves would surely have elicited questions in Parliament. The difficulties, discussed earlier, associated with the Quetta *chakla* (brothel), is an instance of the ability of British reform movements to impact colonial practices. Agency officials concerned about preventing such metropolitan intrusions, engaged in their own form of *purdah*. The practice of female seclusion facilitated this maneuver, and enabled them to blur the difference in status between a slave and a wife. Although their differing status was perfectly clear to the tribespeople, Agency officials, engaged in a refusal of locals' knowledge.

By the time the Baluchistan Agency was established in 1877, the British had suppressed most of the slave trade in the Persian Gulf. However, it was difficult for the British to control the trade in the trans-border region of Kalat, Afghanistan and Iran, because here it



was small-scale and decentralized. Captured persons could be easily transported across borders and jurisdictions. Most of the slaves were native-born by this time, the descendants of people brought to the area prior to the Agency. Fragmentary evidence suggests that most of the late nineteenth-century local trade consisted of captured and kidnapped persons and women, sold by relatives.

The British-Afghan Wars and the permanent stationing of troops in Baluchistan stimulated a regional demand for European guns. British efforts to suppress the gun-trade drove the trade underground, where it became linked to the illicit slave-trade. A 1903 report from Iranian Baluchistan, noted a rise in slaves from Makran sold across the border. In one instance, a slave-owner in Iran sold forty-nine captive slaves. Calcutta asked the AGG to investigate. The PA Kalat denied that trans-border slave-trafficking existed, but as he had accepted the word of the Khan's local representative, his denial was dubious.<sup>1</sup> However, by 1922, the PA Kalat had acknowledged a rise in trans-border trafficking in slaves, associated with the arms trade.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of slavery arose shortly before the founding of the Baluchistan Agency. In 1876, a group of some 170 slaves from the southern province of Makran, escaped to Gwadar, a coastal port held by Oman.<sup>3</sup> Since a 1873 treaty between the British Government and the Sultanate of Oman, forbade the Sultan from surrendering the fugitive slaves, their owners retaliated by raiding and burning a local telegraph post, cutting the telegraph line, and kidnapping a native employee of the Telegraph Department. Most of the stolen property was eventually returned, and the employee was also released unharmed.

When Robert Sandeman became the AGG in 1877, he mediated the dispute, advocating leniency for the raiders. In reporting the case to the Government of India, Sandeman argued:

Domestic slavery is a time-honoured institution in Baluchistan . . . many of the ideas attaching to the word 'slavery', which are so repellent to civilized minds are absent from the manners of the Biluch tribes. The condition of the slaves approaches more nearly that of the serfs in Russia before their emancipation. . . . They are, generally speaking, treated kindly (*sic*), and as members of the family to which they belong. . . . I need hardly say that I have no desire whatever to defend even this modified form of slavery. I merely wish to remove any false impressions which might arise from the use of the word. A system of this kind, which has the sanction of centuries, cannot be upset in a day without disturbing effects; and this is especially the case when the change involves serious pecuniary losses to individuals. . . . It is hardly then a subject for wonder that the rude Biluch who dwells in the country near Gwadar is slow to appreciate the motives which had led the English people to strive so earnestly for the abolition of slavery.<sup>4</sup>

With this paradigmatic statement of nineteenth century European ideas about cultural difference and evolutionary progress, Sandeman succeeded in setting a policy followed by his successors until 1912. The initiating event, the flight of a large number of slaves, is omitted in the construction of Baloch slavery as a relatively benign institution, significantly different than the plantation slavery targeted by the abolition movement. Sandeman incorrectly asserts that there was no trans-border trafficking in slaves. He characterizes slavery as an ancient and economically important Baloch cultural tradition. Despite his professed rejection of slavery, Sandeman had in fact, issued a *sanad* (official document) to the Marris in 1878, that supported their right to own slaves.<sup>5</sup> British officials attempted to keep a distance from the slavery issue, and it was their practice to have sardars and other tribal notables hear cases involving slaves.



As Sandeman's successor, AGG Barnes, put it, '... we don't wish to inquire whether they have slaves or not. The law does not authorize us or direct us to do so.'<sup>6</sup>

The Slavery Act of 1843 stated that no property rights in a slave would be enforced in any British court. The law, however, did not extend to Kalat, which as a native state, had the right to self-governance in domestic affairs, and Calcutta, caught between parliamentary sensitivities at home and the practical problems of securing the Imperial border at a minimal cost, found it expedient to accept Sandeman's position.<sup>7</sup> The delicate complicity of the Government of India is evident in a caution that Political Agents should refrain from saying anything that implied any right to keep slaves:

It would therefore be better that the PA should not explain to them [Baloch] the necessity of taking proper care of their slaves if they do not wish to lose them, as such language would probably be regarded ... as a virtual recognition on our part of the institution of slavery.<sup>8</sup>

As officers with judicial powers, the Political Agents were put in a difficult position. Slaves fleeing to the directly-administered territories of Sindh and British Baluchistan, were not returned against their will to their owners. Despite the caution from Calcutta, agents, however, did convey some minimal standards necessary for them to keep the practice of slavery in *purdah*: slaves were not to be bought or sold, slave-families were not to be separated, and they were not to be mistreated.

It was not always possible, however, to keep slavery behind a veil. By the 1890s, some slaves appear to have heard that the British would not return them to their masters if they fled either to Sindh or British Baluchistan, and sorting out cases of absconding slaves

could be complicated. One particularly enterprising man, fled with his family, from one chiefly territory to another. By the time his owner had located him, the alleged slave had enlisted in the militia of his new chief and had married a daughter to a local man. When the chief claiming his ownership sought British help in his return, the man denied he was a slave. The British cited their policy of non-return of slaves and refused to intervene.<sup>9</sup>

In 1910, an Assistant Political Agent (APA) was presiding over a court in Quetta when a girl dashed in, flung herself at his feet, and begged him to release her from slavery.<sup>10</sup> Investigation revealed that the girl was the daughter of a free-born Jat and a Hazara woman, purchased by the Raisani sardar as a maid for his wife. A slave of bad reputation, who belonged to the sardar's brother, wanted to marry the girl. The threat of this marriage led the mother and daughter to concoct a plan. The mother put pepper in her daughter's eyes and then begged the sardar to take them to Quetta for treatment. Since Quetta was leased land under direct British administration, the APA was obliged to free her. However, he worried that the sardar would get the girl's relatives to persuade her to return and accept the marriage. So the official asked the sardar to tea, and spoke of the girl, of Raisani's KCIE, and how the King, who was soon coming to India, would not like to hear that one of his nobles owned and mistreated slaves. Faced with this pressure, the Raisani presented the girl to the APA, and explained that this was the only honourable way he could get out of his promise to his brother. The APA arranged the girl's marriage to a Hazara militiaman, and both the mother and the daughter professed to be pleased with the marriage. Perhaps the sardar had the last word here, as the APA was reprimanded for interfering in Kalat affairs.

British officials were generally not as sympathetic in such cases. More typical is an 1899 report of a female slave who approached



the Political Agent complaining of mistreatment from her master. The official noted that she 'didn't appear to be in a very bad way'. A group of sardars quickly petitioned for her return. The discomfort of the Political Agent, obliged to shelter the woman under mounting pressure from the sardars, is evident in the report. The agent concluded with a statement, that if the woman was willing to return to her master, he would let her go. It is hard to believe that he did not encourage her to return.<sup>11</sup>

While it is impossible to determine how often slaves fled to British India during the 1890s, it is clear that slavery was a divisive issue in British relations with the chiefs. The sardars petitioning for the return of the woman above, argued that the custom of slavery was exempt from British interference by the terms of the Mastung Treaty of 1876. While the treaty did acknowledge tradition and chiefly prerogatives, it did not, specifically, mention slavery, and the British rejected the sardars' argument. If the sardars were confused about the British position on slavery, it was understandable. On the one hand they were told that the British did not want to know whether they had slaves, while on the other, they were informally counseled to conform to minimal standards of treatment. Although officials would not return runaway slaves, they were often sympathetic to the owners. AGG Barnes, responding to a delegation of owners from British Baluchistan, indicated, that he personally felt, that it would be fair to make slaves purchase their manumission, but the law did not permit this.<sup>12</sup>

Slavery was cited by the Khan, in an objection to a British project of completing a surfaced road between the Agency's Headquarters in Quetta and the Kalat town, where he resided. According to Mir Mahmud:

Most of the male and female slaves of the people of that part of the country are becoming obstinate merely on account of the road which has been constructed, and none of the men of Mastung can, therefore, use harsh words to their male or female slaves. Although by construction of the road nothing else is meant than an easy thoroughfare, yet the low persons, i.e. male and female slaves are entertaining peculiar ideas. If the road were constructed as far as Kalat, the people would entertain more serious ideas. In this manner, God forbid, the splendour of Baluchis will be gradually diminished.<sup>13</sup>

The real reason for his resistance to the road was surely the concern that it would abridge the relative seclusion he enjoyed at Kalat town, although it remains unclear why he chose to focus on unrest among the slaves as his opposition. Perhaps, it was his argument for eliciting the sardari support for his position.

The number and economic importance of slaves varied between different regions in Kalat. In 1911, the British estimated the number of slaves in Kalat at 17,800, of whom 9,300 were female. The slaves were concentrated in the more remote areas of southern Jhalawan, Makran and Kharan, where male slaves cultivated their masters' fields while the women did their domestic work. There were relatively few slaves in Sarawan, where they were primarily engaged in domestic work in the chieftains' households. A proportional estimate in 1926 had the slaves comprising about 4 per cent of the total population in Jhalawan and the Marri-Bugti tribal lands, 6 per cent in Makran and 15 per cent in Kharan.<sup>14</sup>

Slavery practices undoubtedly varied, considerably, from place to place and from owner to owner. Slaves intermarried, sometimes at the insistence of their owners. Bride-price was given by the man, although it was sometimes appropriated by the owner of the woman. In much of Kalat, male slaves did agricultural work and received a portion of the harvest. They were similar to poor



free-sharecroppers with two major exceptions. Slaves could be mortgaged, and if the debt was foreclosed, the mortgager could seize and sell them. A slave who managed to acquire property could not pass it on to his heirs, and at his death it went to his owner, although<sup>15</sup> only a few slaves held by wealthy families would have acquired property, anyway, usually as a result of overseeing an owner's estate. Masson (1997[1842]I: 339) reported that some of the Khan's *khanazada* (hereditary slaves) were taught to read and write and sent to oversee the Khan's estates. The town of Dhadar in Kachhi, was administered by a slave. Masson (2001[1844]IV: 442–3) found that *khanazada* were favoured over purchased or gifted slaves. The Baluchistan District Gazetteers reveal considerable ambiguity regarding slavery. There is no mention at all of slavery in the District Gazetteers of the directly-administered territory. This would appear to be a deliberate omission, as in 1911, the British estimated about 2,500 slaves in British Baluchistan.<sup>16</sup> By the 1921 census, servile dependents had become 'tribal followers' numbering 21,683.<sup>17</sup> The Kalat Gazetteers handle slavery in varying ways. Slaves are discretely noted as 'servile dependents', a category that also included *loris*, who were craftspeople and entertainers. In Sarawan, though, slaves and *loris* were merged, while in Jhalawan, 'servile dependents' included the descendants of war-prisoners. In Kachhi, slaves are not mentioned at all, and the only servile dependents were the Jats, who were the non-tribal tenant cultivators.

The Gazetteers' construction of slavery had a male subject, which facilitated the assertion of benign treatment of slaves. In Kharan, slaves were said to engage in a number of occupations, including acting as advisors to the sardar and serving in his militia. Some were said to advance socially, through marriage with tribal women. However, it was noted, without comment, that many slaves had sought freedom by fleeing to Sindh (GOB Kharan: 80).

In Lasbela, slaves were represented as a quasi-tribal group, the *Gadras*. There was a village of independent *Gadras* with 'a certain undefined bond of connection', which tied them to their former masters. *Gadras* were said to have marriages arranged by their owners, who were interested in increasing their slave-holdings. (GOB Lasbela: 62). The puzzle of a free *Gadra*, whose offspring was a slave, is, perhaps, clarified by material in the Makran District Gazetteer. When an owner was unable or unwilling to provide food and clothing for his slaves, he could order them to fend for themselves. Should the owner wish to obtain their labour in the future, he could order them back (GOB Makran: 108).

Makran was the only location in Kalat where slaves were included in exchanges of marriage among the local Gichki landlord families. It was stated that, conventionally, an equal number of male and female slaves were given (GOB Makran: 72).<sup>18</sup> The slavery issue was most acute in Makran and Kharan, where their numbers were large and where slaves did a significant amount of agricultural labour, but the areas' proximity to British-held Sindh, led to repeated escapes. Despite evidence that slaves were not content with the conditions of their lives, the British consistently downplayed their miserable condition:

The conditions of slavery in Makran are very easy, and the few masters who were inclined to treat their slaves badly have taken warning; they know that any slaves who can prove that they have been treated cruelly, have not received proper food and clothing, or have been separated by sale from their families, will be released; and the slaves also know that they can obtain redress in such cases. Most of the slaves, however, are fairly well contented with their lot and know that on the whole they get their livelihood on easier terms than if they had to work for themselves as free men. Abstract ideas of freedom do not appeal strongly to the majority of them.<sup>19</sup>



As the above passage suggests, the British maintained their 'don't ask, don't look' policy by blurring distinct social categories clearly understood by the Baloch: in the case of men, field-slaves and sharecroppers; in the case of women, slaves and wives. The observation that the conditions of the poorer free-sharecroppers were little better than those of the enslaved, was probably accurate. The critical factors differentiating slaves from sharecroppers were only an issue when slaves challenged their status, or when they were sold to discharge a debt.

Women were as problematic as slaves for the compilers of the Gazetteers. Sections on marriage and the conditions of women are marked by a distanced and repetitive representation of their lives. In the ethnography of the Gazetteers, the key descriptor for the status of women is degradation, variously modified by the adjective 'extreme' or 'great'. The defining features of women's degraded conditions were: 1) lack of property rights; 2) excessive work; and 3) being sold in marriage. Only in Makran, Jhalawan, and Loralai (British Baluchistan) Gazetteers, is there an acknowledgement of class difference. Women in the prosperous households 'have an easy life and have female servants to help them' (GOB Jhalawan: 68).

The compilers of the Gazetteers appear to be speaking of ordinary women in the villages and pastoral nomadic camps of Baluchistan. The repetitive, formulaic description of women's condition indicates that the compilers knew virtually nothing about the lives of tribal women. Degradation is repeatedly linked to the notion that young girls were auctioned off and sold to the highest bidder. There is little in these statements that distinguished a wife from a slave. Tribal women were 'chattels' (GOB Kharan: 61). The notion that women lived lives of unrelenting, degraded toil, could hardly have been based on direct observation, given the seclusion of women. This is a British construction that reflected both the refusal

of local knowledge and the complexly overlapping categories of wives and slaves. Slave or wife, a woman was subject to the sexual and domestic demands of a man, and both could be repudiated by him—a wife through a divorce, and a slave through a sale or a 'gift'.

In an ironic turn, 'bride-price', the very practice that facilitated British categorical blurring, was a critical Baloch signifier; not because the Baloch offered their daughters to the highest bidder, but because the material exchanges called 'bride-price', sealed the delicate negotiations between two families arranging a marriage. Arranging a good marriage was an indication of family honour, and the wife's family maintained an ongoing concern for her well-being. This, in combination with a man's right to multiple wives, discouraged divorce.

The social protections accorded in marriage, did not always prevent husbands from abusing their wives, and a generous bride-price might tempt a father to overlook the shortcomings of a prospective groom. But in most cases, a wife's close patrikin—fathers and brothers, especially—gave her the support, which the female slaves, married or otherwise, were denied. There was a strong preference for marriage within the lineage, which facilitated ongoing contact between the wife and her family. Marriages contracted with unrelated families were open to the suspicion that a generous bride-price had tempted a family to overlook the possible shortcomings of the husband.

Slaves were outside kinship; they were constituted as categorically different persons, lacking the familial rights and protections of tribespeople. The depiction of Baloch women to be as degraded as 'slave-like chattel', obscures critical differences in women's lives. While neither wives nor the female slaves controlled their bodies, wives did have a bodily integrity which was denied to the slave



women. A wife was not alienated from her procreation, and her sexuality, although controlled by her husband, was essentially indivisible—so indivisible that even suspicion of adultery could lead to her death. Slave-girls, on the other hand, were circulated through gift or sale, and their sexuality was the property of succeeding owners.

The difference between wives and enslaved women is clear in the case of jointly-owned slaves. In joint-ownership, a woman's offspring were committed to different men, often years in advance of their conception. The only reported instance of a jointly-owned woman is evocatively concrete. In the 1920s, a Makrani purchased 'one-half a leg' of a woman for Rs25. A year later he bought a whole leg for Rs50. The report does not specify what services came with the ownership of a leg and a half. It notes only that the half-a-leg owner got no service from her, but was entitled to the proceeds of the sale of her fourth child. When her husband died after only one child, she was ordered to marry again immediately.<sup>20</sup>

Like their counterparts in other parts of Asia and the Middle East, officials in Baluchistan had a rather androcentric take on sexuality and female slavery. British officials often resorted to the term 'concubinage' when speaking of female slaves. One suggested that 'the girls generally preferred to be the concubines of a rich man rather than the wives of poor men.' He did deplore what he referred to as forced 'concubinage' and it is hard not to see such a term as anything but a euphemism for rape, a word that never appeared in any British documents.<sup>21</sup>

The discourse of benign slavery was based on the distanced and deliberate refusal of knowledge on the part of British officials. In 1914, AGG John Ramsay breached this *purdah* by going to Makran to investigate reports that slaves were being abused. While he found

no evidence of physical abuse, he received numerous complaints of separation of families. Local notables were persuaded to sign agreements that they would neither separate children from their parents nor husbands from their wives. The AGG's official report to the Foreign Department in Calcutta was measured and upbeat. He advised against emancipation, because:

... such precipitate action would shatter the whole fabric of economic life in the country, and it was accordingly to be depreciated in the interests of the *ghulums* [slaves] themselves. ... The ghulums have thus gained their heart's desire [in the non-separation agreements], and will be quite capable themselves of voicing any further grievances they may have.<sup>22</sup>

AGG Ramsay enclosed a personal letter with the report that has a very different tone:

The facts that were forced on my notice appalled me; without the testimony of my own eyes and ears, I could hardly have believed that slavery of a peculiarly brutal form existed naked and unashamed in India, and in my own province at that. ... I believe now that the evil has been crushed—happily just in time to save us from a public scandal. How it can have escaped publication for so long, I am at a loss to understand, even on the supposition that discontented and disaffected persons have never realized what a powerful weapon lay to their hands. ... It is a matter of such personal congratulations to myself, and a matter, I think, for congratulations to Government also, that we have forestalled the inevitable scandal, and that, while feeling it is my duty to report the existence of the evil, I have been able to report at the same time that measures have been taken to eradicate it.<sup>23</sup>

The notably different registers of these two documents mark a fracture between the British discourse of slavery and the actual Balochi practice. The separation of families obscured the reality of trafficking of female slaves, many of them young girls, into what



officials delicately termed 'forced concubinage'. A sardar put it more directly: 'A girl is ten days here, ten days there.'<sup>24</sup> Ramsay abridged the longstanding 'don't look, don't tell' policy, and found himself in a difficult position. Having looked, he was burdened with what could not be said in official correspondence, in fact, what could not even be explicitly acknowledged in a private letter. Despite witnessing complaints that horrified him, Ramsay argued against abolition, claiming it would not be in the interests of the slaves themselves. The AGG's assertion that the slaves obtained 'their heart's desire', seems a rhetorical excess that disrupts normal bureaucratic language, an exaggeration, perhaps necessary, to recuperate benign slavery from the 'facts that were forced' on him. It is hard to believe that Ramsay was in fact confident that slaves would be capable of protecting the rights specified in the agreements, as there was no resident British presence in Makran.

What could not be spoken is related to the threat of scandal. Who were those 'discontented and disaffected persons' who missed an opportunity to embarrass the British government? The two issues—slavery and the sexual abuse of young girls and women—would surely have been publicized by those missionaries allied with the social purity reformers, who were active in both India and Great Britain at the time, had they learned of them (cf. Ballhatchet, 1980; Burton, 1994; Levine, 1996; Ware, 1992). Calcutta responded to Ramsay's report and ignored his letter. 'The Government of India appreciates the tactful manner in which you have handled the *ghulam* matter, and I am to congratulate you on the success of your negotiations in this matter.'<sup>25</sup> The challenge to 'benign slavery' ended during the First World War. British officials, concerned about ensuring the loyalty of the Baloch sardars, were reluctant to pursue charges of abuse, and the Assistant Political Agent, Makran, suggested that complaints were instigated by 'intriguers' in Lasbela:

I think that the enquiries which have been made in recent years and the action taken in one or two proved cases of ill-treatment have had the desired effect, and there is not the least necessity to take any drastic steps in Makran until the time is ripe for the consideration of the question of domestic slavery in the whole of Baluchistan. The steps of slavery in Makran are very easy, and the few masters who were inclined to treat their slaves badly have taken warning; they know conditions of slavery in Makran are very easy, and the few masters who were inclined to treat their slaves badly have taken warning; they know that any slaves who can prove that they have been treated cruelly, have not received proper food and clothing, or have been separated from their families, will be released; and the slaves know that they can obtain redress in such cases. . . . I do not suppose Government desires to tackle so big a question while the war is going on, and, therefore, glad as I should be to see slavery abolished, I think it will be best for the present to be content to apply palliative treatment to such cases as may arise. I would suggest that no notice be taken of telegrams from either masters or slaves.<sup>26</sup>

Sandeman's 1884 representation of benign slavery is echoed here, but without his rhetorical confidence. Like Sandeman, this official felt obligated to record his personal rejection of slavery, while simultaneously, arguing that abolition was impractical in the present. There is a careful acknowledgment that slaves are on occasion mistreated, balanced by the claim that the administration has taken steps to punish and prevent such abuse. The assertion that most enslaved men were content with their lot and even preferred slavery to free-sharecropping, evaded the issues of family separation and sexual abuse of female slaves. It also defined those slaves who were not satisfied with their condition as minority malcontents, perhaps prone to manipulation by enemy agents.

The British blurring of wives and female slaves is apparent in a report submitted by a junior Agency Official in 1922. He had been ordered to investigate a report that '40 girls and women' from the state of Kalat, had been sold to men in neighbouring Sindh. The



informant alleged these sales to be a response to food shortages arising from several years of drought. The official reported that sixteen of the women were said to be slaves or females 'having no near relatives', while twenty-four were said to have been sold by relatives. The Agent complained that it was difficult to determine whether the women in question were being sold as slaves or simply married in accordance with local custom:

You are aware that a Brahui female is sold in marriage (emphasis in original) to the highest bidder in the same way as a Brahui disposes of his livestock. Under these circumstances the sale of Jhalawan women does not call for any special consideration more so as these females were ostensibly given in marriage (emphasis in original) to Sindhi husbands.<sup>27</sup>

This report inscribed a convenient refusal of local knowledge. Local Baloch certainly knew the difference between arranging a marriage and selling a woman into slavery, and had the Political Agent wanted to be more informed, he could certainly have engaged local knowledge. At the same time it inscribed a masculine collusion across cultural difference to constrain the disruptive and divisive potential of women. The successful refusal of local knowledge was not simply a one-sided exercise of colonial power. Those Baloch men who were questioned about this issue had their own motives for telling the official what he wanted to hear. The report can be seen as inscribing a performative collaboration between men holding rather different notions of marriage, slavery, and women, who nevertheless found it possible, perhaps even easy, to collude in fashioning a mutually satisfactory understanding. Finally, the report inscribes the delicate negotiations involved in adjusting colonial policy instituted at high levels of government to local political interests. Since trafficking in slaves was prohibited while slavery was tolerated, albeit deplored, an official conclusion that

the women were being sold would have required further action. Indeed, the confusion expressed by the Political Agent may well have been mirrored by categorical blurring on the Baloch side, because if these were in fact marriages, they may not have been very honourable ones, as the women were being sent some distance from their kin. The girls and women, who were the subject of the investigation, are textually absent, and it is quite likely that they were physically absent as well, and the transactions that sent them to Sindh had already been accomplished. Reports concerning slavery often ended on an ambiguous note, and this one is no exception. The official hedged his conclusion, with the modifier, *ostensibly*. He noted the food shortage in Baluchistan, and the high prices being paid for women in Sindh. Despite the inconclusive ending, the AGG noted, 'This is not slavery—and no action, I suggest, is required—nor, as it is observed, is a recommendation of the Political Agent.'<sup>28</sup>

The issue of slavery heated up in 1926 when the League of Nations proposed abolishing slavery and forced labour throughout the world. At the request of the British government, the Government of India solicited comments on the proposal. Forced to confront the issue, the AGG officially acknowledged the presence of slavery in Kalat. Although he denied the regular selling of slaves, he noted the separation of families. That he, apparently, saw no contradiction in this, is perhaps related to the blurred categories of bride-price and gift. In 1927, the PA Kalat, piously noted, 'It was not till the actual liberation of slaves commenced that it was possible to realise the inhumanity with which these unfortunate beings were treated.'<sup>29</sup>

In 1926, under strong British pressure, the Khan abolished slavery in Kalat. Male slaves engaged in agricultural labour became sharecroppers while the female domestic slaves became household



servants, entitled to payment in food, clothes and grain. There was considerable resistance to abolition in southern Jhalawan and Makran. Some Makrani Baloch threatened to migrate to Iranian Baluchistan rather than free their slaves. A few did transport their slaves across the border, but some of the slaves escaped back to Makran.<sup>30</sup>

Agency officials, responding to concerns both in London and Calcutta, now took a more active role in abolition:

After much discussion with Jhalawan Sardars, *motebirs* and the slaves themselves, it seemed clear that the freeing of the men slaves could take place without any considerable disturbance of conditions. The difficulties came with the *kanizes* [female slaves]. . . . So many girls have changed hands recently for large sums—in one case for as much as Rs1,000—that the owners will undoubtedly place obstacles in the way of their release and will endeavour to obtain bride-price for marrying them.<sup>31</sup>

In 1927, the Kalat PA used the occasion of a chieftain's wedding to gather the slaves present, more than seventy in number, to inform them of their new rights. He reported that only five families sought immediate manumission, while two families asked for the return of young daughters sold or given away.<sup>32</sup> In most cases, emancipation appears to have produced little material improvement in the lives of those newly-freed. Complaints of imprisonment, mistreatment, and sale, especially of the girls, continued throughout the 1920s.

Benign slavery was a discourse constructed on deferral and exclusion. It was a differentiating discourse that marked the distance between British and Baloch cultures. But it was British veiling of it that placed the female slaves in a *purdah* so opaque, which made it difficult to distinguish a slave from a wife. Gender

was at the centre of rhetorical strategies deployed to maintain benign slavery. These strategies included the use of terms such as 'concubinage' and 'separation of families', to cover rape and trafficking of females. The persuasiveness of the discourse rested on a male subject, abstract and disembodied, little different from a poor, free sharecropper. A female slave had bodily specificity, which disrupted the discourse.

Colonial officials distanced themselves from the practice of slavery. Sandeman articulated the cultural distance in his 1884 contrast of 'rude Biluch' and the 'English people'. Abolition was a natural byproduct of Englishness; the political struggles that brought it about were erased. Sandeman and his successors looked to some future time when it would be possible to impose emancipation without causing economic and political disruption. In the end, when Parliament forced emancipation, it was accomplished without the serious dislocations predicted by its apologists.

#### Notes

1. Note, PA to AGG, May 1903, HSA, Sec. 6, File 23, Basta 3.
2. PA Kalat to AGG, 9 May 1922, IOR R/1/34/48.
3. There is some debate as to the circumstances of Oman's claim to Gwadar. In 1783, after the Sultan of Muscat was driven from office, he took refuge at Gwadar. The Khan of Kalat is variously reputed to have either lent the port of Gwadar to the Sultan until he returned to Oman, or to have given it as a gift in perpetuity. The Sultan held the latter position. When he returned to Muscat, he appointed a *wali* to govern. Gwadar remained under Oman until 1958, when it was transferred to Pakistan.
4. Sandeman to Foreign, 25 March 1884, HSA Sec. 3, File 94-Z, Basta 8.
5. General Note on Slavery, 30 January 1926, IOR R/1/34/48.
6. Cited in an unsigned note, 'Slavery in Baluchistan', HSA Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9.
7. Foreign to AGG, 27 May 1898, HSA Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9.
8. Foreign to AGG, 4 December 1893, Sec. 1, File M-1, Vol. I, Basta 1.



9. AGG to PA Kalat, 30 July 1898, HSA Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9. Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9.
10. Unsigned, undated document, Abolition of Slavery in Kalat. Internal evidence indicates it was written by Terence Keyes, IOR MSS Eur. F/131/24.
11. PA Kalat to AGG, 30 July 1898, HSA Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9.
12. Unsigned note, 'Slavery in Baluchistan', HSA Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9.
13. Mir Mahmud Khan to AGG, 6 May 1897, HSA, Sec. 9, File 298, Basta 9.
14. PA Kalat, Comments on Article of Draft Convention, 1926, IOR R/34/48.
15. Unsigned Notes, 1925, IOR R/34/48.
16. PA Kalat, Comments on Article of Draft Convention, 1926, IOR R/34/48. In 1927, the PA Kalat acknowledged that *ghulam* (slaves) became 'servile dependents' in the 1911 Census (PA Kalat to AGG, 4 April 1927, IOR MSS Eur. F/13/24).
17. PA Kalat to AGG, 4 April 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.
18. Makran has longstanding ties to Iranian Balochistan. Spooner (1969) discusses the cognatic tendencies among the elites in Persian Balochistan. The British noted the relatively high status of women in Makran, where women owned and controlled property (GOB Makran: 75).
19. APA Makran to PA Kalat, 28 February 1918, IOR R/1/34/48.
20. PA Kalat to AGG, 4 April 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.
21. Unsigned Notes, 1925, IOR R/1/34/48.
22. AGG to Foreign, 25 February 1914, IOR R/1/34/34.
23. AGG to Grant, 25 February 1914, IOR R/1/34/34.
24. PA Sibi to AGG, 27 October 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.
25. Foreign to AGG, 14 March 1914, IOR R/1/34/48.
26. APA Makran to PA Kalat, 28 February 1918, IOR R/1/34/48.
27. APA Jhalawan to PA Kalat, 7 October 1922, IOR R/1/34/48.
28. AGG, undated note, IOR R/1/34/48.
29. PA Kalat to AGG, 4 April 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.
30. Diary PA Kalat for Fortnight Ending 10 January 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.
31. Diary PA Kalat for Fortnight Ending 10 January 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.
32. Diary PA Kalat for Fortnight Ending 10 January 1927, IOR R/1/34/48.

## Seeking the Imaginary Balance

Ever since Khodadad Khan's forced abdication in 1893, the Agency's officials had been seeking a colonial stability that continuously eluded them. This led to reformist efforts at intervals of roughly ten years. These reforms occurred in the context of the Agency's efforts to establish its authority in Jhalawan, where the succession conflicts among the sardars, were a troubling challenge. In the early years of the twentieth century, the reformist thrust spearheaded by PA Showers, focused on political realism. He argued for Calcutta accepting the Khan's shortcomings with a consequent expansion of the Agency's staff to compensate for the Khan's refusal to rule, and to constrain the sardari politics more effectively. Calcutta did officially acknowledge the breaching of paramountcy:

The Government of India recognise that, as the result of circumstances over which they could exercise but little influence, the authority of His Highness the Khan over the Sarawan and Jhalawan Sirdars has now practically ceased to exist and that control over the tribes must, for the present at any rate, be vested in the Political Agent. Should however there be any disposition hereafter on the part of the Khan or his successor to reassert his authority and influence over the tribes, the claim will demand careful attention.<sup>1</sup>

They authorized the appointment of a Political Advisor to the Khan (PAK) and Native Assistants (NA) for Sarawan and Jhalawan. These actions strengthened British domination by extending their reach



further into tribal government. The network of personal relations that had enmeshed the Khan and the sardars was severely undermined.<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, the protracted, occasionally embarrassing, problems of Mengal succession, led AGG J. Ramsay to reflect on the Agency's staffing and tribal governance.<sup>3</sup> He believed that during the years of Mir Mahmud Khan's reign in Kalat, the Agency's practices had departed from the Sandeman's principle of tribal self-governance, with the unfortunate consequence of undermining the *sardari* authority and responsibility. The appointments of the Political Advisor for the Khan, along with the Native Assistant for Jhalawan, provided tribesmen with new officials to whom they could take their complaints, thus bypassing the traditional tribal leaders. The expansion of *thana* (levy-posts) exacerbated the problem as the *thanedars* (head of a *thana*) too, were drawn into tribal disputes. Sardars now had even less need to consider tribal opinion in making their decisions because they could now turn to the PA Kalat instead, to ensure the implementation of those decisions. As Ramsay saw it, the Agency's governance had become more expensive and less effective.

The AGG noted that his predecessors had reservations about Mir Mahmud Khan's character, but pointed out that efforts to compensate for his 'supposed deficiencies' had placed him in a difficult position: '... while he remains Khan of Kalat with high titles and honours, his work is done for him by officials who are not under his control.' Ramsay believed that the present situation was untenable: 'I think we must either recognise that our interference in Kalat affairs exists and must increase, or we should make yet one more effort to get the Khan to take an interest in his duties and to induce the Sardars to administer their tribes.'<sup>4</sup> Ramsay proposed, in effect, to undo the changes instituted by

Henry Showers when the latter had served as the PA Kalat in the early years of the twentieth century. In accordance with Ramsay's reforms, the PA Kalat obtained the Khan's agreement to the following changes:

1. The annual Kalat budget would be prepared by the Political Advisor and sanctioned by the Khan.
2. The Khan would have three lakhs (Rs300,000) as his private purse.
3. A State Council would be instituted, consisting of the Khan, serving as President, Shams Shah, the Political Advisor, serving as Vice-President, and the Raisani, Shawani, Zehri and Mengal sardars, as permanent members.
4. The PA Kalat would be consulted about all issues before the Council.

As part of the agreement, the Khan would relinquish his private purse for one year in order to fund the changes.<sup>5</sup>

The new State Council met in July 1913, with much pomp and ceremony. Shams Shah, speaking on behalf of the Khan, noted that 'His Highness and his Council agree that the interests of the Government of India and those of the State are identical.' PA Kalat, Armine Dew, reported that he had taken steps to encourage the sardars to take more responsibility for their tribes. According to Dew, the Native Assistants and the *thanedars* were intriguing against the sardars.<sup>6</sup> Agency officials sought to implement many of Ramsay's proposals, but most were set aside with the beginning of World War I. The State Council also met only once, as the wartime resistance of the Zehri and Mengal sardars doomed further meetings.<sup>7</sup>



### WARTIME CHALLENGES

Although the Baluchistan Agency owed its existence in large part to the regional politics between Russia and Great Britain, it remained relatively free from outside threats until World War I. When Turkey joined the Central Powers in 1914, the Sultan declared a *jihad* against the allies. Axmann (2008: 45–57) notes that the Germans sought to amplify the effects of *jihad* by smuggling propaganda leaflets into Russian and British colonial territories. German agents infiltrated Persia, hoping to incite Persia's Baloch tribes. They also sought to enlist the Amir of Afghanistan on their side, and although the British failed in their efforts to prevent a German-Afghan meeting, the Amir remained uncommitted.

Uprisings in the Marri territory, and in Makran and Jhalawan, challenged the Agency's authority and stretched its resources very thin. Although British military superiority was never in doubt, the Agency staff was, in some instances, forced to forego punishing actions that would certainly have elicited fines and imprisonment in earlier years. Each uprising required at least one military intervention, and each reflected local conditions, but all were shaped by the war.

In 1916, the AGG asked Calcutta to authorize an additional Assistant to the Political Agent for a period of three years, as the Agency's current staff was hard-pressed to cope with the various problems in Kalat. He argued that instability in the Zehri and Mengal tribes was likely to continue. The Mengals were causing trouble on the Lasbela border, while the situation in Makran required careful monitoring. It was hoped that with adequate staff the Khan could be persuaded to exert more authority, and Makran could be secured, following which the office could lapse. The PA Kalat argued forcefully for the appointment of a British officer, on

the grounds that he would naturally have more influence over the chiefs than a native officer.<sup>8</sup>

Calcutta, during wartime, was especially cost-conscious. In view of this, the AGG recommended that the APA be funded by all parties benefiting from the appointment, i.e. the Khan, the Jam of Lasbela, and the Government of India. Before acting on the proposal, however, Calcutta directed that both the rulers be consulted about sharing the costs, and not unsurprisingly, they were reluctant. The Jam pointed out that Jhalawanis were the trouble-makers, and they should pay the cost. The Khan argued that since the British had assumed control of Jhalawan, they should, therefore, fund the office. However, despite their reservations, both rulers were persuaded to contribute to the support of the Office. Calcutta finally sanctioned the APA in 1918, but could not provide a candidate due to the wartime shortage of British officers, and a native officer, Seth Kaikobad, who proved to be exceptionally able, was appointed. (Todd, 1926: 101–2).

### TROUBLE IN MARRILAND

In pre-colonial times, the fractious Marris were only tenuously connected to Kalat. They frequently raided their neighbours, especially the Bugtis on their southern border and Pushtuns on the north. Raiding by the Marris led to four British campaigns into their lands between 1840 and 1890. Marris attacked and killed several railway workers during the 1890s, for which six tribesmen were charged under the Murderous Outrages Act and hanged (GOB Sibi: 282). Differing ideas about how to resolve the 'Marri problem' led to the dispute between Sandeman and Merewether, discussed in Chapter 3. When it became clear that the Khan would not constrain Marri depredations, the Marris, along with



the Bugtis, were placed under the jurisdiction of the PA Sibi in an effort to control them.

Even before the war began, the Marri *tumendar* (chief) was engaged in succession politics with his *mukkadams* (section-heads). Khair Baksh Marri wanted his oldest son, Allahdad Khan, to succeed him, but most *mukkadams* objected at first, on grounds that his mother was of low birth. When the PA Sibi met with them, they agreed to support the *tumendar's* choice. In 1915, Khair Baksh said that he was too busy to attend the Sibi *Shahi Jirga* and proposed that Allahdad represent him. The British rejected his request, believing that Allahdad lacked sufficient influence with the *mukkadams*. It had become a custom for the Marri and Bugti chiefs to meet after the *jirga* and hear inter-tribal disputes. Khair Baksh attended the *jirga*, but departed immediately thereafter, leaving Allahdad to settle the specific cases. The PA postponed the hearing and arranged a meeting later at Kohlu (British Baluchistan). When the *tumendar* failed to appear, the PA and the *muqaddams* decided to hear the cases without him.

In addition to differences regarding the Marri succession, the *tumendar* had been complaining for some months about colonial policies that favoured the Bugti sardar:

1. The Phailawagh land-settlement unfairly rewarded the Bugtis at the expense of the Marris.
2. In the distribution of money for the levies in the two areas, the Bugti chief was granted the money directly for distribution to the levies, whereas the levies serving in the land of the Marris were paid directly by the British, thus bypassing the chief. The PA's comments give credence to Khair Baksh's complaints:

In the Marri tribe, the headmen do the work and are the men on whom we have to rely. In the Bugti tribe, the Tumandar is the man and the headmen of not much importance. . . . This has always been so. In the old days when the Marri raided, the sardar stayed in Kahan and got his one-fifth share while the raiders were led by the *mukkadams*. In Bugti all important raids were led by the Tumandar or a close relative. The British are fortunate to have dependable *mukkadams* as the nawab is weak and indolent.<sup>9</sup>

Phailawagh was a no man's land between the Marri and the Bugti territories, a source of conflict between them, as parties from both tribes raided one another there. In 1905, the British drew a boundary that awarded about three-quarters of the disputed land to the Bugtis. The Marris challenged the decision and claimed a bias in favour of the Bugtis. AGG Tucker, investigating the records, noted that a preponderance of them identified Phailawagh as land belonging to the Marris. When Tucker questioned the award to the Bugtis, the Foreign Department, responded, 'You will doubtless recognize that, in a political case of this character, some consideration may properly be attached to the attitude of the tribe at the time of settlement.'<sup>10</sup> This case is reminiscent of the Raisani-Luni land case in the way that cooperative relations influenced the AGG's award.

Thus the Marris' relations with the Agency's officials were somewhat tense, when in December 1917 the PA Sibi approached the *tumendar* and the *mukkadams* with regard to military recruitment of the Marris. He met with strenuous objections, and the leaders refused to provide recruits. Several months later the Marri and the neighbouring Khetrans rose up. The administrative centres of Kohlu and Barkhan (British Baluchistan) were looted and burned. Bands of tribesmen raided villages in British Baluchistan. Telegraph lines were cut, and tribal *lashkars* attacked army convoys and the railway line. Agency officials were quick to send troops, and



eventually the tribal forces surrendered in April 1918, after suffering heavy casualties (Axmann, 2008: 63). A *jirga* in 1918, recommended that Rs136,000 be paid as compensation to the Agency for losses it had sustained in the uprising. In addition, Rs231,000 was assessed against the Marris for other losses. Khair Baksh was deprived of his title of Nawab, and all arms seized by the British during the uprising were confiscated. The British accepted the *jirga's* decisions, but after a year the tribe was released from these obligations in a general amnesty, and Khair Baksh's title was restored (Dehwar, 1994: 206).

### WARTIME TROUBLES ON THE PERSIAN BORDER

The wartime resistance in Makran posed particular problems for the British, as it involved the Baloch on both sides of the border. Furthermore, German agents were encouraging the Persian Baloch to rise up against the British. While they were unsuccessful in generating a coordinated attack, their efforts did lead to increased raiding across the border (Axmann, 2008: 55). PA, Armine Dew, reported six significant cross-border raids in about a year and a half (November 1914–May 1916). Each involved fatalities and considerable loss of property. Half of the raids were attributed to a local chief, Bahrān Khan Baranzai, whose rise was associated with the collapse of governance in Persian Balochistan.<sup>11</sup> In 1915, Bahrān Khan invaded Makran with a force of some 1,400 men. He robbed the Kech valley as far as Tump, where a Gichkhi chief and several members of his family were killed. The British dispatched troops from Karachi to Pasni, and Bahrān Khan's forces withdrew across the border. The performance of the Makran Levies and the *nazim* were judged to be unacceptable, and Mehrulla Raisani, who had ruled Makran for nineteen years, was pensioned off. Agency resources were severely stretched during the war. Raiding in Makran increased, in part, because the PA Kalat had been summoned for

consultation with the Government of India and did not get back to Makran until the end of 1915. The British were unable to obtain compensation for victims of the raiding because they feared it would incite further conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In 1916, two British officers were killed at Mand (Makran). PA Dew believed that the murderers were Persian 'fanatics'. He argued that the disorders in Jhalawan and Makran fed upon each other, as dissidents in both areas observed the relatively weak responses from the Agency:

... recent experience has more than ever convinced me that only the personal influence obtained through the continuous presence of British officers possessed of the necessary training, tact and sympathy to deal with the hearts and minds and not only with the fears of these wild frontier people, is it possible at periods of universal unrest to keep them under control and prevent them from outbreaks which result for their lack of sense of proportion of the larger affairs of the world outside their immediate kin.<sup>13</sup>

In 1914, Mehrab Khan Nausherwani seized the fort at Kuhak (Iran) and also claimed rights in Chagai pasture-lands. The British, who had little confidence in Mehrab Khan's loyalty, were obliged to respond to this provocation with restraint, so they negotiated an agreement with him whereby he relinquished his claim to some tracts in exchange for recognition of his rights in others. The agreement was contingent on Mehrab Khan's loyalty and cooperation. Raiding by the Persian Baloch on the Chagai border escalated during the war. This led the British to move into the Sarhad region of Persian Baluchistan, where they occupied several villages. They constructed a railway line to Duzdap (Iran) in 1919 to secure transport and communications, and they offered subsidies to cooperative Iranian Baloch chiefs. However, in the end, the British were forced to deal with the raiding along the border by



deploying troops under General Reginald Dyer and Sir Percy Sykes on the Persian side and sending the PA Kalat to secure the cooperation of chiefs in Makran.

### WARTIME CHALLENGES IN JHALAWAN

When the war began in August 1914, Agency officials were already plagued with the insubordination of Sardar Khan Muhammad Zarakzai, who had fomented troubles within the Zehri. Nuruddin (formerly Allahdina) Mengal joined Khan Muhammad, and the two sardars took an oath to oppose the government.<sup>14</sup> Shops were looted, mail was robbed, and Nuruddin's followers pillaged and burned the Khan's treasury at Wad. As disturbances spread throughout Jhalwan, the AGG requested military assistance, and a regiment was sent from Quetta to Jhalwan.<sup>15</sup>

The British account of the Zehri sardar's behaviour was typically formulaic. He was said to have been cooperative at first, responding well to British advice, and settling a number of outstanding Zehri disputes. However, when he was rewarded with the title of Nawab, his behaviour changed. According to the British, his elevated status as the ranking sardar of Jhalawan went to his head. He became arrogant and insubordinate, and turned to disreputable advisors for advice. There was some substance to these charges in this instance, however. The Khan had repeatedly complained that Khan Muhammad was interfering in the affairs of the *niabet*. Even the sardar's father said his behaviour was arrogant. In the face of Khan Muhammad's failure to obey several government instructions, the PA Kalat alerted the Magasi and the Rind sardars to prepare for possible punitive action. Predictably, the Zehri sardar learned of this and began to rally his supporters. He informed the PA that the Magasis, Rinds and Mengals were going to mount an attack against him. The Khan's *naib* fled from the Zehri village.

The British learned, well after the fact, that Khan Muhammad and Nuruddin, the Mengal chief, had secretly taken an oath on the Quran to oppose the British. As the Zehri sardar gathered more allies, hostilities threatened to break out at several locations in Kalat. A *jirga* convened in June 1915, declared Sardar Khan Muhammad an outlaw and removed him from office. Troops were sent from Quetta and levies were brought in, and Khan Muhammad's allies withdrew at this show of force.

British characterization of Khan Muhammad began with charges of arrogance and insubordination. During the early months of 1915, he was described as a mischief-maker, implying that he was immature and lacking a sense of responsibility. When his actions seemed clearly insurrectionary, Agency officials labeled him an outlaw. These words—immature or childish, mischievous, and outlaw or insane—were deployed with such regularity as to reveal a systematic policy of depoliticization. No dissident sardar, no Khan ruling during the British times, escaped depiction with less than two or more of these words.

The British reappointed Khan Muhammad's father, the aging Pasand Khan Zarakzai, to head the Zehri. Pasand Khan's tenure was short; he died in 1918, setting off a round of intense succession politics. There was no shortage of claimants. There was one surviving son of the former sardar, Gauher Khan, whose exploits were recounted earlier. However, Pasand Khan had two sons and three grandsons who also aspired to the sardarship. Asad Khan, Pasand's oldest grandson, had the strongest genealogical claim, but his candidacy was weakened by the mental state of his father, who was said to be hopelessly mad. Rasul Baksh was Pasand Khan's youngest son and the latter's choice. His claim was strengthened, politically, by his affinal ties with the Shawani sardarkhel in Sarawan.



However, it was Nauroz Khan, Rasul Baksh's older brother, who made the first move by sending the levy-men to collect the *sardari* share of the harvest at Gajan (Jhalawan). While the British were attempting to arrange a meeting between Nauroz Khan and Rasul Baksh, Shah Beg, a younger grandson, activated his claim by seizing crops belonging to Rasul Baksh. The British managed to get the three contenders to Mastung before fighting broke out, but as they were trying to determine which candidate enjoyed the most support among the minor sardars of Jhalawan, Nauroz Khan fled to Zehri and seized Pasand Khan's fort at Gat, where he attacked Rasul Baksh's supporters, forcing them out of the village. A detachment of Makran levies was brought in to quell the skirmishes between Nauroz Khan's followers, who now included some Mengals, and Rasul Baksh's supporters. Nauroz Khan was taken to Sibi to await the deliberations of the next *Sibi Shahi Jirga*. A *jirga* met to assess compensation for Rasul Baksh's property and for deaths which had occurred during the skirmishes. Nauroz Khan was fined Rs10,000 and sentenced to seven years in jail. The result of all this maneuvering was that the Zehri sardarship was still vacant at the end of the First World War.

In February 1920, the issue of the Zehri succession finally went to a *jirga* that recommended Shah Beg to succeed his uncle, Pasand Khan. However, there was a significant minority vote for Rasul Baksh, and in an unusual move, the Khan wrote to the AGG in favour of Rasul Baksh. The AGG decided to defer the decision and bring the case back to the *Sibi Shahi Jirga* in 1921. This time the *jirga* reversed its recommendation, delivering a strong majority in favour of Rasul Baksh. In an effort to strengthen Rasul Baksh's position, Shah Beg was exiled from Jhalawan for three years, and the Shawani and Mengal sardars agreed to post a good behaviour bond for Rasul Baksh. The British further obtained a *jirga's* recommendation limiting Rasul Baksh's authority. Several minor

sardars were granted direct access to the Assistant Political Agent, authorized to hear their cases. The authorization of broadened access to the Agency's officials appears to have been an effort to enhance the surveillance of Zehri internal affairs.

In an indication of resistance to the colonial government, the Mengal and the Gurgnari sardars failed to attend the *Sibi Shahi Jirga* in February 1916. The following month, Sardar Nuruddin Mengal and Sardar Shahbaz Khan Gurgnari fled to Persia with a band of followers. The two sardars were reported to have signed an oath against the government and were reportedly seeking contact with the German agents. Their departure fueled widespread disturbances in Jhalawan. The levies were unable to control the situation, and the British were again forced to dispatch their troops. In an engagement with the insurgents near Wad, one British officer was killed and another was wounded, along with three native soldiers. The British responded with mass arrests of Mengals in the vicinity, and sent additional troops to the area. The lands of several leading sardars, including the Mengal and the Gurgnari, were confiscated. These lands were surrendered to Kalat, to be cultivated on behalf of the Khan. The PA Kalat found 'evidence of a strong religious feeling underlying the unrest' (Todd, 1926: 80). Tribesmen, even those accompanying the PA's camp, referred to those killed in skirmishes with the British as *shaheeds* (martyrs). Both Sardar Nuruddin Mengal and Sardar Shabaz Gurgnari returned to Kalat, where they were swiftly captured. The Gurgnari sardar was carrying a letter with instructions for sending intelligence to the Turks and Germans through a contact in Kej (Makran).

On 17 September 1916, a Kalat *Jirga* was convened at Quetta to consider the case of Nuruddin Mengal (Todd, 1923: 84-5). The attending sardars were asked to consider the following questions:



1. Was the Mengal sardar guilty, directly or indirectly, of fomenting unrest in Jhalawan?
2. Did the sardar go to Persia in order to obtain weapons?
3. Did he import these weapons from Persia into Kalat in violation of the prevalent law of Kalat?
4. Did the sardar intrigue with Germans against the British Government?

The *jirga* responded affirmatively to all questions and recommended death by hanging. Alternatively, if the British rejected the death penalty, the *jirga* recommended a sentence of thirty years imprisonment, to be served outside Baluchistan. All the sardar's property was to be confiscated, save a share for maintaining his family. These recommendations indicate that the *jirga* understood the Mengal sardar to have engaged in rebellious actions, albeit unsuccessful ones. The *jirga*, in effect, yielded the determination of the punishment to the British. As he had done in the earlier case of Khan Muhammad Zehri and Nuruddin Mengal, the PA Kalat depoliticized the decision. He rejected the death penalty, arguing that Nurddin was led astray by the older and stronger Gurgnari sardar. PA Dew reduced the sentence to twelve and a half years. The *jirga* offered the same recommendations for Sardar Shahbaz Khan Gurgnari: death or thirty years imprisonment. The PA reduced the sentence to twenty-one-and-a-half years. The lengthier sentence reflected Dew's belief that Shahbaz Khan had manipulated the younger, more impressionable, Mengal sardar. The British confirmed Rahim Khan as the Mengal sardar and Yusef Khan as the Gurgnari chief in 1917.

British efforts to recruit soldiers were as unpopular in Jhalawan as they were in the Marri areas. While Agency officials were occupied in controlling the Marri resistance, Rahim Khan Mengal and Yusef

Khan Gurgnari, along with several members of their parties, were murdered in what appeared to be coordinated attacks. The PA Kalat was in Makran, and his Assistant was making arrangements to protect the Bolan Pass from Marri raiders (Todd, 1925: 88). The absence of officials in Jhalawan forced the AGG to propose the payment of compensation for the deaths without further punishment if the two tribes abstained from further attacks and the recruitment drive was terminated.

The administration found it difficult to persuade the Mengal *takkars* (sections) involved in the Rahim Khan murders to meet anywhere other than Wad. Investigation revealed that one aim of the killings was to pressure the British to release the ex-sardars, Nuruddin Mengal and Shahbaz Khan Gurgnari. A *jirga* was finally convened in October 1918 at Quetta, in which a compensation was assessed, and hostages were held in Mastung, pending payments. Although the British had pledged to exact no punishment beyond blood compensation, they asked the *jirga* to consider whether the Mengals and Gurgnaris could be assessed for expenses connected to handling of the disturbances. The *jirga* recommended the additional charge, along with assessments against the Mengal *takkars* for support of a *naib* at Wad but it declined to recommend a candidate for the Mengal's sardarship. The Gurgnari *takkris* present at the *jirga* requested that Shafi Mohammad, son of the ex-sardar Shahbaz Khan, replace Sardar Yusef Khan. This was rejected, as Shahbaz's family had been explicitly excluded from succession at the 1917 *jirga* (Todd, 1925: 91).

The British made a ceremonial show for the first compensation payment. The PA, accompanied by many sardars of Sarawan and Jhalawan and some 200 Makran and Kalat levies, travelled to Wad, but the Mengal *takkris* responsible for the payments failed to appear. Five parties of levies were dispatched to arrest them.



Although there was some resistance, the levies persuaded most *takkris* to surrender, and they also collected substantial numbers of animals, weapons and other property. The payments were made, although not voluntarily, as the British would have liked.

In late 1919, the Mengals requested the appointment of a sardar. Internal support was divided between Rasul Baksh, minor son of Shahbaz Khan, and the deceased sardar's brother, Karam Khan. A *jirga* met in February 1920 to consider the appointment in which the British framed the succession with five questions:

1. Should a sardar be appointed at this time, and if so, who should it be?
2. If a minor is appointed, who should the *sarbarah* (regent) be?
3. Should the sardar have jurisdiction over all the Mengals, including those around Khozdar? If his authority does not include them, should he recover *malia* (taxes) from them?
4. Should the sardar or the *sarbarah* be obliged to spend time in Wad, Saruna, Kanraj and Purali, over the course of the year?
5. How can peace in the tribe and the authority of the Khan be secured? (Todd, 1926: 95)

The Mengals' succession disputes had vexed British officials for several decades. The size of the tribe and the factionalism of the *takkris* (section heads) consistently undermined British efforts to establish an effective and cooperative leader. These questions reflected a British effort to more strongly institutionalize the office of the Mengal sardar.

The *jirga* endorsed appointing a Mengal sardar and recommended Rasul Baksh as its selection because he had the stronger inheritance claim. When Karam Khan agreed to support the nomination, he

was appointed the *sarbarah*. The *jirga* stated that all the Mengals were subject to the authority of the sardar, giving him the right to collect the *malia* (taxes) from all of them. It further recommended that the *sarbarah* spend time every year in each of the specified settlements. There appears to have been some discussion about the final question above. *Jirga* members suggested that Mir Karam Khan and the *takkris* should take an oath on the Quran to keep the peace. They further advised that any *takkri* who rejected the sardar's authority or breached the peace, should have his property confiscated and be expelled from Jhalawan.

The relationship between a young sardar and his *sarbarah* was often troubled, as it contained a structural conflict of interest. The *sarbarah* was typically a close agnate, often the deceased sardar's brother, who had some claim to the *sardarship* himself, as in the case of the Mengals. The young Rasul Baksh spent most of his time with his mother, sister of the former Jam, who had returned to Bela to live with her relatives and rarely visited the Mengal territory. In January 1922, Rasul Baksh asked to resign the sardarship. The British believed that Karam Khan had intimidated the young sardar, and the British were unwilling to accept the resignation without exploring the motives leading to it. They encouraged Karam Khan to seek reconciliation with his nephew. When this failed, the British external Karam Khan from the Mengal land, gave full powers to Sardar Rasul Baksh, and warned the *takkris* against intriguing with him.

Although the chiefs did not mount a coordinated, sustained rebellion, it seems clear that the war had spurred an increased level of resistance, and the British resolve and power were tested in new ways. The Agency was forced to call up troops, and make compromises where they lacked resources to exact punishments as they had before the war. The political nature of the resistance was



manifest in efforts to obtain German assistance and the hostility towards the recruitment programme.

#### A FINAL EFFORT TO FIND THE BALANCE

By the 1920s Agency officials were watching political movements in India and Central Asia with wary eyes. Although they were reassured by the relative isolation of Baluchistan, there was concern that new, non-tribal ideologies had reached its borders. The Congress Party and the Khilafat Movement had gathered strength in Sindh and Punjab.<sup>16</sup> The Russian Revolution had produced new levels of instability and violence as the Soviets attempted to secure the semi-independent khanates while destroying pockets of Tsarist resistance.

In the Annual Report of 1920–21, AGG Armine Dew sought to explain why the political movements which had been gathering strength in India after World War I, had little impact in Baluchistan. He acknowledged that the 'zeal and industry' of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had succeeded in keeping Quetta 'quiet and free from disturbing influences' emanating from Sindh and Punjab. He attributed relative calm in the rest of the Agency to other factors: the remoteness of Baluchistan, the lack of a press that might foment unrest, the dispersion of the population, and the presence of a large military force. The AGG thought that this was only a partial answer. According to Dew, the happy state of affairs in Baluchistan was due mainly:

to the fact that the Province already enjoys in its 'Jirgas' or 'Council of Elders'—both local and Provincial—an admirable system of Home Rule which, being free from all hide-bound restrictions and strict rule, is perfectly suited to them, which gives them all the scope for development and all the opportunities of influencing the Administration which they can wish for. . . . And it should be the constant aim of this

Administration and of the Government of India to see that this system is never tampered with either through ignorance or under the impulse of mistaken notions of efficiency.<sup>17</sup>

Dew's explanation for the political tranquility of Baluchistan rests on the strength of tribal traditions while downplaying British success in constraining efforts to enlist local support for non-tribal political movements. The zealous police, in combination with a high proportion of residents dependent on the government for jobs, contracts, and commerce, made Quetta an inhospitable location for political activity. The lack of a local press was related to government priorities that ranked education below public works and medical facilities. There were few schools in the Agency, and most of these were located in British Baluchistan and the leased territories. According to Dehwar (1994: 242), there were only three schools in Kalat, a middle school in Mastung (Sarawan), and primary schools at Bhag (Kachhi) and Turbat (Makran). In response to a 1926 query from the Department of Education, Health and Lands in Calcutta, the AGG provided an overview of education in Baluchistan with some proposals for the future. He associated the lack of schools with a lack of interest in education among the tribal population. However, the AGG noted there was 234 madrassahs, and he proposed making grants to a selected few for upgrading the quality and substance of the education they offered. He believed that a greater emphasis on manual training and agriculture would make schooling more attractive to the local people.<sup>18</sup> By this time, some sardari families had educated their sons privately, and a few sent them to Aitchison College in Lahore, which had been established to educate boys from well-off and influential, landowning and chiefly families.



Dew's support of the *jirga* as a bulwark against the infections of foreign ideologies erases the serious difficulties that challenged British authority during the war. Dew served as the PA Kalat during the war-years, and thus had directly experienced the uprisings. As the PA Kalat, Dew had depoliticized them, while as the AGG he erased them. Far from exemplifying 'Home Rule', the record suggests that the *jirga* system had limited tribal legitimacy at best.

Sometime in 1922, the AGG solicited a report from the PA Kalat about Kalat State administration. The major question to be considered was 'whether the just balance between the component parts of the state', had been disrupted by practices unauthorized by the AGG or Calcutta.<sup>19</sup> PA Terence Keyes characterized Kalat as, 'a federal State with some feudal elements in its constitution, but some even (*sic*) of the sardars and many of the tribesmen have a dual status, in one place being revenue paying subjects of the Khan and in another freemen of the Confederacy.' The concept of a tribal confederacy distinct from Kalat State, is rather inconsistent with a central problem of the 'just balance' that impelled the report. The designation of subjects and freemen exemplifies the inconsistency. Freemen are analogous to subjects in that both had no existence in Agency administration. Freemen were tribal subjects of sardars, and in fact most paid *malia* (taxes) to a sardar. Keyes noted additional anomalies: Kharan, whose position in the state 'has never been defined', and the position of the Dombkis, Marris and Bugtis, nominally part of Kalat, until Sandeman placed them under the PA Sibi (British Baluchistan). Despite its manifest inconsistencies, the Keyes report became the authoritative source for later officials struggling with the disposition of Kalat in the final years of the Raj.

As Keyes saw it, the system of 'just balance' was Sandeman's achievement and was guided by the following principles:

1. Minimum interference with the Khan's *niabets*.
2. Independence of the tribal Chiefs within tribal territory and collective responsibility for individual actions.
3. *Jirgas* to handle inter-tribal disputes, and disputes between the tribesmen and the Khan's subjects.
4. Maintaining the Raisani sardar as the premier sardar of Sarawan and the Zehri (Zarakzai) sardar as his counterpart in Jhalawan.

Keyes drew on the earlier reports prepared by Showers and Ramsay, in citing the factors that had created an imbalance. Following Showers, he argued that the authority of the Chiefs was undermined when the Rustomzais were allowed to separate from the Raisanis, and several *takkars* were de facto separated from Zehri.<sup>20</sup> Keyes, like Ramsay, saw the expansion of the *thanas* and their *thanedars* as a second factor disrupting the balance. Over time, the *thana*-model instituted in British Baluchistan, was smuggled into the system of the Kalat levy-posts as well. In British Baluchistan, *thanedars* had civil and criminal authority, and they conducted inquiries into the cases that came to them, while their levy counterparts in Kalat gradually assumed a similar role, taking on administrative tasks that should have been handled by the sardars. A third unbalancing factor, noted by Keyes's predecessors, was the Khan's 'incapacity' that forced the British to intervene in the management of his estates. Keyes recommended re-instituting the Kalat State Council established by Ramsay, which consisted of the Khan and the four major sardars of Sarawan and Jhalawan and was designed to integrate the Khan and the sardars in the governance of Kalat. Keyes proposed further steps to overcome the de facto compartmentalization of Kalat State political institutions. He advocated making the Political Advisor a *wazir-i-azam* (vizier), and transferring some *thanas* and Makran administration to him. Keyes



also proposed abolishing a number of *thanas* as a means of restoring the sardars' authority and forcing them to administer their tribes.

Ramsay, too, had been concerned about the deterioration of sardari authority. He also saw this as related to the *thanas*, whose expansion was enabled because they were supported by the Khan's Fund, which was controlled by the Agency officials. The Khan had no say in the location and staffing of the *thanas*, these questions were negotiated with the sardars. According to Ramsay, when the *thanedar* and the sardar got along, the former ended up doing much of the work that should have been done by the sardar. When relations between them were problematic, both appealed to the PA at Kalat for support, thus drawing the Agency into disputes that should have been settled by the sardars in consultation with their section heads. Ramsay saw the cumulative effect of the *thana* system as having two consequences for the sardars. On the one hand, it undermined sardari authority by constituting *thanedars* as an alternative means of adjudication. On the other hand, it made the sardars relatively independent of public opinion within their tribes. The sardars were able to make *jirga* recommendations without considering whether these were popular with their tribesmen, as they depended upon the Agency's officials for the implementation of *jirga* decisions.<sup>21</sup>

Keyes clearly agreed with Ramsay's analysis. He proposed policies to enhance the sardar's authority within his tribe:

1. The PA's staff would not accept disputes involving parties from the same tribe unless the sardar stated that he could not settle the case.
2. No *thanedar* in the tribal territory would be allowed to investigate local disputes.

3. Sardars who failed to administer their tribes would be subject to a *jirga* composed of the major sardars.

Keyes viewed the third procedure as shaming enough to elicit better tribal administration.

What was this policy of 'just balance' that the British sought to restore? Had it ever really existed? To support their points both Ramsay and Keyes cited historical examples. Both believed that it was manifest during the Second Afghan War, when the sardars, with their tribes behind them, were loyal allies of the British, and furnished transport and provisions for their troops. Keyes also cited a rather problematic example in suggesting that 'The inherent force of the Confederate spirit was shown by the willingness with which the Sardars rallied to the Political Agent in 1918, when no troops were available . . . and assisted him to chastise the Mengals.'<sup>22</sup> It is true that some sardars, mostly from Sarawan, were loyal and cooperative during World War I. However, the uprisings in Makran and Jhalawan were serious challenges to colonial authority. In a maneuver seen earlier in AGG Dew's Annual Report for 1921, resistance is expunged from the colonial record.

The 'just balance' envisioned in the early twentieth century, looked back to the Sandeman years when the sardars voluntarily supported the British, a time when sardari authority within the tribe appeared to be strong. This is the exemplary colonial vision, the gathering of tribesmen and colonials, joined together in the British campaign to protect the further reaches of the empire. It is a narrative of mutuality between the colonizer and the colonized. The voluntary nature of the relationship is central to the story. The sardars refused the alliance sought by the Afghans during the Second Afghan War, and chose instead to support the British, and provided the camel transport necessary for the British military campaign. This exemplar



of the 'just balance', the joining of the colonized to advance the goals of the colonizers, conveniently displaces the first meeting of British and Balochis during the First Afghan War. There was no joining together then, as the tribesmen repeatedly looted the imperial troops marching through Balochistan. The British blamed Mir Mehrab Khan, unjustly, as it turned out, and attacked his palace in the Kalat town and killed him. The narrative of the just balance occludes the earlier narrative, which was violent, bloody and unjust.

The notion that a just balance was achieved during the Sandeman years and could be reconstituted by a return to the policies of that time was delusional. Sandeman's policies were guided by his expansionist vision of the western border that was harnessed to a personal politics that often led to ad hoc agreements, as in the case of his direct dealings with the sardar of Kharan. The fifteen years of Sandeman's administration were profoundly non-bureaucratic. He operated within a context of unmarked space, much of which was essentially unknown to the British. The Baluchistan Agency of Sandeman's time was effectively Sarawan, Kachhi, Lasbela, and the southern part of British Baluchistan. The Agency of 1923 was a very different political space, administered by officials more securely integrated in the Imperial bureaucracy.

Ramsay and Keyes saw restoration of the just balance as dependant on pressuring the Khan and the sardars to take more active administrative roles in tribal governance. Both ignored the impact of some thirty years of post-Sandeman colonial rule. Their explanation for the deterioration of sardari authority echoed the argument proposed earlier by their predecessors with regard to the Khan's refusal to rule; his refusal was attributed to character defects. Similarly, too many sardars were failing to perform their administrative duties. Ramsay and Keyes stopped short of a mass indictment of sardari character, in part because they saw British

decisions to elevate the status of minor chiefs as a contributory factor in the decline of sardari authority. Both agreed that a major factor in pursuit of restoring the just balance was eliminating the ability of tribesmen to seek adjudication at the *thana* posts.

The first *thana* post at Mastung was established in 1892, in an effort to deal with the Khan's refusal to rule, i.e. to protect his cultivating tenants and the sardars' unwillingness to adjudicate disputes between the pastoral tribesmen and the Khan's tenants, as was discussed earlier. Over time, the *thanas* were established on a case-by-case basis. Most were located in areas of chronic unrest, a few in geostrategic locations. Showers was a strong advocate of these *thanas*. He increased their number in Jhalawan during his tenure as PA Kalat. Showers also expanded the duties of the *thanedar* by encouraging them to engage in mediation as well as policing. In a few areas where factionalism was entrenched and disputes frequent, Showers appointed a tribal notable from outside as the *thanedar*. Most of these outside *thanedars* came from Sarawan tribes, especially the Raisanis and Kurds (Todd, 1926: 29). The majority of the *thanedars*, however, served in their own tribal territories. British officials often referred to *thanas* by tribal identification, e.g., the Mengal or Zehri *thana*. Most *thanedars* came from sardari families and it was not uncommon for a chief's son to occupy the position. By 1923, there were fifteen *thanas* in Kalat.<sup>23</sup>

Keyes and Ramsay's analyses of the decline in sardari authority were insightful in several ways, as both displayed a sense of process that changed through time. They understood that the *jirga* provided an inter-cultural political arena, dominated by the British, who were committed to administering through the tribal custom. On occasion, Agency officials sought to 'improve' custom, as in the case of trying to limit the vengeance killing to the actual perpetrator of the initiating offence. In most, but not all, instances, *jirgas*



accepted the way the presiding official framed the case and provided the recommendations sought by the British. Ramsay and Keyes noted that the sardars had managed to shift much of the responsibility for implementing the *jirga* decisions from themselves to Agency officials. When it came to evaluating changes in the tribal process related to the expansion of the *thanas*, Ramsay and Keyes fell back on formulaic complaints. In a move similar to the British characterizations of the Khan, some sardars were represented as refusing to perform their administrative duties, leaving the *thanedars* to pick up the slack. In other cases, *thanedars* and sardars were at odds, forcing the British to referee their differences. Both officials acknowledged the *thanas* as a British innovation, hence a legitimate subject of changes in British policy. Both failed to consider whether the *thanas* contributed to the volatility of sardari politics in Jhalawan by creating an alternative to sardari adjudication. In 1913, PA Dew reported that the *thanedars* and the Native Assistants actively undermined sardari authority.<sup>24</sup> Typically, Agency officials could not envision tribesmen as political actors whose choices affected the system. However, the choices of tribesmen seeking mediation were critical to viewing the *thanedars* as part of the problem, because a *thanedar* could not have been a troublesome challenger of the chiefs' authority unless the actions of his tribesmen constituted him thus. Ramsay and Keyes framed their argument for restoring the sardari authority within the larger issue of tribal governance and turned towards a structural solution: *thanas* should be reduced in number and responsibility for them should be transferred to the *Wazir-i-Azam* (Prime minister), formerly, the Political Advisor to the Khan.

It is remarkable that the issue of tribal subjects appeared so rarely in the colonial archive. The absence of tribepeople was the result of deliberate British policy. In the protocol of Agency administration,

it was virtually impossible for a tribal subject to appeal to an official above the level of an Assistant Political Agent or, rarely, the PA himself. Such appeals were routinely referred to the sardars, who would, certainly, have been displeased at the attempt to go around them.

The crisis surrounding the leasing of Nasirabad, provides a rare glimpse of tribal cultivators recognizing a new opportunity.<sup>25</sup> When the irrigation canals were extended into Kalat in 1843, cultivators were quick to participate in the project, and quick to understand how the arbitrary and corrupt administration of the Khan's officials disadvantaged them vis-à-vis the Sindhi cultivators. In 1898, E.G. Colvin, Revenue Commissioner, Baluchistan, reported that the Khan's tenants repeatedly complained about being short-changed on water and being denied the agricultural loans available to their Sindhi counterparts. They challenged their status as subjects of the Khan on the grounds that they paid half their revenue assessment to the British, and thus should be considered subjects of the British Government, eligible for the same benefits as the Sindhis. According to Colvin, many went to Jacobabad (Sindh) to register their land, even though such registration had no standing in Kalat. Colvin may have overstated the cultivators' willingness to accept British authority. The subtext of his report suggests that they recognized the intrinsic superiority of British governance, which is a dubious assumption. However, the Baloch did recognize the material benefits denied them as Kalat subjects, and they devised an argument about taxes and status compatible with British concepts. Their agitation played a role in the British decision to lease Nasirabad, if only in providing Colvin with an argument in favour of it.

Many tenants of the Khan were willing to register complaints against him and his *naibs* when the British were willing to listen,



as they were in Mastung in 1876 and during the 1892 deposition hearings against Mir Khodadad Khan. Most of the land cases involved arbitrary increases in water, crop-shares, and taxes. Some petitioners claimed outright seizure of land or water. While the British did not hear complaints against the sardars, the frequency with which tribal subjects turned to the levies suggests a desire to find alternative forms of mediation.

Agency efforts to persuade the Khan to take a more constructive role in Kalat's governance were vitiated by the declining health of Mir Mahmud Khan. According to Dehwar (1994: 237), the Khan became blind, and the *Wazir-i-Azam*, Mir Shams Shah, became effectively 'the ruler of Kalat State with vast powers to run the administration of the State for the next ten years.'

The British were committed to a top-down administration that produced a structural ignorance about tribal subjects. Proposed reforms were backward-looking, designed to restore the illusory 'just balance' between the colonizers and the tribal elites. Both Keyes and Ramsay advocated reducing institutions and practices they viewed as non-tribal. The sardars did not share the imperial nostalgia behind the notion of a just balance, and in the twenty-five years following Sandeman's death, they adapted to the colonial constraints imposed by the British, but each sardar pursued his own interests. The notion of a just balance that excluded tribal subjects was fundamentally flawed.

### Notes

1. Foreign to AGG, 5 May 1906, SAHSA, Sec. 6, File 222, Basta 6.
2. I have been unable to resolve the extent of Mir Mahmud's interaction with the sardars out of the purview of the Agency. It is clear, for example, that the Khan did take an active interest in the succession conflicts of Jhalawan.
3. AGG to Foreign, 30 August 1912, IOR R/1/34/33.



## The Politics of Change

Although British rule was challenged from time to time, Agency officials had managed to maintain the tribal system established by Sandeman, for more than fifty years. In 1930, Kalat was almost as isolated from the Indian Empire as it had been in 1876. Its remoteness was underwritten by British policies that supported tribal governance and pre-colonial land tenures rather than economic development and education. The decade of the 1930s was a historic turning point as a Baloch nationalist movement emerged, a new Khan was invested, and longstanding anomalies of Agency governance became increasingly problematic for the British.

Mir Mahmud Khan's long reign ended with his death in 1931. He died without indicating a preference for succession. His son, Anwar Jan, said to be weak and easily influenced, was the powerful *wazir-i-azam*, Shams Shah's, choice. The AGG favoured Mahmud Khan's aged brother, Mir Mohammad Azam Jan. He opposed Anwar Jan for several reasons: he was Shams Shah's choice, his mother was reputed to be a concubine, and he was uneducated. The AGG was concerned that Anwar Jan would be the sardars' choice, and he wished to avoid rejecting their candidate. He managed to do this by indirectly advocating Azam Jan in a speech before the sardars and by requesting a verbal vote prior to the official vote in writing.<sup>1</sup> Azam Jan was also the candidate of the emerging Baloch nationalists. In a ceremony attended by the viceroy, Mohammad Azam Jan was installed in 1932. The viceroy took the occasion to

advise the new Khan to work with the sardars and cautioned him against those who challenged sardari authority, an apparent warning against the nationalists (Breseeg, 2004: 212). Mohammad Azam Khan's short and uneventful reign ended with his death in 1933.

When Mir Ahmad Yar Khan succeeded his father in 1933, he was thrust into a Kalat which was no longer isolated from the forces that were unsettling India. The British Government was beginning to consider political reforms that would lead to the 1935 Government of India Act. The Baluchistan nationalist movement, although only a small cadre of elites, had become a presence in Agency politics. Ahmad Yar Khan himself embodied historical changes in the Kalat State. He was born in Loralai (British Baluchistan) in 1902, and spent his early years in the household of his grandfather, the deposed Mir Khodadad Khan. He was educated by tutors and became fluent in Urdu, Persian and English, and was the first Khan to hold official positions in the Agency, first as an assistant to the AGG, and later, as Adjutant in the Zhob Militia. He was stationed in Chagai, where one of his duties was the surveillance of communist influence on the Iranian border (Baluch, 1975: 111–12).

Shortly after his accession, Ahmad Yar Khan sought to resume some of the powers that had been taken by the British during the decades when Mir Mahmud Khan had refused to rule. The Khan's formal request to assume the responsibilities of his position was accompanied by a supporting petition signed by the sardars. The British were cooperative to a point as over the years Agency officials had repeatedly assured Calcutta that their interventions in Kalat were undertaken reluctantly, and were due to Mahmud Khan's inadequacies. The AGG drafted a careful response. 'It has been my very great pleasure to assure His Excellency the Viceroy that I believe Your Highness capable, with good advisors, of discharging



wisely and well the onerous burden of responsibility for the control of the Sardars and their tribes.<sup>12</sup> The agreement set out apparently attractive terms: the Khan would assume control of the sardars; jurisdiction of cases involving the sardars or the tribesmen would be transferred to him; and he would take charge of disbursing the *sardari* subsidies paid by Kalat. There were, however, conditions Ahmad Yar Khan would have to accept, the most important of which were:

1. No previous orders of the AGG or the PA could be reversed without consultation.
2. A sardar could be deposed only on the advice of a *jirga*.
3. Sardars would retain their access to the PA.
4. The Khan would consult the PA in cases involving the sardars.

With regard to the last condition, the AGG explicitly stated that a failure to consult would be regarded as a breach of the Mastung Agreement. Under such circumstances, the AGG would take appropriate action, which 'might involve a reversion to the present system whereby the Political Agent exercises direct authority over the Sardars.'<sup>13</sup> The AGG assured Ahmad Yar Khan that this constraint on his power would remain confidential. The confidentiality being offered was a deceptive *purdah*; it would evaporate if the British believed that the Khan had violated the agreement. In fact, the terms and spirit of the agreement offered the Khan the appearance of rule, contingent on him relinquishing the substance. The British had no intention of losing control of the sardars.<sup>14</sup> They were also determined to keep a firm rein on the Khan, insisting that he consult the PA Kalat before issuing any significant order. The British persuaded Ahmad Yar Khan to accept Edward Wakefield, a young and inexperienced Assistant Political

Agent, as his *wazir-i-azam*. For the first time a British official was appointed to a position of the Kalat State. Although Wakefield said his appointment was based on the need to sort out the management of the Khan's *niabets*, the British probably felt a stronger need to have full confidence in the chief advisor to the Khan (Wakefield, 1966: 111). Wakefield was in many ways a good choice for both the British and the Khan. He was energetic, anti-nationalist, and had a flair for problem-solving. Wakefield's ingenuity was manifest in the ways he found to increase Kalat's revenues, even, on one occasion, briefly working against the interests of Calcutta. In 1933, some Sindhi silk-merchants took advantage of favourable duties on imported silk by shipping to Pasni (Makran) rather than Karachi. Calcutta asked the AGG to stop the trade at Pasni. Wakefield's first move was to raise the duty from 5 per cent to 33 per cent, which was half the rate charged at Karachi. Unsurprisingly, this did not satisfy Calcutta, and after several weeks of negotiations, Wakefield raised the level of the rate charged at Pasni to that of Karachi, but in the interim Kalat enjoyed a minor windfall in import duties (Wakefield, 1966: 112). In 1934, Wakefield enlisted the unpaid help of a British engineer to upgrade irrigation in Kachhi. He encouraged former residents who had immigrated to Sindh to return by providing advances against the harvest. There was a bumper crop that year, but the low prices it fetched at auction aroused Wakefield's suspicion of price-fixing. He conspired with his Punjabi Revenue-Assistant in setting up new Punjabi contractors for the auction in 1936, and Kalat's revenues from the grain sales more than doubled (Wakefield, 1966: 141).<sup>5</sup>

In the same year, Wakefield received a visit from the Bangalzai sardar. Although Wakefield does not report the visit as unusual, it probably was; sardars would not have been inclined to place themselves in the lesser status as a guest with British officials. The chief indicated that the Khan might order Wakefield to travel to



Kachhi to inspect dams along the Nari River. He told Wakefield that the trip would be too dangerous and advised him to send his assistant in his place. Wakefield was well aware that summer heat in Kachhi was legendary among British officials and highland tribes alike. It was—and is—summed up in a local saying: 'Oh creator of Sibi and Dhadur, why bother to create hell.' The sardar's prediction was fulfilled when Wakefield received a letter ordering him to inspect the dams. It was the first written instruction sent to Wakefield, who, after some thought, 'decided to obey' (1966: 116). Wakefield survived the difficult journey unscathed, although a servant and several horses perished along the way. When he returned to Kalat town, Ahmad Yar Khan informed him that the Bangalzai sardar had suggested the trip as a test of Wakefield's loyalty to the Khan (1966: 118). Wherever the truth lies in this story, it indicates that Wakefield had become an object of intrigue in the volatile relations between Ahmad Yar Khan and the sardars, so, shortly thereafter, the British reassigned Wakefield.

Negotiations between the Khan and the AGG broke down over several issues concerning the distribution of authority between the Khan and the sardars. The British refused to transfer payment of the Sarawan sardars' allowances to the Khan. For his part, the Khan would not accept the British right to appoint and dismiss sardars. The British claimed that the treaty of 1876 obligated them to uphold sardari authority. They argued that they met this obligation by seeking *jirga* recommendations in sardari depositions and appointments. However, Redaelli (1997: 121) points out that the British had no formal right to appoint and depose sardars. During negotiations the AGG noted that some sardars were concerned about, what he called 'the Raisani faction', which included the Bangalzai and Lehri sardars, having too much influence over the young and inexperienced Khan. The AGG worried that the Khan would practice 'divide and rule' tactics with the sardars.<sup>6</sup> This was

a truly ironic turn, coming from an official of the government that had employed similar tactics repeatedly in expanding the Indian Empire. By the late 1930s, relations between the British and the Khan were strained, as the passage of the Government of India Act in 1935 put new pressures on their relations.

The Government of India Act 1935, was the last British constitutional reform in India. It was controversial in Britain, where Conservatives thought it gave Indians too much power, and the Socialists criticized it for favouring the princes at the expense of the Congress, which opposed it for the same reason. The Act envisioned a Federation of Provinces (British India), the Princely States, and a few Chief Commissioner's provinces (Wolpert, 1993: 322). Although the idea of a federation was eventually abandoned, provincial governments were elected in 1937. The overwhelming success of Congress candidates pressured Jinnah to decide whether to engage in coalition politics or push for Pakistan as a unified Muslim state. When Congress's leaders failed to provide the protections Jinnah sought for the coalition option, he committed the Muslim League to the Pakistan solution (Wolpert, 1993: 324).

The politics set in motion by the Act eventuated in British acceptance of two successor nations. Before this major realignment of the subcontinent, colonial officials struggled to fit Baluchistan into the proposed federated structure of the Act. The question of Baluchistan's representation in the proposed Federal Assembly, highlighted problems of space and governance, long acknowledged but finessed by colonial authorities. There were serious difficulties at several levels. The provincial status of British Baluchistan made it technically eligible to join the Assembly, but its population was too small to include it as a separate electorate. The participation of Kalat State depended upon the Khan's decision to join. The mélange of leased territories, Agency Territories and the tribal areas,



further complicated the issue. 'Their implied or express agreements with the British Government', meant that there were a number of leaders, who, according to Agency officials, had the right to determine whether to join the Federation.<sup>7</sup> It was highly improbable that all, or even most of them, would agree to do so.

Kharan exemplified the constitutional problems that had been ignored or finessed in the past. When Azad Khan Nausherwani met with Sandeman in 1883, the Khan was not a party to the agreement they signed. However, Azad Khan did take a seat in the Khan's *darbar*, which implied his submission. On the one hand, the Nausherwani sardar was not a signatory to the 1876 Mastung Agreement, on the other, however, he did sign the sardars' petition for the removal of Mir Khodadad Khan in 1892. The issue was further muddled by the fact that Kharan had been placed under the PA Chagai from 1911 to 1920, giving it an implied status as an Agency territory rather than part of Kalat.<sup>8</sup> Yet Kharan had been incorporated in Kalat in official government maps.<sup>9</sup>

As the AGG and the newly-constituted External Affairs Department, grappled with these inconsistencies over several months in 1939, tempers became short. The Government of India asserted that it had always been clear about Kharan's subordination to the Khan and took exception to the AGG's complaint that it had shirked resolving Kharan's status in the past.<sup>10</sup> It was the Khan's failure to control Kharan that had rendered it effectively independent.<sup>11</sup> When the Nausherwani Nawab asked the British to clarify his status, the AGG responded that he was not a sardar of Kalat State but was a member of the Baluch Confederacy, of which the Khan was the head.<sup>12</sup>

Lasbela posed a similar problem. In 1932 the Jam wrote directly to the Viceroy, requesting British recognition of Lasbela's

independence from Kalat, pointing out that he, the Jam had enjoyed direct relations with the British for several generations. Lasbela, arguably, had a stronger case than Kharan's, since the Jam had been, for all intents and purposes, independent from the Khan, as Calcutta acknowledged.<sup>13</sup> If, as Denys Bray once suggested, Kalat's politics were *opera buffa*, the farce was as much a creation of the British as of the Baloch.<sup>14</sup> The Baloch Confederation was an expedient myth, derived from Calcutta's determination to protect its foundational fiction of Kalat as a native state ruled by the Khan. Unlike Kalat, which did have a territorial existence, however contested its borders, the Baluch Confederation existed only in the colonial archive.

#### THE KALAT-KHARAN WAR

British pronouncements on the status of Kharan pleased neither Mir Ahmad Yar Khan nor Nawab Habibullah Khan. Dissatisfaction with British policy probably contributed to Habibullah's turn to the longstanding Nausherwani land-dispute on the Kharan-Chagai border. He was the third Nausherwani sardar to protest British claims there. The contested lands appeared to have figured in the Agency's strategy to control Kharan by flanking it from the north and south. In 1910, Habibullah's father, Yaqub Khan, had expelled levies from Ladgasht and Sohtagan but his challenge ended when he was assassinated in a palace plot in 1911. In 1925, Habibullah Khan again claimed Sohtagan but once again the British rejected his claim.<sup>15</sup> Conditions predisposed intransigence from both the Khan and the Nawab. While Ahmad Yar Khan was a new and untested leader, Habibullah Khan was the inheritor of his predecessors' displeasure with a series of decisions by the Agency, and was now presented with yet another adverse ruling.



The Nawab made the first moves in Gorjak (Mashkai) and Khudabadan (Makran).<sup>16</sup> Gorjak had become an ambiguous space in colonial Baluchistan, located in the unmarked zone between Kharan and Jhalawan. In 1938, Habibullah Khan dispatched troops to Mashkai with the aim of collecting *sung* (duty) from the transit trade along the Kalat-Pasni Road. Asserting a claim to territorial control in pre-colonial Kalat, it had been used some years earlier by the Bizenjo sardar on the Bizenjo-Labela border. Ahmad Yar Khan would have recognized the *sung* claim as a challenge to his authority in Mashkai.

Relations between the sardar and the Khan were further strained by a land dispute with a complicated history. In 1896, Mir Mahmud Khan confirmed a Nausherwani grant at Gorjak in a *sanad* with unclear boundaries, but which may have included the neighbouring tract of Mastolad. In 1900, the Khan's *naib* gave cultivating rights in Mastolad to a Bizenjo. About 1918, the Muhammad Hasni sardar, serving as the Khan's *naib*, gave the land to different tenants and took the proprietary share until around 1930. In 1933, the Nausherwani chief claimed that Mastolad fell within his Gorjak grant. The Khan's *naib* objected and wanted a *jirga* to consider the case. In 1936 the PA Kalat began taking evidence. The PA declined to send the case to a *jirga* and decided in favour of the Nawab, but the Khan appealed. The succeeding PA decided that the *sanad* held by the Nausherwanis was a fake, and awarded the land to the Khan. The PA was perhaps predisposed to favour the Khan, as Habibullah Khan was resisting the British demand that he cease collecting the *sung*.

The case dragged on, with each party accusing the other of territorial encroachment. Ahmad Yar Khan upped the ante by pointing out that Gorjak was a *jagir*, held on condition of loyalty, and as the Nawab was clearly disloyal, the land should revert to

Kalat. The Nausherwani chief responded that Kalat had never collected revenue on Mastolad, arguing that the Nausherwanis held both proprietary and judicial rights in the land. This kind of land dispute was probably not uncommon in pre-colonial times. When a sardar or the Khan failed to protect his interests in a tract of land, the rights to it effectively passed to an intermediary agent who exercised control, perhaps retaining the proprietary share for himself, as the Muhammad Hasni sardar did for some years. Given Mahmud Khan's apparent disinterest in managing his estates, it is not surprising that the Nausherwani sardar had been expanding his control in the Mashkai area.

In Khudabadan, the Nausherwanis were also claiming both proprietary and judicial rights. Khudabadan residents were of a mixed-tribal background, and non-resident Nausherwanis, Gichkis and the Khan were the principal proprietors. The APA Makran reported to the PA Kalat, that prior to 1904, Khudabadan was, like other Makrani villages, administered by the *nazim*, acting as the Khan's agent. In 1908, Nawab Nauroz Khan, grandfather of Habibullah Khan, was said to have ordered his *naib* to settle the Khudabadan cases himself. When the *nazim* complained to the PA Kalat, he was told not to interfere in cases involving only the Khudabadan residents. By 1931, the *naib* of Khudabadan, agent of the Nausherwani sardar, was settling cases that involved the Khan's subjects with no objection from Mahmud Khan.

While a newly-appointed AGG considered affairs in Gorjak, the Khan's *mastaufi* (representative) in Panjghur (Makran), complained that the *naib* of Khudabadan was refusing requests to send residents involved in Panjghur cases to him. On 1 November 1939, the Nausherwani sardar telegraphed the AGG, asserting that the PA Kalat was ignoring his reports about the Khan's interference in Khudabadan's administration. A few days later, Habibullah Khan



called Nausherwani notables to a meeting where he solicited their support against Kalat.

On 18 November, Kharan's forces attacked and burned Malechband, a Kalati post in Mashkai, capturing four Kalati soldiers. Kalat sardars, in defiance of an Agency order, began to collect *lashkars* in the Balochi style. The AGG urged him to hold back and let the sardar would be held accountable. The conflict seemed averted when Kharan's forces withdrew in the face of Kalat troops. On 30 November, Ahmad Yar Khan met with the AGG and agreed to defer retaliation against Kharan. However, the following day Kharan's forces re-occupied Malechband. In response, Kalat troops occupied the Nausherwani village of Patkin, and shortly thereafter, took Malechband and Gorjak. On 6 December, the Khan's chief minister and four Sarawani sardars went to Patkin to stop the fighting and arrange a withdrawal.

Actual hostilities were short and limited, but the Kalat-Kharan conflict had important consequences. The British investigation in early 1940 clearly showed that the PA Kalat viewed Kharan as the aggressor and its sardar, Habibullah Khan, as repeatedly deceptive and uncooperative. He had retained his *naiib* at Khudabadan, despite British advice to replace him and had also failed to tell him to comply with the APA's orders, who, therefore, had continued to collect taxes in Khudabadan against British orders. Furthermore, Habibullah Khan had mounted a wily propaganda campaign. He turned out a series of letters to the AGG with charges against Kalat and claims that Kharan had always been independent. During the Agency's investigation in 1940, the sardar had mobilized petitions to the Viceroy from Kharanis in Sindh, alleging ongoing plundering by Kalat's forces. There were occasional newspaper articles

deploring the actions of Kalat in Kharan.<sup>17</sup> The Khan had been consistently cooperative with the British during the conflict and the subsequent investigation. The only serious British concern about Kalat's conduct during the conflict was the looting, especially by the Jhalawan troops, who had stripped inhabitants of a couple of villages of all their possessions. Several sardars were reported to have participated in these raids.

Ahmad Yar Khan had every reason to be pleased with the response of the Kalati sardars to the Nausherwani challenge. They had turned out an impressively large *lashkar*, which according to the PA's estimate numbered around 1,700 tribesmen. The Sarawan sardars, more accustomed to cooperating with Agency officials, had backed the Khan. The PA noted that the Kalati forces would have achieved a decisive victory over Kharan, had the British not intervened. On 23 January 1940, the Khan requested a determination of fault, to be decided by the British rather than a *jirga*, and he wanted the Kharan-Jhalawan border officially demarcated. The PA Kalat was clearly sympathetic to these conditions. In a letter dated 18 February to the AGG, the PA recommended a public finding that Habibullah Khan was to blame for the conflict, and advocated public apologies to Ahmad Yar Khan and the AGG. Additionally, he suggested that the sardar should also be forced to dismiss and exile from Kharan, the *shagassi*, who had led Kharan's forces.<sup>18</sup>

Since Calcutta had its own agenda, and wanted the blame to be equally distributed between Kalat and Kharan, the PA's recommendations were not implemented. The AGG, however had strong reservations about this:

The major blame in my opinion attaches to Nawab Habibullah Khan, who committed two unprovoked acts of aggression against a State, whose suzerainty over him he had only recently been required by the Crown Representative to acknowledge. . . . I think he [the Khan] was



genuinely nervous about his position and influence as Ruler of Kalat and Head of the Kalat Confederacy, if he failed to take up Kharan's challenge.<sup>19</sup>

Although Calcutta took a harsh position with regard to the pillaging by Kalat's forces, the Colonial Officials certainly understood that plunder was legitimate spoils of war for many indigeneous subcontinental forces. It seems to have been their justification for equal distribution of blame. However, Calcutta's position was based on wartime concerns. Kharan, Calcutta's the essentially uncontrolled borders of Afghanistan and Iran. There was concern that Habibullah Khan might intrigue with the Afghans or Persians 'or both if he is pressed too hard. He might even follow the practice, which is not without precedent in Baluchistan . . . [and] abscond across the Frontier.'<sup>20</sup> There was particular concern about Iran, where, German presence and influence had grown in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup> In an effort to obtain reliable surveillance in Kharan, the British sent an official to advise Habibullah Khan. The Nawab welcomed the envoy because he saw this as recognition of Kharan's status of equality with Lasbela. Calcutta's wartime policy diverged from the Agency's practical concerns in maintaining stability in Kalat. The AGG was forced to deal with an angry Ahmad Yar Khan, who saw the British rewarding the Nawab for his territorial challenge to the Khan's authority. This determined the Khan's recalcitrant position vis-à-vis Agency officials at a particularly critical time. It led Ahmad Yar Khan to make decisions that had adverse consequences after the war.

The Khan saw Kalat as victimized by Calcutta's refusal to formally sanction Habibullah Khan. The decision dishonoured him and damaged his relations with the sardars. Appealing to Article 5 of the 1876 treaty, Ahmad Yar Khan asked to open direct relations with the Government of India.<sup>22</sup> What he had hoped to gain from

this request is unclear but perhaps he was not aware of the differences between the Agency and Calcutta, and had lost confidence in the AGG. Then again, he might have hoped that he could persuade officials at the higher levels to change their position. In any case, while Calcutta acknowledged the Khan's right to such representation, they opposed exercising it, pointing out that it was an unnecessary expense, as all formal relations would continue to go through the PA Kalat and the AGG.<sup>23</sup> Calcutta's decision came at a critical time in British-Kalat relations, as the new Khan had demonstrated his desire to resume the responsibilities of his office while working cooperatively with the Agency's officials.

Furthermore, the Government of India made another decision that alienated Ahmad Yar Khan. They confirmed the policy of treating Kharan as de facto independent of the Khan, though still formally a dependency of Kalat:

There is a great difference between the AGG acting as an arbitrator between two independent rulers and two parties, one of whom is subordinate to the other. The Khan claimed that a dispute between him and the Chief of Kharan should be decided under Article 5 of the Treaty, as if he was an ordinary Kalat Sardar: the Chief of Kharan, supported by the unbroken practice of more than 50 years, refuses arbitration on such terms.<sup>24</sup>

#### BALUCHISTAN AND THE 1935 GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT

The proposed Act called for an elected Federal Assembly, and this raised the question of voting procedures. AGG Norman Cater did not believe that a universal franchise was workable. Quetta, with its large non-tribal population, could dominate the vote, possibly returning a non-Muslim representative. Cater supported voting with 'some version of the Sardari and Jirga System which forms the



foundation not only of our administration but of the whole social edifice of Baluchistan.<sup>25</sup> When the AGG solicited comment from the PAs, they expressed reservations about harnessing the process to the *jirga* system. They pointed out that the *jirga* was not based on any proportional principle of participation, nor was it a body whose process lent itself to electoral contests, being based on compromising differences to arrive at an acceptable settlement. Furthermore, election through the *jirga* system would leave urban interests unrepresented.<sup>26</sup>

The extensive correspondence between London, Calcutta and Quetta from 1933 to 1939 demonstrated the impossibility of bureaucratic regulations designed to protect designated interests in India and ensure the quality of electoral candidates were unworkable in the Baluchistan Agency. When the Government of India Act was passed in London in 1935, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan queried the AGG about its effects on his State. Would Kalat remain a frontier state, separate from the other Princely States, without direct relations with the new Federal Assembly, as the PA Kalat had suggested?<sup>27</sup> Or would Kalat fall under the regulations relating to the other Princely States? If the latter were the case, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan would have to decide whether to accede. When the AGG sought Calcutta's advice on these questions, the Foreign Department responded that, under the provisions of the Act, a state that was incapable of meeting the regulations would not be allowed to federate, i.e. His Majesty would not accept the Instrument of Accession. The Foreign Department also pointed out that if the Khan were allowed to accede, paramountcy would cease, and the Federation would not acknowledge any previous rights enjoyed by the sardars, nor any such rights formerly granted to the Jam of Lasbela. If the sardars were to object to federating, His Majesty would not accept the Instrument of Accession. Given the

circumstances, it would be the task of the AGG to see that the Khan did not decide on accession, thus avoiding placing the British throne in an embarrassing position. The PA's suggestion that Kalat might remain a frontier state 'to a great extent aloof from the rest of India, and having no direct relations with the Federal Government', seems designed to encourage Ahmad Yar Khan's desire for independence and to prevent a royal embarrassment.<sup>28</sup> The Government of India Act was shelved during the war, and in the rapid pace of the subcontinent's post-war politics, the anomalies of Kalat were again finessed as it was incorporated into the category of Native States.

The difficulties of applying the reform regulations made it clear that Calcutta and the Agency needed to devise a unified position on Kalat. It became the AGG's task to present Kalat's constitutional history in a way that defended the Agency's policies and practices to Calcutta. In 1934, AGG H. Weightman, wrote a lengthy memo on this subject.<sup>29</sup> He noted that there had been a longstanding debate among British officials as to whether the Government of Kalat was basically feudal or federal. The Government of India had taken the feudal position at the signing of the 1876 treaty, noting that the Khan did not rule directly, but through the sardars. However, Sandeman stated that the Government of Kalat was federal, as the Khan had supreme authority in external affairs and sardars had the obligation to provide troops at his request. Sandeman's federalist argument is somewhat weak, as it is unlikely that any Khan had any kind of supreme authority off the battlefield. While it is true that the sardars had an obligation to provide the troops, the ability of a Khan to enforce that obligation was limited.

After Khodadad Khan's removal, the sardars endorsed certain changes in Kalat governance, but Weightman pointed out that the Government of India would not accept these changes unless



Mahmud Khan agreed to them, which, under some pressure, he did. The Agency faced new challenges when Mahmud Khan refused to govern and the sardars shirked their administrative duties. This led to an increase in the Agency's staff, two Native Assistants and a Political Advisor to the Khan.

British interference in Kalat's domestic affairs became constant, a situation that the Government of India had wished to avoid, although they sanctioned the staffing that made it possible. AGG Ramsay in 1912, and Terence Keyes, PA Kalat, in 1923, proposed reforms directed toward persuading the Khan and the sardars to perform their administrative duties, as was discussed earlier. According to Weightman, Calcutta's response to Keyes's note on the constitutional question in 1926, 'made it clear that they had no idea what the constitution of Kalat was.'<sup>30</sup>

Mir Mahmud Khan's declining health inspired the AGG, Frederick Johnston, to undertake yet another summary of Kalat's constitutional history. Johnston foresaw the possibility that Mahmud Khan's successor might seek restoration of the powers accorded him in the treaty of 1876. It was Johnston's view that the British could not permit him such independence. The AGG recommended drawing up a new treaty with the ailing Mahmud Khan, but eventually decided that the Khan was too sick to pursue the matter.<sup>31</sup>

Weightman, arguing from Keyes note of 1926, said that the British had underwritten the sardars' independence from the Khan when Sandeman instituted the *jirga* as the basis of tribal governance. Keyes had rejected Calcutta's characterization of Kalat as a confederacy, arguing instead, that it was a 'multiple federal state', and the Khan embodied this multiplicity: autocratic ruler in his *niabets*, feudal overlord in the *sardari* grants held on the obligation to support the Khan and provide warriors at his request, and head

of the confederacy in the tribal territories. Keyes claimed that at some earlier, yet unspecified, time, the Khan held all the land with perennial water, which gave him a status superior to the sardars. According to Weightman, Calcutta abandoned the effort to define the Kalat government, and fell back on realpolitik: Kalat was a frontier state and maintaining cooperative sardars trumped the rights of the Khan. Weightman seconded this position, concluding:

We must of necessity have a tranquil state on our lines of communication in the event of war and we must ensure against the spread of anti-social propaganda from external sources via the state. We must therefore do the Khan something less than justice . . . the Khan can have no practical authority whatsoever (emphasis in original) in the tribal areas. . . .<sup>32</sup>

As a coherent constitutional history, Weightman's report leaves much to be desired. By appealing to Keyes's tortured analysis of the Khan's multiple statuses, it undermines the territorial integrity of Kalat and calls its statehood into question. Weightman asserted that Calcutta had determined the impossibility of defining Kalat's governance, and then seconded Calcutta's conclusion that, regardless of treaty obligations, the Khan could not be allowed to strengthen his authority with the sardars.

While the British devised their version of Kalat's constitutional history, Ahmad Yar Khan created an alternative construction. In the Khan's account, 'misunderstandings' occupy a central position in Kalat's history since the first arrival of the British as a colonial power on the scene. It was a misunderstanding that led the British to murder Mir Mehrab Khan and plunder Kalat town in 1839. Subsequent misunderstandings arose from the intrigues of sardars and the ignorance of Sandeman's successors. The Khan, like the British, portrayed the Sandeman years as a time of trust and friendship. It was in this context that Quetta and the other leased



lands were granted to the British. Ahmad Yar Khan noted that the events leading to Khodadad Khan's removal occurred within the Khan's jurisdiction. He suggested that AGG Browne exceeded his authority in seeking sardari approval for changes in Kalat's governance. The Khan asserted that this was a violation of the 1876 Treaty. It weakened Mahmud Khan's authority and resulted in the abuse and impoverishment of Kalat's subjects by the sardars, the *naibs* and the state's officials. Ahmad Yar Khan called for a new treaty that would reiterate the terms of 1876 and protect the interests of both parties. He also requested the cancellation of the Nushki and Nasirabad leases; control of subsidies paid to sardars; the restoration, with arrears, of a road-fund that had been suspended for many years; and direct collection of various revenue sources. These proposed reforms would be announced at a *darbar* in Quetta.<sup>33</sup>

The creation of a revisionist history, even one conceived to further royalist interests, was a step in the development of a national identity. Ahmad Yar Khan's selectivity was astute as he cited the most egregious British actions, while avoiding issues, like the return of Quetta, which would have been tantamount to proposing a British withdrawal. In effect, the Khan sought a treaty that would replicate the basic terms of the Treaty of 1876, but would subordinate the sardars. Ahmad Yar Khan's attempt to challenge the British narrative of Kalat while remaining loyal to them, was doomed by the decision to privilege the *de facto* tribal confederacy and the sardars over the treaty with the Kalat State.

The central contradiction of the Kalat State was that Calcutta formally recognized the Khan as its ruler while acknowledging a *de facto* tribal governance. This was the problem envisioned by Merewether a century earlier, when he advocated military support to back up the authority of the Khan. Calcutta's goal of securing

the border at minimal cost led it to go with Sandeman's tribal policy. While Kalat and the Baluchistan Agency in general, were a remote space in the empire, Agency officials and Calcutta could soften the contradiction with finesse, but events, local and international, caught up with decades of ad hoc colonial policies that papered over the frequent breaches of paramountcy. The ascendance of a new, activist Khan, along with the proposed constitutional reforms, revealed the cost of issues deferred and finessed: a politically isolated and undeveloped quasi-state, unfit to participate in the new Indian government.

#### THE BALUCH NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Baluchistan was unpromising ground for the growth of a nationalist movement. The population was scattered in encampments, villages and small towns. There were few schools and literacy was rare. Quetta, the only city in the Agency, was effectively British territory. Neither tribal chiefs nor Agency officials were sympathetic to such ideas. Yet the beginnings of a nationalist movement emerged in the late 1920s, probably out of informal conversations among a small number of educated Baluchis, who began to question colonial governance. The movement became more organized as the 'Anjuman-e Ittehad-e-Balochan wa Baluchistan' in the early 1930s, under the leadership of Mir Yusuf Ali Magasi and Abdul Aziz Kurd. The founders of the Baluch nationalist movement came from different tribal and economic backgrounds. Yusuf Ali Khan Magassi, son of the Magassi sardar, was educated at home in Persian and Urdu. Abdul Aziz Kurd's father was a civil servant of Kalat. A third early member was Mohammad Hossein Anka, whose father was a labourer who had moved the family to Mach (Bolan) in search of employment. Anka attended primary school in Mach and graduated from a high school in Quetta (Breseeg, 2004: 206; Dehwar, 1994: 243-4).



Yusef Ali Khan's family went into exile in Multan (Sindh), when the sardar ran afoul of Mir Shams Shah, Mahmud Khan's powerful *wazir* (vizier; minister). It was during this period that Yusuf Ali Khan 'imbibed Congress ideas.' In 1929, shortly after the family returned to their home in Kachhi, Mir Yusuf Ali Khan published an article in a Lahore weekly that criticized colonial governance and called for Mir Shams Shah to be replaced. Agency officials reported this to be the first time that Congress's ideas had appeared in Kalat, and described the article as 'highly inflammatory'.<sup>34</sup> The British recognized the threat posed by a non-tribal politics focused on colonial relations and responded harshly to Magassi's article, and jailed him for a year in Mastung (Sarawan). According to Baloch (1987: 151), Abdul Aziz Kurd and Magassi met during this time.

The Baloch nationalists, inspired by the growing strength of the Congress, developed at a contingent moment in Balochistan history. The declining health of Mir Mahmud Khan led to maneuverings around the question of succession to the khanship. When Mir Mohammed Azam Khan dismissed Shams Shah shortly after his investiture, the Anjuman saw this as a victory, but it was probably due to Shams Shah's backing of Mir Mahmud's son for the succession and not due to any efforts by the Anjuman itself. Mohammed Azam Khan invited both Yusuf Khan Magassi and Abdul Aziz Kurd to a meeting, and according to Baloch (1987: 152), the meeting was inconclusive but the Khan did warn Abdul Aziz Kurd that the Anjuman's activism was dangerous.

The most significant accomplishment of the Anjuman was the organization of two All-India Baloch Conferences in 1932 and 1933 (Axmann, 2008: 148). Both were convened in Sindh, as the British would not have allowed such meetings in Quetta, the only easily accessible location in Baluchistan. The first, at Jacobabad in 1932, attracted more than 200 people, including Abdus Samad Achakzai,

a noted Pushtun nationalist leader (Breseeg, 2004: 215). Although many young progressive Baloch were present, the leading sponsors of the conference were tribal notables. As Axmann (2008: 149) notes, the appointees to the executive board of the conference included chiefs of the major tribes in Baluchistan. The ruler of Khairpur, a native state, gave the presidential address, cautioning the Baloch against the dangers of negative politics (Baloch, 1987: 154). The resolutions passed at the conference reflect the heterogeneous interests of those attending. They ranged from constitutional reforms, the unification of all Baloch, economic development and the expansion of educational facilities, to the closing of brothels. The unification of all the Baloch was a complicated question. Just before the conference, the Anjuman published a map of a 'Greater Baluchistan', that included some of the leased territories and parts of Punjab and Sindh (Breseeg, 2004: 215). The unification resolution called for joining the separately administered units of Kalat and British Baluchistan, an indication that the participants were united in opposition to colonial rule and did not view Baloch and Pushtun nationalisms as politically distinct at the time. This position was confirmed by Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai's testimony given before the Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms in 1933. He denounced both the FCR and the customary law. He viewed the latter as a collection of the 'moods and fancies of sardars.' Achakzai proposed a *Shahi Jirga* as the federal legislature of Baluchistan, with the constituent states of Kalat, Lasbela and Kharan, subject to their princely rulers. British Baluchistan would be governed as a Governor's Province under a Chief Commissioner with a council.<sup>35</sup> Achakzai's proposal was designed to reassure the political interests of the standing rulers and sardars. In its effort to integrate past political structures with a new federated centre, it was a structurally, unwieldy proposal.



The second Baloch conference was convened in Hyderabad, Sindh, in 1933. The agenda echoed the concerns expressed the previous year regarding political, economic and educational issues. Shortly after the second conference, Abdul Aziz Kurd, who was serving as the General Secretary of the Anjuman, was arrested. He had published several articles that challenged the Agency's governance. He advocated the return of the leased territories and called for the integration of Marri-Bugti into the Kalat State. The British placed the deposition of Kurd before a *Shahi Jirga* at Sibi, which recommended three years imprisonment (Breseeg, 2004: 216).

The Anjuman suffered a serious loss with the untimely death of Mir Yusef Ali Magassi in the earthquake that devastated Quetta in 1935, following which, Abdul Aziz Kurd assumed the leadership of the Anjuman. By this time, differences within the Anjuman had developed over the question of whether to cooperate with the British in efforts for reform. The radicals opposed this, arguing that the British were the enemy (Baloch, 1987: 158). The accession of a new, more activist Khan, probably intensified this debate, the moderates viewing it as an opportunity to advance the less controversial items on their agenda. The more radical members left the Anjuman in 1937 and formed the Kalat State National Party (KSNP). The interests and tactics of the four parties—the Khan, the sardars, the nationalists and the British, converged and diverged in fluid, unstable ways. The local parties had a common interest in opposing colonial rule, but had very different ideas about what should replace it. The nationalists envisioned some form of representative government, while the Khan sought to regain powers appropriated by the British. The sardars were not unified and they tended to play opportunistic politics, some allying with the Khan, some with the nationalists, and some with the British, often shifting their allegiances. Sardari politics were particularly unstable and disruptive. At one moment the sardars allied with the Khan

against the British, petitioning the Khan to 'assume direct control of all our affairs.'<sup>36</sup> When the British failed to take the petition seriously, the sardars abandoned the project. At another moment, a sardari faction intrigued to disrupt Wakefield's relations with the Khan, thus undermining the Khan's standing with Agency officials. The fragile and transitory alliances enabled the British to play their own version of divide and dominate.

Relations between the KSNP and Ahmad Yar Khan were cooperative at first, as both sought reforms in the state and both wanted to curb the sardars. Writing some years after the fact, Ahmad Yar Khan outlined his agenda when he assumed the throne. He had hoped to enlist the support of political activists of all persuasions and to 'purge out' sardars aligned with the British (Baluch, 1975: 118). Political realities soon led him to drop the purge and make overtures to the sardars. As the KSNP became the odd-man-out in Kalat politics, it accelerated both its criticism of the sardars, and its demand for a representative government. On the eve of the war, the KSNP could claim some success. Although it was still a small party of educated elites, it recruited new members from the ranks of state employees, and it persuaded the Khan to abolish a few taxes (Baloch, 1987: 155–6). These modest achievements did not sit well with the sardars and Agency officials. Tribal forces disrupted the annual party meeting at Mastung (Sarawan) in 1939. The Shawani sardar submitted a petition to Ahmad Yar Khan, demanding the arrest or expulsion of KSNP leaders and banning of the party. Although no one was arrested, the Khan banned the KSNP and exiled its leaders (Dehwar, 1994: 266–8), who established their headquarters in Quetta. Shortly thereafter, World War II began, and all political activity was banned, which encouraged the KSNP to turn towards the Congress. Even as the Muslim League gained momentum after the Lahore Resolution, KSNP cultivated ties with the Congress.<sup>37</sup> In 1944,



KSNP joined the All-India Peoples States Conference, which was closely aligned with Congress (Axmann, 2008: 158–9).

In the final years before the war, the British, the sardars and the Khan, maneuvered with an eye towards external political forces. The Khan sought legal advice from Jinnah, head of the Muslim League, regarding Kalat's status (Baluch, 1975: 131–2). The British worked to retain control of the Khan and the sardars while attempting to sort out Kalat's position within the context of Imperial reform. The KSNP allied with the Khan in supporting a unified Kalat State that included Kharan, Lasbela and the Marri–Bugti territories. The Khan and the sardars played complicated strategies of alliance against the British and in competition with each other for British support.

The struggle between the Congress and the Muslim League in India had barely begun when the Anjuman was formed. It is not surprising that Baloch nationalists turned to Congress before the war. As the Muslim League gathered strength, its platform of a unified Islamic state conflicted with the KSNP's aspirations. Although the Baloch nationalists differed as to whether the goal should be greater autonomy within some form of union with a post-colonial Indian government or an independent Baloch state, all were wary of a Baluchistan submerged within a successor Islamic state (Redaelli, 1997: 146).

In the late 1930s, the Muslim League had minimal presence in Baluchistan. It was essentially a one-man operation run by Qazi Muhammad Isa, a Pushtun lawyer from Pishin (British Baluchistan). The League attracted a small following that was predominately Pushtun. For his part, Ahmad Yar Khan viewed communal politics as an Indian issue, alien to Kalat, where Hindu shopkeepers and traders had longstanding relations of patronage and protection with

the Khan and the sardars, but the KSNP's antipathy to Pakistan would have serious consequences in the postwar period.

The politics of pre-War Baluchistan was dominated by a struggle for power among the elite actors, and economic reform did not figure significantly in any party's agenda. All of them—the British, the Khan and the sardars—were committed to maintaining the pre-colonial land-tenures. Agency policy stabilized the system by mediating land-disputes and setting boundaries. The marginalization of economic issues was related to the historical conditions of early Baloch nationalism. British colonialism in Balochistan was fundamentally political, and to the extent that the Agency's officials did encourage any economic development, they directed their efforts to the leased *niabets* of Nasirabad and Nushki, and of British Baluchistan, where they took the overlord's share from most of the cultivated land. As the dominating party in Baluchistan, the British were determined to control the distribution of power. The Khan and the sardars, whose economies benefited from British administration, engaged the colonial state at the political level. The nationalists, constrained by the power of the other actors, focused on sardari exploitation, which they saw as the barrier to political and economic reform.

In 1940, the British established the Council of National Defence, an organization to integrate the rulers of the Native States and strengthen their loyalty to Great Britain.<sup>38</sup> Ahmad Yar Khan, still angry about British failure to sanction Kharan, was not inclined to do the AGG's bidding. He declined to join the Council on the grounds that Kalat was not an Indian native state. The Government of India was not pleased, as Ahmad Yar Khan was the only invited ruler to refuse what the British clearly viewed as an 'honour'. Calcutta pressured the AGG to persuade Ahmad Yar Khan to change his mind. AGG Aubrey Metcalfe in turn pressured Ahmad



Yar Khan, pointing out that this was no ordinary invitation and stressing Kalat's independence and stating that he wished to remain aloof from Indian affairs. External Affairs (formerly the Foreign Department) again urged the AGG to obtain the Khan's agreement to join. This time Ahmad Yar Khan yielded, but with the following conditions:

1. His agreement would in no way alter the status of the Khanate, nor would his participation commit him to join any subsequent governmental body.
2. He would not be obliged to attend meetings, but could send a personal representative, who would be allowed to attend all meetings.

These conditions were unacceptable to the Government of India, and the invitation was withdrawn, with the assurance that the Khan's decision in no way altered Kalat's status as a native state. As Redaelli (1997: 177) points out, the 'assurance' that Kalat's status will be unchanged by the Khan's action is best read as British rejection of his claim that Kalat was an independent, rather than a native, state.

Redaelli views Ahmad Yar Khan's refusal to participate in the Council of Defence as a critical mistake. The Khan's isolationist stance during the critical wartime period led the British to distrust him, despite his frequent avowals of loyalty. The Baloch nationalists, too, turned away from him, while Jinnah had little difficulty working around him. 'Mir Ahmad Yar Khan thus managed to precipitate what he had desperately tried to avoid, namely the merging of his state with the possible future state entities of the Indian subcontinent' (Redaelli, 1997: 178). It is easy in hindsight to fault the Khan and the sardars for pursuing factional, local

concerns and ignoring the rise of Islamic nationalism in India. However, it seems unlikely that even the most adroit statesmanship would have produced a substantially different outcome. Once the British accepted Pakistan, neither they nor the Muslim League would have supported an independent or semi-autonomous Kalat as a permanent polity on the border of the new state. In the scant years between the end of the war, when the ban on political activity was lifted, and the birth of Pakistan, politics in Balochistan remained intensely local. There was little sense that events unfolding in India would eventually determine the future of Balochistan. The pre-war pattern of unstable alliance was now complicated by the rapid proliferation of organizations. Ahmad Yar Khan continued to pursue his vision of an independent state, while Colonial Officials worked to maintain control of the political arena. This was more easily done in British Baluchistan, where they had a freer hand than they had in Kalat. There were two significant organizations in British Baluchistan: the Muslim League, headed by Qazi Isa, and the Anjuman-i-Watan, founded by Abdus Samad Achakzai in 1938. The Anjuman sought constitutional reform and was allied with the Congress Party. Achakzai established a newspaper, *Istiqlal*, in Quetta, which was shut down from time to time, but it reported on local politics throughout the 1940s and 1950s. It was mentioned with some frequency in the official Fortnightly Reports, usually for its critical stance on local organizations and their leaders.<sup>39</sup> Achakzai had close relations with Abdul Ghaffar Khan, leader of the Khudai Khidmatgar in the NWFP (now renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-KP).<sup>40</sup> The Anjuman lacked the support-base of the Khudai Khidmatgar and was in an increasingly vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Provincial Muslim League. In 1948, Qazi Isa took legal action against Achakzai for what was called disruptive propaganda in his newspaper. Although Abdus Samad was only briefly detained on that occasion his



continuing activism, however, led frequently to such episodes of detention. Anjuman-i-Watan was essentially a reformist movement, and Achakzai's frequent imprisonment indicates the greater control of the Agency's officials in British Baluchistan. The extent of the Anjuman's support in the Pushtun areas is not known, although Axmann (2008: 165) speculates that in the 1940s, it was probably close to that of the Muslim League.

Colonial authorities employed several tactics to disrupt political organizations. Police in Quetta kept political meetings under surveillance and reported to the AGG's office. Colonial Officials compiled dossiers on the leading activists that were used to justify orders extorting them from their core supporters, while in some cases such leaders were transferred out of Baluchistan. This was an effective tactic with the Railway Workers' Union, which led to a strike in 1947. However, by 1948, the police reported that the Quetta Railway Trade Workers Union had collapsed as a result of its leaders getting frequently transferred. British officials were wary of the unions because they believed that nationalists were encouraging their activism.<sup>41</sup>

When local protests persisted or escalated, multiple interests were rapidly drawn in. In December 1945, four local chiefs from the Nushki area wrote to the PA Chagai, stating that Gul Khan Nasir, a prominent member of the KSNP, had organized a political party. They further stated that such parties were prohibited in their frontier area: 'Tribes have maintained the peace, and now we fear the leaders of this party (KSNP) will meddle in our affairs.'<sup>42</sup> The feared meddling involved octroi—import—taxes in Nushki, which the new organization had publicly criticized. In January 1946, the PA Chagai reported a 'plot to discredit senior officials.' The plot consisted of circulating stories about administrative mismanagement and gambling in which some officials were engaged. Gul Khan

Nasir was named as a plotter, along with Maulvi Ghulam Haider. The latter, associated with the KSNP, was said to have attended a Congress school in Deoband (India). He had applied for permission to open a school in Nushki, but the PA had rejected the request. By March the AGG decided to visit Nushki, where he met with a large crowd complaining about irregularities in rationing of wheat. British intelligence led the AGG to see these complaints as fueled by a faction in the Badini tribe that took any opportunity to obstruct the smooth functioning of the administration.

At this point there were two disputes raging in Chagai: the issue of taxes, with the nationalists opposing the sardars' traditional right to tax; and the question of rationing irregularities, which pitted both the nationalists and the Badini faction against the administration and the sardars, whom the nationalists charged were withholding—and perhaps selling—the public's wheat rations. The British re-established order in Chagai by expelling Gul Khan Nasir from Kalat and bringing seven others before a *jirga*. The *jirga* recommended taking security bonds for good behaviour in the amount of Rs5,000 from each man, while any form of 'public assembly' was also temporarily prohibited in Nushki.

AGG Savidge, who held office in 1948–49, had his hands full as Baloch nationalist activity increased and tensions between the Muslim League, still headed by Qazi Isa, and the sardars, simmered. When the Viceroy nominated Nawab Assadullah Raisani to the Council of State, Qazi Isa objected on grounds that a Baloch could not represent Pushtun interests.<sup>43</sup> This appeal to ethnic difference was perhaps only an expedient tactic, but it seems to have been ill-advised, as it reinforced the image of the Muslim League as a Pushtun organization. Qazi Isa would have been a logical candidate for this position and was said to be Jinnah's choice as well (Axmann, 2008: 114), but it appears that he was blocked, perhaps due to his



reputation for difficult behaviour. In any case, Qazi Isa's turn to ethnicity alienated the Baloch sardars and inspired them to organize in a loose federation. The sardars professed loyalty to Pakistan and claimed that they could guarantee the loyalty of the tribesmen, so they saw no need for the Muslim League in Baluchistan. Qazi Isa charged that the sardars were unrepresentative and irresponsible, and advocated the elections of these sardars.<sup>44</sup>

On the eve of the subcontinent's partition, Ahmad Yar Khan, in 1946, submitted a final appeal to the Cabinet Mission for the acceptance of Kalat as an independent state. The Cabinet Mission had a mandate to devise a plan that would allow the British Government to transfer power to a single union that would include British India and the Princely States. The Khan's appeal was essentially a legal brief in the form of three memoranda prepared by Sir Sayyid Sultan Ahmad, a distinguished attorney in international law. They supported the Khan's claim that Kalat was not a Princely State but rather an independent ally of the British. The British Government's termination of past treaties should, therefore, restore Kalat's pre-colonial independence. Lasbela, Kharan, and the Marri-Bugti territories, historically connected to Kalat, should be included in the transfer of power along with the leased lands of Quetta, Nasirabad and Nushki.<sup>45</sup> The argument ignored the realities on the ground, as it was ultimately military force that had maintained Kalat during the British period. The Imperial anomalies that had developed when Kalat was a 'remotely governed' space in the Indian Empire, were not acceptable to the new state emerging from Imperial dissolution. The failure of the Cabinet Mission postponed the resolution of Kalat's status, but the Khan must have realized that the British were not sympathetic to his aspirations. The future of Kalat would rest with a successor state.

The fate of British Baluchistan was settled by a Special *Jirga* in June 1947. With some reluctance, both the Congress and the Muslim League accepted the British argument that it would be impossible to constitute a more representative body in the time available. The *Jirga* was composed of Pushtun chiefs and representatives of the Quetta Municipal Committee. In a controversial referendum, the *Jirga* voted to join Pakistan, and British Baluchistan became a Governor's Province under Jinnah's authority.<sup>46</sup>

#### AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The years between the founding of Pakistan in 1947 and the imposition of One Unit in 1956 were characterized by impractical visions, mutual distrust, and retrograde politics. The new nation grappled with a series of daunting problems: resettlement of millions of refugees, shortages of trained personnel in the bureaucracy and military, and the integration of the two wings of East and West Pakistan.

The carving out of a new Muslim-majority state of Pakistan from British India had been the vision of the Muslim League's leadership, most of which came from the United Provinces in India, and they were thus refugees in the new state. Many of those who became citizens of West Pakistan at partition had little commitment, initially, to the new country. As the successor state that denied the British desire for a single post-colonial union, the Pakistani leadership saw their country as the more vulnerable party vis-à-vis India. Political constraints led the Muslim League to move cautiously in their relations with the Princely States. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the rulers of these states maintained a rather distanced stance towards Pakistan at first. Nor is it surprising that the Muslim Leaguers had a deep distrust of those who expressed any reservations about Pakistan.



This distrust, combined with ignorance, dominated relations between the Khan and Pakistani officials from the start. Douglas Fell, who had held several postings in Baluchistan, joined the Khan's staff in 1947. He represented Kalat in negotiations with the British and the new state of Pakistan. Fell found most Pakistanis he dealt with, to be woefully uninformed about Baluchistan. There was opposition to Fell's appointment from the start. According to Col. A.B.S. Shah, Minister of States and Frontier Regions, (MSFR), Fell 'was never friendly to Pakistan and towards the end we suspected he was double-dealing.' Fell, in his turn, believed that Kalat would have to accede to Pakistan eventually, but he found the terms offered by the Pakistanis to be insensitive and harsh.<sup>47</sup>

The year 1947 was critical in Kalat-Government of Pakistan relations. On 4 August, a few days before independence, Ahmad Yar Khan signed a standstill agreement with Jinnah and the Viceroy that affirmed the independence of the Kalat State. According to the terms of the agreement, both the Government of Pakistan and the Khan, would seek legal counsel as to whether Pakistan was bound by previous treaties between Kalat and the British-Indian Government. In the meantime, Pakistan would observe the terms of such treaties. The standstill agreement was internally inconsistent, acknowledging Kalat's independence while, simultaneously, constituting Pakistan as the 'legal, constitutional, and political successor of the British.' As Axmann (2007: 211) points out, this had the effect of 'putting the future existence of the khanate of Kalat at the mercy of Pakistan.'

Shortly after independence on 14 August, Ahmad Yar Khan declared Kalat independent and promulgated a constitution that provided a bicameral legislature composed of the Dar-ul Khas (Upper House, comprising the Sardars), and the Dar-ul Awam (Lower House, comprising the commoners), in which the latter was

to be elected. According to Agha Nasir Khan, who was then governor of Jhalawan, *tehsil* (district) *jirgas* constituted the electorate, and the election was conducted on a non-party basis (Axmann, 2008: 227-8). Under the circumstances, the apparent success of the KSNP candidates is somewhat surprising. At their first meetings, both the Dar-ul Awam and the Dar-ul Khas passed resolutions affirming the independence of Kalat and supporting friendly relations with Pakistan.

The constitution also established a Council of Ministers, a body controlled by the Khan, who appointed its members. They had advisory responsibilities and served at his convenience (Baloch, 1987: 179). The Khan had the right to appoint ten of the forty-six members of the Upper House and five of the fifty-five members of the Lower House. This was a constitutional monarchy with a very strong monarch. As Baloch (1987: 180) points out, the constitution failed to address the status of Lasbela, Kharan and Makran. Thus the spatial dimension of the state was finessed, as it had been earlier by the British.<sup>48</sup>

Even before independence, the Government of Pakistan had been trying to persuade the Khan to sign the Agreement of Accession and relinquish his claims to the leased lands. The institution of the parliament in Kalat and the electoral success of the KSNP increased the Government of Pakistan's determination to settle the Kalat issue as soon as possible. In March 1948, the Government of Pakistan announced separate accession agreements with the Jam of Lasbela, the Nawab of Kharan and Sardar Bai Khan of Makran. Wilcox (1966: 104) points out that the terms of these agreements ceded foreign affairs, communications and defence to the federal government, but left considerable latitude to the rulers with regards to their domestic affairs. The terms clearly descended from British paramountcy. Bai Khan, a local Gichki chief, was expediently



elevated to the newly-created position of the Nawab of Makran, and was then authorized by the Government of Pakistan to negotiate the status of Makran (Axmann, 2008: 240–1). The Government justified its legally questionable acceptance of the accessions on grounds that the Khan of Kalat was guilty of disloyalty to Pakistan. Ahmad Yar Khan was accused of seeking alliances with India and Afghanistan, charges which he denied (Baloch, 1987: 187). The Khan attempted to summon the sardars, but few of them appeared.<sup>49</sup> The Government began to move troops to Makran and Kalat, and on 27 March, the Khan signed the Instrument of Accession to Pakistan. There were scattered protests, probably fomented by KSNP members. Shortly thereafter, prominent nationalists were arrested, and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) stepped up its campaign against the KSNP.

On 15 April 1958, the Khan's brother, Agha Abdul Karim, appealed to the Baloch to join him in rising up against the Accession. Like many dissidents before him, Abdul Karim crossed into Afghanistan where he could await supporters and organize the resistance but relatively few tribesmen answered his call.<sup>50</sup> According to Dehwar (1994: 328–9), the nationalists were divided on the question of armed struggle. Some opposed the Prince's action on grounds that there was insufficient Baloch support and no active support from the Afghan government. Indeed, the Afghans told Abdul Karim to accept a refugee status or leave the country (Breseeg, 2004: 242). On 8 July, Abdul Karim's forces crossed back into Pakistan but after a brief skirmish with Pakistani troops, he surrendered. A special *jirga* recommended a fine of Rs5,000 and ten years imprisonment for him. Other dissidents received various fines and sentences.

After the failed uprising, the Government of Pakistan pressured the Khan to terminate Douglas Fell's contract. The Pakistanis claimed

that Fell, serving as the *wazir-i-azam*, should be removed on grounds that he was incapable of dealing with palace intrigue, since he apparently had not been aware of Abdul Karim's plans. The Khan denied the charge and argued for Fell's retention. Col. A.S.B. Shah, (MSFR), charged Fell with mismanagement and inability to keep control of anti-Pakistan elements in Kalat. The mismanagement charge was subsequently determined to be unfounded, but Fell was eventually persuaded to resign. Brigadier Purves, hired to upgrade Kalat's troops, was also removed, although charges against him appeared limited to his friendly relations with Fell. Several Baloch officials of the Kalat State were also expelled.<sup>51</sup>

The Government of Pakistan had prevailed, but the greater challenge was how to integrate Balochistan into the new state. Axmann (2008: 238) points out that, essentially, the Government extended the British colonial system to each of the four acceding units of Balochistan. In the new paramouncy, an Assistant Political Agent (APA) was appointed for each unit to advise the ruler and his chief minister (*Wazir-i-Azam*). For Kalat, Lasbela and Kharan, this was a return to the status quo ante, and it was reasonably successful. However, Makran proved to be more difficult.<sup>52</sup> In a move reminiscent of Mir Mahmud Khan, Nawab Bai Khan refused to rule, at least not on the terms set out by the Government of Pakistan. He resisted supervision, interfered with the APA, and ignored protocol by contacting the MSFR directly, bypassing the APA. The Nawab's intriguing, which complicated his relations with the APA, was probably inevitable, given the long history of internecine disputes among the Gichki lineages in Makran. Repeated efforts to persuade Bai Khan to cooperate in modernizing Makran were of no avail. In 1951, the AGG, Aminuddin, argued against maintaining the separate units. His reservations appear to have been predominately economic. The Federal Government was poised to take over the custom ports, abolishing the taxes



traditionally levied by the Jam and the various Gichkis. As for Kharan, '... the state can barely afford her existing ridiculously cheap system of administration and, until some way is found of making the desert pay increased dividends, cannot contemplate the cost of any reforms.'<sup>53</sup>

By 1952, the Government of Pakistan had succeeded in obtaining federation agreements from the four rulers, and the Baluchistan States Union (BSU) was founded. It was an expensive organization. The acceding princes were granted tax-free privy purses: Kalat Rs425,000, Makran Rs200,000, Lasbela Rs170,000, and Kharan Rs61,000 (Wilcox, 1966: 150). Kalat's State Securities of Rs41,500,000, which had been frozen by the Government of Pakistan, were released to Mir Ahmad Yar Khan as his personal property. These securities were purchased from monies appropriated from the Khan's treasury by AGG Browne in 1892, during the forced abdication of Mir Khodadad Khan. The legal grounds for the seizure were dubious at best, which is probably why the securities were returned to Ahmad Yar Khan.

The BSU was to have a chief minister appointed by the Council of Rulers and vetted by the Government of Pakistan. There was to be a Legislative Assembly with twenty-eight elected representatives and twelve appointed sardars. This Assembly would choose members of a cabinet to advise the Council of Rulers (Axmann, 2008: 262). The Council was established, and it produced an interim constitution. The *Wazir-i-Azam* of Kalat was appointed the chief minister for the Union. However, the legislative elections never took place, and the Council deadlocked on most issues (Wilcox, 1966: 151).

At the 1954 Sibi *Darbar*, a number of sardars presented a petition to the AGG that called for merging the BSU with the Balochistan

Province. This precipitated opposition from the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (CAP), which was struggling to create a national constitution. In order to forestall an open battle between the federalists in the CAP and the Government's supporters, which were backing the merger of the states and provinces of West Pakistan into a single unit, the states of BSU were designated 'special areas', subject to the Chief Commissioner of Balochistan but without representation in the provincial legislature. The states were thus linked to the province, but not integrated into it. Thus, a rather tortured compromise, averted the immediate crisis by postponing the administration and allocation of the states. The underlying crisis of representation between the Eastern and Western wings of the country was to prove more serious for Pakistan. In an effort to establish parity between the wings, the provinces of West Pakistan were merged into a single province under the 'One Unit' scheme in 1955 and this marked the end of the Kalat polity. There was considerable resistance to One Unit in Balochistan with widespread demonstrations in defiance of a ban on political action. The army moved into Kalat town and detained the Khan, who was placed under house-arrest in Lahore. When the army attempted to collect the tribesmen's weapons, the resistance stiffened. *Lashkars* formed and engaged in guerilla tactics, especially in southern Jhalawan, for more than a year as the government's forces bombed villages believed to be supporting the rebels (Harrison, 1981: 27-8). In 1960, representatives of the insurgents and the government met to end the hostilities. Apparently, the Baloch leaders believed they had an amnesty and safe-conduct agreement with the government, but they were arrested (Awan, 1985: 228). All were hanged, save Sardar Nauroz Khan, who was given a life sentence in view of his advanced age.



### POLITICS AND RESISTANCE SINCE ONE UNIT

The imposition of One Unit in 1955 fueled Baloch nationalism. Although some sardars had accepted it, the Baloch nationalists that Harrison (1981: 41) calls the triumvirate—Nawab Khair Baksh Marri, Ataullah Khan Mengal and Ghaus Bux Bizenjo—were united in their opposition to it. The federal government revoked the sardarships of Mengal and Marri. In response, their government-appointed successors were assassinated, army posts were attacked, and Marri and Mengal were jailed.

The reconstitution of the provinces after the separation of Bangladesh posed new problems in Balochistan. Some Pushtun nationalists backed a proposal to sever the former British Baluchistan and merge it into the NWFP (now KP). A coalition led by the Jogezi nawab and the Muslim Leaguer, Qazi Isa, advocated creation of two provinces that would generally conform to Kalat and British Baluchistan, respectively. A third proposal to retain the borders of the Baluchistan Agency was backed by a coalition of both nationalist and tribal Baloch, along with some Pushtun notables. The settlement of Quetta was a central problem, and a united Balochistan carried the day (Titus and Swidler, 2000: 58).

A short-lived NAP–JUI coalition government was formed in Balochistan after the 1970 elections that brought Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and The Peoples' Party to power.<sup>54</sup> In authorizing the provincial government, Bhutto enumerated seven conditions relating to centre-province rights and duties, the equality of all residents of Balochistan, and protection of the Sui Gas complex. Axmann (2007: 234) notes that all seven of the conditions were violated. The inexperienced and undisciplined NAP government, faced an equally undisciplined sardari opposition. There was ample room for the central government to exploit the situation.

Mazari (2000: 286) believes that Bhutto deliberately played Nawab Akbar Bugti against the NAP leadership. The result was a series of escalating clashes. NAP engaged in an affirmative action program, replacing Punjabi civil servants with Baloch. This was especially sensitive in the Punjabi-dominated police, and it led to a police strike, and disorder escalated across the province.<sup>55</sup> Bhutto dismissed the government after ten months, and the NAP leaders were arrested. This led to a four-year insurgency, a more serious challenge to the state than the preceding uprisings.

The insurgency was centred in the Marri area, where Sher Muhammad Marri led a movement, the Pararis, which had been active there for a number of years. He came from a lineage of activists. He, along with his father and uncle, were imprisoned for anti-British (and anti-sardar) activities during the 1920s and the 1930s. He was an avowed Marxist-Leninist with no ties to the Communist Party of Pakistan, which opposed separatist movements on grounds that they undermined national liberation. The Pararis aimed to establish a liberated space in the Marri area, from where they could launch a full-scale struggle for an independent Balochistan (Harrison, 1981: 29–33). The insurgency sparked a largely spontaneous uprising in Jhalawan. Self-selected leaders, often students, organized guerilla bands that carried out hit-and-run attacks.

The insurgents attacked army posts, ambushed military convoys and attacked trains. The army responded with ground and air attacks and destruction of crops. Estimates of insurgent numbers vary widely. At the high end, Harrison (1978: 141) estimates about 50,000 Baloch were involved in the fighting, 11,500 of them in organized units. NAP claimed about 3,000 fighters. In 1974, the third year of the uprising, the insurgents intensified their campaign. In addition to hit-and-run raids, they disrupted rail and road links.



The army responded with expanded helicopter attacks. There was a major army attack in Chamalang Valley, where helicopters had herded a large number of Marris, many of them women and children. The Marris were subjected to mortar fire, helicopter gunships and strafing by fighter planes. Over a hundred guerillas were killed, and almost a thousand captured, along with large flocks of sheep and goats. The Pararis never fully recovered from this loss. Like many dissidents before them, the Pararis began moving to Afghanistan, where they set up camps and received support from the Afghan government. They renamed themselves Baloch Peoples Liberation Front (BPLF). In Afghanistan, after ideological differences had come to the fore and internal factions had weakened the BPLF, the insurgency faded away. Bhutto's turn to the army after dismissing the NAP-JUI government, was politically costly. Talbot (1998: 224) sees it as derailing his effort to subordinate the military to the civilian government.

The expansion of higher education under Bhutto in the 1970s, fostered the growth of student activism, and new voices entered the Baloch nationalist discourse. While the nationalist sardars tended to emphasize the betrayal of the Kalat State shortly after independence, the students were more interested in the current situation of the Baloch. The Baloch Students Organization (BSO), with branches in Quetta and Karachi, generated several cadres of student leaders. Axman (2007: 422–8) argues that the BSO has had a protracted and problematic relationship with the nationalist sardars. Internal differences with regard to the sardars were cross-cut with differences over militancy and moderation. These contributed to chronic factionalism in the BSO and the emergence of splinter groups. Sardars have affiliated with and abandoned student organizations in ways reminiscent of the tactical politics of colonial times. Although BSO leaders were repeatedly disillusioned by the sardars' opportunistic politics and authoritarian leadership,

it has been difficult for them to become fully independent from them.

In 1977 General Ziaul Haq led a coup that overthrew Bhutto. Zia freed the imprisoned NAP leaders, offered amnesty to insurgent leaders, and released several thousand prisoners. The ban on politics and the departure of the Mengal and Marri leaders to Europe underwrote a relatively calm period in nationalist politics.

Axmann (2007: 608–10) argues that the parliamentary decade of 1988–99 was detrimental to the Baloch nationalist movement. Factional leaders struggled among themselves for power and parliamentary office. The more conservative nationalist sardars, with the advantage of vote banks, played electoral politics more effectively, and the radical wing of the movement essentially disappeared.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 had significant long-term consequences for Balochistan. The war generated a flood of refugees, mostly Pushtun. It also led to a flood of outside funding, largely from the US, to support the *mujahideen* opposition to the Soviets. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, consolidated power by serving as a conduit for the distribution of weapons and funds to its client *mujahadeen*.<sup>56</sup> The presence of some 1.5 million refugees heightened tensions between the Baloch and Pushtuns.

The JUI got more votes in the 1988 elections than it had received earlier, largely as a result of ethnic and sectarian tensions. Titus (nd: 20) reported some friction between the JUI and Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), a Pushtun nationalist organization, and the NAP during the elections. The nationalists accused the JUI of enlisting support as well as illegal votes from Afghan refugees. The JUI complained that tribal leaders did not allow JUI workers



to campaign in their territories. The status of religious minorities was also a source of disagreement as many JUI supporters would like to see the Zikris of Makran declared non-Muslim.<sup>57</sup> JUI entered another coalition government with Baloch nationalists and independents legislators.<sup>58</sup>

Conducting a provincial census in Balochistan has been a politically charged project for many years. Past attempts at enumeration were met with such resistance that the census was postponed. A census, conducted under military supervision, was finally accomplished in 1988. PKMAP, which had complained about past over-counting of the Baloch, boycotted the census, and many Pushtuns rejected the 1988 results. Release of the 2012 census is likely to generate challenges from some of the parties.

It is easy to criticize the Provincial Assembly, as almost all of the fifty-one elected members have ministerial portfolios, which means that there are more ministers than departments. The graft and corruption that plague the government at all levels, is a problem. However, the assembly is an important political arena for negotiation in a province with two major ethnicities, both of which are highly factionalized. The national parties—PPP and the PML (N)—are well-represented, although their members pursue local agendas, sometimes at the expense of the party position. JUI, also a national party, has been the major Pushtun party since the first coalition government. The Baloch nationalist parties and Independents are also important in coalition-building. Sardars are distributed among the parties, and major sardars can usually count on tribal vote-banks. Forming a governing coalition is a complicated process, and the exchange of support for favours contributes to the unsavoury reputation of the provincial government.





## 10

### The Afterlife of Paramountcy

Although colonialism was imposed upon the colonized, it can be best seen as an ongoing negotiated relationship between parties of unequal power. The aims of colonizers varied in place and time. The colonized, too, differed in terms of their economic and political organization and in the tactics and strategies they employed to mediate their lesser power. The British engaged in several versions of colonialism in the land that became Pakistan. Direct rule was imposed in large portions of Sindh and Punjab, where the construction of extensive irrigation works increased agricultural yields that underwrote a new class of large landowners. Paramountcy, the principle governing relations between the colonial state and the Khan of Kalat, was a very conservative variation of colonialism, and officials governed through a modified version of the pre-colonial political order.

Just as colonialism varied in time and space, there was more than one path to decolonization. Pakistani independence was achieved through constitutional politics rather than a liberation struggle. Pakistan is 'a nation forged not in reaction to a foreign colonial master, but in opposition to competing colonial subjects' (Shaikh, 2009: 43). These subjects came to be distinguished by religion, a differentiation that structured nationalist politics in the final decades of the Raj. Thus the idea of Pakistan was centred in Muslim rights rather than a state ideology (Nasr, 2001: 47). The vision of Pakistan was largely held by Muslims from North India



who came as refugees and provided many of the officials and most of the leadership of the new state. Short of resources, unfamiliar with many of the citizens of the new state, the fledgling government endorsed local alliances established by the British. The decision to work through local leaders, who were largely landlords, had important consequences. The old bonds of clientage continued to shape the lives of the newly-constituted citizens, and Pakistan was a distant abstraction for many. Political constraints foreclosed the possibility of effective land-reform.

The ethnic identities that shape Pakistani politics today were not created by the British, but colonial policies made them salient in new ways. By giving local leaders a relatively free hand in administering their estates, the British distanced themselves from the subjects of these leaders. When the Government of Pakistan assumed these colonial relationships, it was at the expense of the state.<sup>1</sup> As Nasr (2001: 51) puts it, the state was born weak and lacked public support.

Successive governments have dealt with the legitimization problem in two ways. First, they played on fears of neighbouring states, especially the threat posed by India. 'Pakistan's nationalism is primarily anti-Indian: this is the essence of the country's identity' (Jaffrelot 2002: 38). The second legitimization tactic has been to turn toward Islam when opposition to a sitting government is on the rise. Jalal (1995: 234) points out that tensions between an Islamic state and inclusive citizenship in a nation-state were inevitable, since Muslim nationhood does not support equal rights of citizenship. Bhutto and Zia both turned to an exclusionary Islam to legitimate their regimes.<sup>2</sup> Shaikh (2009: 43) sees these actions as threatening the status of all non-Muslim minorities 'who are now in danger of being increasingly regarded as compatriots sharing a common territory rather than as citizens with a claim to legal and



political equality.' The narrowing of 'state Islam' has been associated with increasing violence against Shias, who comprise about 20 per cent of the national population (Talbot, 1998: 28).

### TRIBALISM AND NATIONALISM

Today Kalat denotes only a district in the province of Balochistan. The largest province in terms of size, Balochistan has the smallest population of all.<sup>3</sup> Balochistan falls at the bottom of the national scale with regards to infant mortality, poverty and literacy. When the province attracts national attention, it is often in ways that highlight its ongoing remoteness. The conditions—nationalism and tribalism—that troubled relations between Kalat and Pakistan at the time of independence, continue to cause tension. Despite Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's efforts to abolish sardari privileges in 1976, sardars remain powerful players in the districts that were formerly Kalat. The adult sons of sardars, active since the early days of Pakistan, have by and large inherited their fathers' powers. In the 1990s, liberal newsweeklies ran articles detailing Pushtun-Baloch tensions and tribal vendettas. Although the articles are generally quite insightful in locating tribalism in the larger national and international context, the dominant image is the retrograde persistence of sardari power.<sup>4</sup>

Maintaining a tribal confederation under the guise of a native state worked well enough for the British, given their geostrategic aims in Balochistan. However, the status differences they encoded—tribal subject, British subject, or citizen, a racially reserved status for British and Europeans—are incongruent with a modern state, where citizenship is inclusive, based on a notion of status equality. The persistence of tribal governance today is an effect of state legitimacy compromised by corruption, indifference and lack of accountability. The institution of provincial governments in 1970



created a space where state and local power commingle, where sardars hold elected office while continuing to administer tribal governance. Criticism of the provincial government echoes the charges often leveled against the federal government—rampant corruption, nepotism, and incompetence. This suggests that governance problems in Balochistan cannot be explained solely in terms of what Pakistanis find distinctive in the inhabitants, i.e. tribalism and ethno-nationalism.

Tribalism and nationalism are not dichotomous processes in Balochistan. Although each has a vision at radical odds with the other, tribalism and nationalism are complexly interwoven. The nationalist movement arose within tribalism, and as long as sardars dominated the leadership, the movement did not transcend tribal identities. When the BSO emerged, it struggled to find an independent political voice.

The persistence of tribalism is rooted in the realm of daily life with its ordinary problems and conflicts. Here, subject-status dominates citizenship for many Baloch. Subjecthood has its own institutions: the *jirga* and customary law descended from the Frontier Crimes Regulations. Mamdani (2001: 654) points out that civil law and customary law are radically different, the first being a language of rights that set limits to the exercise of power, while the language of custom confines the subject within power. Tribal affiliation is not the encompassing status that it once was, however. There is a shifting from tribe to ethnicity in process, evidenced in the rise of the Baloch nationalist movement. Recently the Pushtun refugees from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have amplified ethnicity as some Baloch are concerned about becoming a minority in the province.



Tribalism and nationalism have histories shaped by dominant powers, first the British, now the Pakistani government. The recent history of both should be read against the instability and corruption of successive Pakistani governments. There have been three military coups since 1947, each followed by years of martial law, during which political activity was banned, and many nationalist leaders were jailed. These repressive periods weakened the positions of those nationalists who were willing to engage in parliamentary politics to further Baloch aspirations within a Pakistani state.

An important source of the continuing sardari authority is the ongoing use of the *jirga* to settle disputes. Today it may be a government official who seeks to convene a *jirga*, usually because it will produce a rapid decision. Titus (1991: 185–9) notes that the government convened two *jirgas* during the 1980s to adjudicate disputes that erupted into riots between Pushtun and Baloch transport workers. The government, that on the one hand deplores the continuing influence of sardars, yet on the other hand turns to tribal practice to resolve a labour dispute, is not only endorsing the *jirga*, it is extending its scope. In recent years, the *jirga* has expanded in other ways as well. From its base as a local assembly to deal with local disputes, it has been employed in the convening of all Baloch by the current Khan of Kalat, and by the Government of Pakistan in convening Pushtuns on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Most ironically, President Musharraf called for a *jirga* to address provincial-centre issues.<sup>5</sup>

A *jirga* may be an attractive option for a tribesperson because it is guided by familiar principles, and it is swift and relatively inexpensive while a court case typically goes on for years. The latter is perceived to be expensive, not only because lawyers need to be paid, but also because popular belief holds that one must bribe various officials in order to obtain a desired result. Resort to *jirga*

adjudication creates a complicated relationship of favours owed and collected between district officials and sardars. Each party lends a degree of legitimacy to the other, but the sardars are the bigger winners in this exchange. In addition to *jirga* adjudication, sardars continue to hold frequent audiences where they provide a variety of services—a letter of introduction, mediation of village disputes—to petitioners. These audiences, together with the *jirgas*, enact an ongoing public tribalism.

The contemporary *jirga* is clearly a post-colonial *jirga*, fusing tribal and nationalistic elements. Like its colonial predecessor, it operates at different levels, from village to ethnicity. However, it operates both within and outside the state. From the state's perspective, it is extra-judicial, a form of vigilantism, yet state officials employ *jirgas* on occasion.<sup>6</sup> It appeals to 'traditional law' in making a decision. *Jirgas* have become a symbol of tribal backwardness to most non-tribal Pakistanis. Their central position in a Pakistani discourse marks a critical distinction between a subject and a citizen that reinforces tribalism and constitutes Baloch as the 'internal other' of the state. The Baloch are seen as passive and gullible, either dominated by corrupt sardars or under the sway of nationalists engaged in treason. However, for many Baloch, the status of citizen offers little of the rights, duties and protections that citizenship normally confers.

There is a tendency to view honour-killings as a distinctive tribal practice. *Jirga* decisions involving honour-killings get special attention in the national press. In fact, honour-killings are a national problem, as they occur throughout Pakistan. An honour-killing is an assertion that women's bodies are sites of masculine kin control. In this respect, it is an aspect of a wider tension between locality and the federal government.



Tribal practice, manifest in *jirgas* and honour killings tends to obscure the fact that citizenship is ethnically mediated for most Pakistanis. The Baloch are not alone in developing an ethno-nationalist movement. In the early years of Pakistan there were similar movements in Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) as well. Jaffrelot (2002: 22–6) argues that in both the cases, a combination of repressive measures and expanded access to government positions, defused them. While Baloch nationalists have experienced the harsh repression, rewards from the centre have been meager.<sup>7</sup>

Baloch grievances against the Government of Pakistan are longstanding, and the failure of the government to address them has fueled the growth of the latest phase of the Baloch nationalist movement. These grievances—the suppression of Baloch nationalism, the failure to invest in economic development, and the imposition of large-scale projects like Sui Gas and the Port of Gwadar without provincial input—have widespread support in Balochistan. These are not solely ‘tribal’ issues, they are ethnic and economic issues, as well. The government’s willingness to let them persist, unaddressed for more than half a century, enabled the growth of a radical wing of the nationalist movement.<sup>8</sup> Whenever the opposition erupts into violence, successive governments have turned to force rather than choosing to negotiate. However, as time and experience have repeatedly shown, these issues do not lend themselves to military solutions.

Two events, only months apart, were central to the recent escalation of violence in Balochistan. It is difficult to see these as anything other than the government’s determination to demonstrate its reach in the province. In late 2005, despite growing resistance to the expanding military presence in the province and to the Gwadar seaport project, President Musharraf went to Kohlu to announce a

package of development projects for the district. His decision to go to Kohlu was intended to demonstrate that the government could impose itself at will, even within Marri territory. Federal governments have never been very popular in the Marri area, and at the time the army was constructing a new cantonment in Kohlu, which was an especially unpopular move. The presidential party was subjected to a rocket attack, which was termed as an ‘assassination attempt’ by the government, and to which it reacted harshly. As Musharraf ordered more regular troops to Balochistan, the militant nationalist groups escalated their hit-and-run raids.

In this tense environment of mutual hostility, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti’s public opposition to the government was especially provocative. Prior to the Kohlu attack, Bugti had accused the government of a cover-up in a rape case at Dera Bugti.<sup>9</sup> The Nawab, an agile and experienced politician, had a long record of opposition to the government’s policies related to the natural-gas projects at Sui. He deployed the rhetoric of tribal honour to pressure the government to pursue the case, in response to which government forces mounted a fierce attack on Dera Bugti. Militant nationalists responded with hit-and-run strikes, blowing up gas and rail lines, and attacking police posts. Intense rocketing damaged much of Dera Bugti, causing many of the residents to flee (Axmann, 2008a: 276–7). Bugti’s compound was repeatedly targeted, and he went into hiding. He continued his opposition to the government, and kept giving interviews to the national and international press. The army attacked his hideout in Kohlu and killed him in August 2006. Bugti’s death sparked widespread demonstrations in Balochistan, which continued despite a curfew and mass arrests in Quetta.

The government calls this ethno-nationalist violence ‘terrorism’, and responds with terrorism of its own. In turning to domestic



part, because they denied ordinary Baloch a voice. This is still a challenge for both the present and the future.

### Notes

1. The rooted territoriality of ethnicity posed problems for the refugees (*mohajirs*), whose language was the Urdu of North India and who had no ancestral land in the new state. They did become territorially clustered, settling in the Sindhi cities of Hyderabad and Karachi. In the early 1980s the Mojahir Qaumi Movement (MQM), an organization representing the *mohajirs*' interests, emerged in Karachi (Verkaaik, 2004: 56–87).
2. Bhutto declared Qadianis (aka 'Ahmedis') to be non-Muslim, depriving them of some citizenship rights. Zia extended this exclusion by criminalizing their claims to Islam.
3. Balochistan comprises about 42 per cent of Pakistani territory, but contains only about 5 per cent of the national population (Cohen, 2004: 219–20).
4. See, for example, 'Tribes' in *Newsline*, June 1993; 'The Politics of Vendetta', in *The Herald*, September 1994; 'Traditional Justice and the Absent State', in *The Herald*, March 1999; 'Holy Crusade' in *Newsline*, January 1993; 'Can Balochistan Survive?' in *The Herald*, March 1992.
5. Baloch sardars rejected this overture. See 'BNP Rejects 'Official Jirga' on Balochistan Issue: Ulterior Motive', *Dawn*, 30 October 2006.
6. According to Lieven (2011: 94–7), *jirgas* are surprisingly popular today. This should probably be read as an indictment of the justice system, although there is a hint of Imperial nostalgia in some of his elite informants.
7. In 2010, the Government issued Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan, a wide-ranging set of proposals and recommendations regarding Balochistan. The proposals dealing with security have been criticized by the Baloch because they expand military presence in the province. The proposals dealing with mega-projects such as Gwadar Port and resource-extraction are also very controversial. Given the current mutual distrust, implementation of much of the package seems uncertain.
8. Axmann (2008a: 262) dates the emergence of the militant Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) to 2000. He argues that the assassination of Justice Muhammad Nawaz Marri, a longtime opponent of Nawab Khair Bux Marri, was a precipitating factor.
9. The victim was an employee of Pakistan Petroleum. The alleged rapist was an army officer whose father was said to be close to President Musharraf.